

NAPOLEON AND HIS MARSHALS

By J. T. HEADLEY.
Profusely illustrated by Reproductions of the Best French Pictures.

CHAPTER II. MARSHAL PONIATOWSKI.

HIS EFFORTS UNDER KOSCIUSKO TO SAVE HIS COUNTRY—APPOINTED MINISTER OF STATE IN THE GRAND DUCHY OF WARSAW—JOINS NAPOLEON IN HIS INVASION OF RUSSIA. HIS LAST STRUGGLE AT LEIPZIG. HIS TRAGIC DEATH AND IMPOSING FUNERAL—HIS CHARACTER.

Introduce a short sketch of Poniatowski simply to make the gallery of Marshals complete. Though his life and battles would make a volume by itself, still he does not occupy a prominent part in the history of the French Empire nor form one of the chief characters in the great Napoleonic drama.

Joseph Poniatowski was born at Warsaw in 1733 of noble parents. Eleven years after his birth, in 1744, Stanislaus, his uncle, ascended the throne of Poland, and the family received the title of Prince. He first appears on the stage of action in 1791, just before the final partition of Poland.

This unhappy Republic, which Providence, from some inscrutable design of its own, has allowed to be trampled under foot, and blotted out from the map of nations by tyrants, as no other country ever before has been, was destined to see its final overthrow under the brave, noble-hearted, and patriotic Kosciusko.

Divided and partitioned off in 1772 by the two imperial robbers who sat on the thrones of Russia and Austria, and redivided in 1793 by Russia and Prussia, the cup of her sufferings seemed full. The royal plunderers kept two immense armies marching over her territory, to take care of the rich booty that already began to burn in their hands; until, at length, the energy and courage of despair took the place of submission, and a devoted band of patriots, maddened by the injustice and outrage everywhere committed, resolved to save their country, or perish in the effort.

Kosciusko, a name which can never be spoken in an American assembly without sending a thrill of emotion through every heart, was chosen their leader. This patriot and warrior had just seen a band of freemen hurl from their necks the yoke of oppression, which a tyrannical power had sought to fasten there; and, side by side with their chiefs, had nobly struggled in their cause. With joy he had witnessed the triumph of freedom on these shores, and then when his work was done, sheathed his sword, and with a sad heart turned his footsteps towards unhappy Poland.

When the war cry was shouted from the streets of Warsaw, and he was declared the leader of the patriots, he knew it was a dreadful struggle in which he was to engage. But he had learned from the success of our almost hopeless struggle to have faith in the power of Right; and firmly stepped before the little band that had nobly thrown themselves between their country and the armies of two powerful despots.

Poniatowski took command of one of the divisions in Kosciusko's army, although in 1792 the latter served as Major-General under him in his expedition against the Russians—and during the short but sanguinary struggle that followed, exhibited that valor which afterwards won the highest praise from Napoleon.

The Poles though at first successful, were finally utterly routed at Maciejowice, and Kosciusko covered with wounds was taken prisoner. Poniatowski then fled to Warsaw, determined to defend it to the last; thither also the Russian thousands swarmed, with the pitiless Suwarow at their head.

The Poles in Praga, on the other side of the river, fortified themselves and planted a hundred cannon so as to sweep the city from this side; but the indomitable Russian hurled his massive columns in such strength on the patriots that in spite of their most endeavor they were rolled back towards the river. Forced in a confused crowd on the bridge, they crushed the yielding structure under their feet, and were precipitated headlong into the stream.

Warsaw shrieked in dismay, and anguish as she saw her brave sons cut off from her protecting walls; the river ran blood, and amid the flames of the burning houses, and cries of despair, Suwarow raged with his bloodhounds amid the defenseless multitude.

Women and children fell in the indiscriminate massacre, infants were carried about on the points of Cossack lances, and over eleven thousand bodies were piled on the streets of Praga, and along the bank of the Vistula.

Warsaw fell, and Poniatowski, dejected and disheartened, went to Vienna; the Emperor and Empress, Paul and Catherine, used every endeavor to reconcile him to their sway, but his uncle was a prisoner, and Poland—rent asunder, had been divided like a carcass among wild animals; and he wished no connection with the empire of the conquerors.

His heart burning with indignation, and his memory still fresh with the bloody scenes he had seen at Warsaw, he rejected all offers of peace, and lived in retirement on his estate.

Here he remained inactive, while Europe was shaking with battles, apparently indifferent to the strife going on about him; since Poland was no more; till 1807, when Napoleon overthrew the army of Russia at Friedland. In the treaty of Tilsit that followed, it was stipulated that the province which before the partition in 1772, belonged to Poland, and had since been held by Prussia, should be formed into the Duchy of Warsaw, and given to the King of Saxony.

MINISTER OF STATE.
This initiatory step towards wresting back those magnificent provinces that had given territory, aroused Poniatowski from his indifference, and he accepted the office of Minister of State in the new Duchy. He now began to look on Napoleon's movements with the deepest anxiety, and gradually identified himself with his interests, till he fell in the struggle to sustain his tottering Empire.

