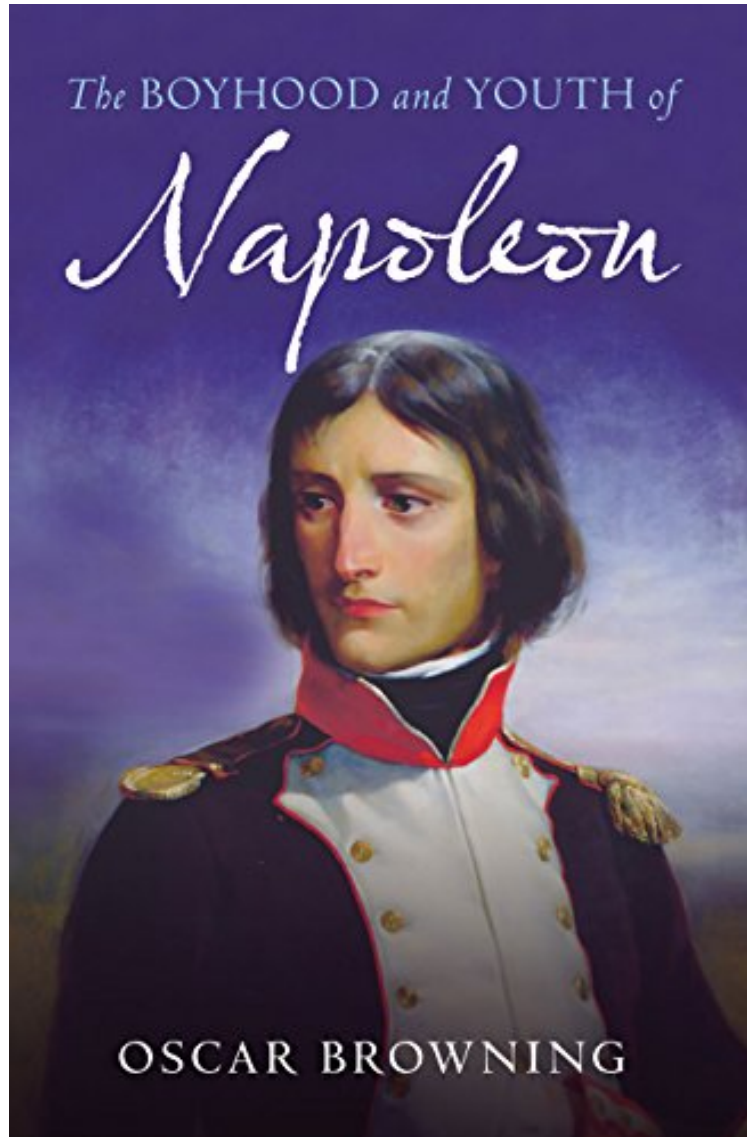


[Download] The Boyhood and Youth of Napoleon

## The Boyhood and Youth of Napoleon

*Oscar Browning*

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**Oscar Browning : The Boyhood and Youth of Napoleon** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Boyhood and Youth of Napoleon:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. The Boy Who Would Be EmperorBy Tom HolmbergOscar Browning's The Boyhood and Youth of Napoleon is based on a sealed packet of papers found in Napoleon's study during the Hundred Days. The packet was marked "À remettre au Cardinal Fesch seul" was delivered to the Emperor's uncle in Rome, but remained unopened. Following Fesch's death in 1839, Fesch's papers including the unopened

