THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF MADAME BONAPARTE

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The life and letters of Madame Bonaparte by Eugene L. Didier

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EUGENE L. DIDIER

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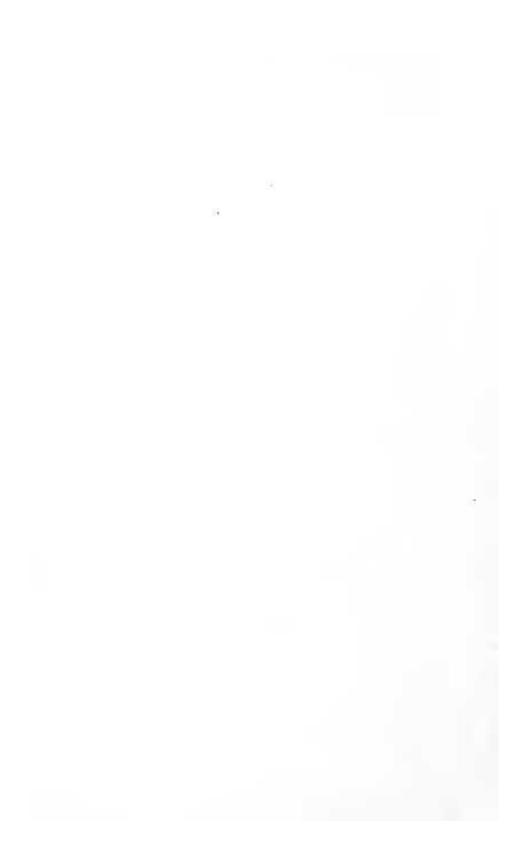
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PREFACE.

THE long, eventful, and romantic career of Madame Bonaparte made her one of the most famous women of the country. Her remarkable history covers a period of nincty-four years. Born four years before the organization of the United States government by the original Thirteen States, she lived to see the Union composed of thirty-eight States, with a population of nearly fifty millions. At the time of her birth, Baltimore was a small town of little more than four thousand inhabitants; she lived to see it a large city of little less than four hundred thousand. Born the daughter of a Baltimore merchant, Elizabeth Patterson became, by her marriage with Jerome Bonaparte, the sister-in-law of the Emperor Napoleon and the half-dozen kings and queens whom the French Cæsar placed upon the thrones of Europe. In all respects the equal, and in some the superior of

those thus favoured, Napoleon nevertheless excluded her from the imperial court; yet, after the Emperor's final downfall, there remained for her a social career in Europe, the brilliancy of which has hitherto been but vaguely described. The recent discovery of her letters, written to her father during this period of her social success-when beauties envied her beauty and wits dreaded her wit, when kings sought her acquaintance and princes claimed her friendship-will enable us to give to the world the true story of the most brilliant years of this remarkable woman's life. Her letters display an amazing knowledge of the world, a keen analysis of men's motives, and an eager pursuit of worldly honours. This Baltimore girl, married at eighteen and deserted at twenty, seems to have possessed the satoir-vivre of Chesterfield, the cold cynicism of Rochefoucauld, and the practical economy of Franklin.

EUGENE L. DIDIER.

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