He felt that the only hope of his country was in the success of the French Emperor, and he bent all his energies to secure it; he had faith in him, and knew it was the wish of his heart, to re-establish the fallen throne. Many of the patriot Poles have wronged Napoleon in condemning him for doing France a Poland that he did, but will they lay their finger on the spot where he could, without endangering the welfare of his own country, have emancipated them?

It required a stronger hand than even his to wrest away the plunder the three most powerful Governments of the Continent had divided among themselves. It would have been the cause of an endless quarrel; and instead of struggling for France, he would have fought his victorious standard, and his energies to the safety and existence of Poland.

It is true the Poles poured out their blood in the defense of this immortal chapter in the history of the civil war. It deals with a great subject, and one little understood, because it was a tragedy enacted behind the scenes, obscured by the smoke of battle in front. While the public was kept daily informed of march and siege and desperate attack and repulse, fixing the attention upon the ever-shifting panorama of active warfare, the voice of heroes dying in prison-cells was lost. No news came from the men herded like cattle beyond the mountains of the South. The Nation knew little of the horrors behind the Stockade.

The author of Andersonville has told a thrilling story. If it has horrors they are not of his invention.

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AUSTRIAN INVASION.

Beloved by the Emperor, he was made aware of his disaffection, and hence left that in helping him to crush the powers about him, he was preparing the way for the resurrection of his country. Bonaparte declared that Napoleon had intended, if he had succeeded in Russia, to have placed him on the throne.

He continued in the Duchy of Warsaw, protected by the powerful arm of the French Emperor, till 1809, when Austria, for the sole purpose of frightening Saxony out of her friendship for France, invaded it. Russia was then the ally of the latter, and had promised to protect Warsaw, so that Napoleon had made no provisions for its defense.

More than thirty thousand Austrians were moving down on that dependent Province, to meet which Poniatowski could bring only 12,000 men into the field. Scarcely however, to ask the co-operation of his Russian allies, whom he hated as cordially as he did the Austrians, he prepared alone to meet this formidable array. He drew up his considerable force at Raszyn and there, for four hours, withstood the whole shock of the Austrian army.

But 12,000 against 30,000 was too great an inequality; and he was compelled to fall back on Warsaw. Forced, at length, to capitulate, he marched with heavy heart out of the capital, accompanied by the authorities, and all the principal inhabitants of the city.

The Archduke Ferdinand supposed he would immediately abandon the Duchy and retreat to Saxony, but Poniatowski boldly resolved to dispute his territory to the last, and returned up the Vistula towards Gallitzin, whither the Russian army was slowly marching, in order to cooperate with his troops.

In the meantime, however, he surprised an Austrian division and took 1,500 prisoners. But, in pursuing his advantage, he effected a more important capture, and made a discovery which showed that little reliance could be placed on the good faith of those governments with which Bonaparte was compelled to treat.

AN IMPORTANT PAPER.
A courier, on his way to the Austrian Headquarters, was intercepted, and in his dispatches was found a letter from a Russian General to the Archduke Ferdinand, congratulating him on his capture of Poniatowski, and predicting complete success to his efforts, and winding up with the wish that their arms might soon be united in the same cause.

This certainly was a most peculiar letter to be sent from an ally to an enemy, and calculated to throw some doubts over the honesty of the Russian Emperor. Poniatowski immediately forwarded it to Bonaparte, in whom it aroused the most violent indignation. He dispatched it instantly to the Emperor Alexander, with a copy of its contents, and a translation into French, which could not be misunderstood, an explanation.

The Emperor declared it was written without his authority, and as an evidence of his sincerity, immediately removed the unlucky General who was its author. Napoleon pressed to be satisfied, but it was evident that the great sin of the French consisted in being found out. Conversations with Savary about it afterwards he said:

"I was perfectly in the right not to trust such allies. What worse could have happened if I had not made peace with the Russians? What have I gained by their alliance? It is more than probable that they would have declared openly against me, if a remnant of regard to the faith of treaties had not prevented them."

"We must not deceive ourselves; they have all fixed a rendezvous on my tomb, but they have not the courage openly to set out thither. That the Emperor Alexander should not come to my assistance is conceivable, but that he should permit Warsaw to be taken, almost in presence of his army, is indeed hardly credible; it is plain that I can no longer rely on an alliance in that quarter. * * * And yet, after all, they will probably say that I am wanting in my engagements, and cannot remain at peace."

NEW TERRITORY ACQUIRED.
Soon after Napoleon's operations on the Danube calling the attention of Ferdinand from Warsaw, he withdrew his forces, and was finally compelled to leave the Duchy. The battle of Wagram and the peace of Vienna followed, and among the stipulations of the treaty, a territory, containing about one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, was taken from Russia and given to the King of Saxony.

habitants, was taken from Russia and added to the Duchy of Warsaw. Thus, Poland seemed to be getting back by slow degrees her ancient possessions. The outcry that Russia made about this strip of land, although a piece was cut from Austria and given to her as an offset, should convince the friends of Poland how difficult it would have been for Bonaparte to have wrenched from the solid grasp of those monarchs the entire kingdom they had dismembered. It is painful to see with what greediness those royal plunderers gloated over their ill-gotten gains, and how narrowly they watched every shiver of the corpse they had mutilated.