packet were sold and eventually came into the possession of Lord Ashburnham. In the 1880s the papers were cataloged by Frédéric Masson and in 1895 Masson published the papers as *Napoléon Inconnu* along with other manuscripts Masson had collected concerning Napoleon's youth. Arthur Chuquet then used Masson's work as the basis for his *La Jeunesse de Napoléon*. Oscar Browning (1837-1923), a disgraced former master at Eton, used Masson's and Chuquet's works, as well as every book "contained in the admirable bibliography of Kircheisen, which bears on this period," (p. 12) to produce this popular biography of Napoleon's early years. Originally titled *Napoleon, The First Phase* (1905) in obvious imitation of Lord Roseberry's well-known, *Napoleon, the Last Phase* (1900), to whom Browning dedicated his work. Browning, obviously interested in the Napoleonic era, had previously published *England and Napoleon in 1803* (1887). In *The Boyhood and Youth of Napoleon* Browning tells the story of Napoleon from his antecedents in Italy through the siege of Toulon in an easy, readable style. Browning tells the reader that his goal is to put Napoleon "in a human light." In Browning estimation even as a young boy Napoleon was already marked as special. Normally the oldest brother would be designated for a military career, while the younger would go into the priesthood. Napoleon got the best of Joseph, who was considered good and quiet, while Napoleon was pensive and clever. Thus it was Napoleon who was marked for a military life. The two oldest Bonaparte brothers were sent to school at Autun to improve their French and prepare for entering their respective schools. Napoleon went on to the royal military school at Brienne, where Napoleon was particularly fond of mathematics, geography and history. Browning notes that Napoleon was an "indefatigable reader." Having success at Brienne Napoleon was recommended to continue his studies at the prestigious *Ecole Militaire de Paris*. Napoleon was later to complain that the *Ecole Militaire* was too luxurious (it was estimated that each cadet cost the treasury £170). When Napoleon founded his own military schools, the students had no servants, groomed their own horses, kept their own rooms clean and ate garrison bread instead of white. Despite Napoleon's criticisms many of those who taught Napoleon were later rewarded by Napoleon when he became First Consul. Many of Napoleon's classmates had to make their own choices concerning their destinies and emigrated during the Revolution, fighting in the armies of France's enemies (the most famous being Phéliepeaux). Having left school and being stationed in Valence with the Regiment of La Fere, which Browning describes as "one of the best in the French army," Napoleon's story becomes one of the young soldier trying to determine if his destiny lay in Corsica or in France. Patrice Gueniffey quotes Jorge Luis Borges concerning biography that one of its concerns is discovering "the [moment] in which the man knows once and for all who he is." (Bonaparte (2015), p.15) Oscar Browning is writing about Napoleon discovering whether he will be Napoleon the Corsican patriot or Napoleon the French soldier. Between 1786 and 1793 Napoleon had spent two years and nine months with his regiment, and five years and nine months on Corsica involved in family and political business. Though this may seem excessive, it was not quite that unusual in France's peace-time army. Browning points out that in spite of Napoleon's absences, the army continued to promote him on schedule. In the end due to both the opportunities that arose due to the Revolution and the war and politics in Corsica, Napoleon's destiny lay in France. The book contains four appendices. The first contains a selection of the documents concerning Napoleon's youth. The second is a criticism of Bourrienne's spurious memoirs. The third discusses the writings of Napoleon that Masson had catalogued. Finally, the fourth is "Original Documents from the British Museum Concerning the Siege and Evacuation of Toulon."

During the Hundred Days, (1815) there lay in Napoleon's study in the Tuileries a packet of papers, sealed with the Imperial arms, on the cover of which was written, "À remettre au Cardinal Fesch seul." This packet was carried by Fesch to Rome, but he never had the curiosity to open it, and it remained sealed and tied up till his death, on 13 May 1839. Many years later it was eventually opened, and an astonished world discovered that Napoleon had collected papers relating to his boyhood and youth. Using this amazing material - and many other sources - Oscar Browning produced the first English language account of the formative years between Napoleon's birth in 1769, and when he first forced his way onto the world stage as a young man of importance at the siege of Toulon in 1793. There he personally led his men in the assault on the field earthworks guarding the city. During one of the attacks he received a bayonet wound from a English soldier. Napoleon with his artillery also destroyed several British warships anchored in Toulon's harbor, forcing them to sail away. It was his first victory and he was promoted to brigadier general. **REVIEWS** n *The Boyhood and Youth of Napoleon* Browning tells the story of Napoleon from his antecedents in Italy through the siege of Toulon in an easy, readable style. Browning tells the reader that his goal is to put Napoleon "in a human light." The Napoleonic Series

About the Author Oscar Browning was a Fellow for life at King's College, Cambridge and he became an assistant master at Eton. He went abroad every school vacation, travelling in princely style with a courier. His associations with young men led him to fall foul of authority at the time and some senior members of King's were dismayed by his return to college. Nevertheless, he did good work in promoting King's to higher intellectual standards. His research was always of quality and his writing style is pleasing and always highly readable. He died at Rome in 1923.