

THE LIFE OF NAPOLEON BONAPARTE



*The King of Rome
by Sir T. Lawrence.*

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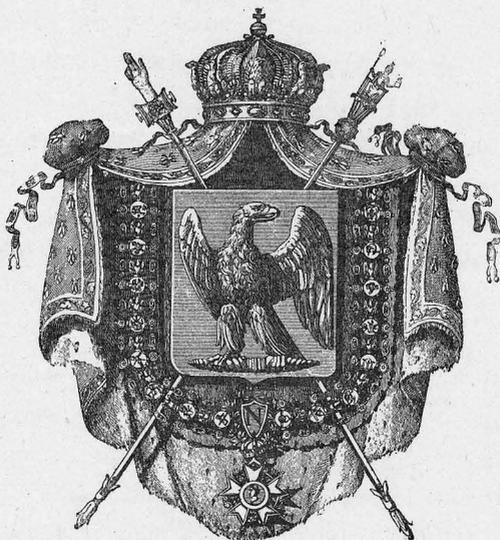
THE LIFE A

OF

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

BY

S. BARING-GOULD



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PREFACE

ON being asked by my publishers to undertake a Life of Napoleon Bonaparte, on the lines of my Lives of the Julian and Claudian Cæsars in my *Tragedy of the Cæsars*, I shrank from the task. In the first place, I considered that the life of the Great Napoleon had been done many times, and done well, and that there was nothing really new to be said upon the matter. And secondly, I knew what an enormous mass of material would have to be digested in order to do the work at all adequately.

On further consideration, I agreed to undertake the task, if I might so far reduce the limits of the work as to make it actually a study of the character and opinions of Napoleon, and might lay on one side what concerned his military achievements and the political importance of his life, so far as did not bear on the development of his mind and the movements of his heart. In the next place, material has recently been accessible for such a study that was inaccessible before.

After Waterloo, when Napoleon saw that his career of glory was at an end, he committed a bundle of papers, in a brown cover, to Cardinal Fesch, sealed with the Imperial signet. This was taken to Rome, but Fesch never took the trouble to open it. On his death in 1839, the parcel went to his grand vicar, the Abbé Lyonnet, who sold them to M. Guillaume Libri, a rather unscrupulous man, and he made some slight use of the papers contained in the bundle, and sold nearly all of them to Lord Ashburnham. When in the possession of the Earl, they were inaccessible to every one till the collection was sold. Lord Ashburnham asked for the budget £300,000. In 1884, they were sold for 675,000 francs to Italy, and are now deposited in the Medicæan-Laurentine Library at Florence.

The parcel contained the MSS. of Napoleon at an early age, between 1786 and 1793, and are of material value for the study of the formation of his mind when in its plastic condition. These papers have been published by