At length, after other considerations were forgotten in the contemplated invasion of Russia, Napoleon, by his wonderful genius, had, at length, subdued his rivals; and not only induced Austria and Prussia and the whole territory from the Rhine to the Neiman to allow his armies a free passage, but he had prevailed on each monarch to furnish his quota of men to march under his banners and fight for the accomplishment of his plans.

Among those who opposed the expedition, yet, who resolved upon, gave soul and heart to it, was Poniatowski; bringing nearly forty thousand Poles to swell the myriad numbers of the grand army. He fought bravely the head of his followers, and at Smolensko and Borodino, and throughout the desolate retreat, brought a good sword, a noble heart, and a strong belief in the aid of the Emperor. And then was seen the just retributions of heaven.

PONIATOWSKI'S VENGEANCE.
Poniatowski had witnessed the degradation of his country by Russian power, he recalled the horrors of the Russian barbars, and his women and children butchered in thousands by Russian soldiers. His proud heart had been compelled to war against a sufferer all this, and now the day of vengeance had come.

He poured his victorious Poles through the burning streets of Smolensko, and made them pitch their tents amid the ruins of the capital of his haughty enemy. The fire and the sword had been carried off to each by the Russian soldiers, and exhibited great bravery and endurance. The first man across the Beresina was a Pole, and Napoleon never had better or more devoted troops than the river Elster sang in rear—awaiting the onset of the immense host that was moving to the attack.

On the fatal day of October 9, 1806, the battle opened, and nearly half a million of men engaged in the mortal combat. The scene of this moment was indescribably awful; the whole plain was black with the moving masses, save where the myriads of glittering helmets arose and fell in the sunlight, while 300 cannon, in one huge line, opened their united thunder on the French.

Clouds of dust filled the air—and amid the roar of artillery, the strains of martial music, the shrill ringing of horns, the deafening clamor and solemn murmurs of a mighty army, the shock came. Nearly two thousand cannon opened with terrific explosions on the living masses, and the frightful carnage began.

ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE.
Poniatowski, on the right, was first engaged. Made Marshal of France the day before, he had distinguished himself by his gallant conduct, and though at first forced back by the heavy charge, he firmly held his position against the united onsets of artillery, cavalry, and infantry, that from morning until night thundered in overwhelming numbers and power on his diminished troops.

A wider day, his earth never saw, and when darkness separated the combatants, both armies sank down exhausted; and silence, solemn and awful, fell over the bloody field.

Napoleon was beaten, and soon gave orders to retreat. All night long the weary thousands went pouring over the bridge, and when daylight dawned, the allies beheld with joy the retreating masses of the enemy. A general movement on Leipzig immediately followed, and the victorious columns went rushing with shouts to the attack.

All was uproar and confusion. Artillery, infantry, cavalry, ammunition and baggage wagons, and chariots, were crowded and rolled together, and went streaming over the only remaining bridge. A rear-guard under Macdonald, Lauriston and

spurred boldly into the Elster. His good steel bore him safely across, but as he was struggling up the opposite bank, the earth gave way under his feet, and he fell back on his rider, and Poniatowski disappeared in the water and never rose again. Weary, wounded and bleeding, this last calamity was too much for his strength and he had done as he said, "died with honor."

The allies celebrated his funeral with great magnificence, and those kings who had driven his family from the throne, buried his capital in ashes, plundered and divided his country, as if it were common booty, now gathered in solemn pomp around his coffin.

Countless banners drooped mournfully over the fallen chief—mighty armies formed

from a thousand trumpets were breathed over his grave. But amid all this imposing mockery the noble-hearted Pole was not without some sincere mourners. His few remaining followers who had battled by his side to the last, pressed in silence around the coffin, and with tears streaming down their faces, reached out their hands to touch the pall.

"There lay the Prince they had loved, the leader they had followed, the last of the royal line, and the only hope of Poland, old and stiff in death. Ah, the tears of those rough warriors were worth more than all the pomp and magnificence imperial pride had gathered around that hier, and honored the patriot for whom they were shed more than royal eulogies or splendid pageants."

"Poniatowski," said Napoleon, "was a noble character, full of honor and bravery,"—a short but comprehensive eulogium.

A skillful commander, a bold warrior, and true friend; wise in counsel, of pure patriotism and unstained honor, he was beloved by his friends and mourned by his enemies. He had redeemed all the follies of his weak relative Stanislaus, and proved that he was worthy to sit on the throne of Poland.

[To be continued.]

ZARISLAW PONIATOWSKI.

Poniatowski, was formed to cover this disastrous retreat. As Napoleon gave his directions to each, he said to Poniatowski: "Prince, you will defend the suburbs of the south."

"Sire," he replied, "I have but few lowered troops, but I will defend the suburbs of the south."

"What then," added Napoleon, "you will defend it with what you have?"

"Ah, sire," replied the exhausted, but still unconquered chieftain, "we are all ready to die for your Majesty."

Poniatowski struggled bravely to arrest the victorious allies, until he heard the premature explosion that sent the hedge into the air, and then he drew his sword, and cried to the others around him: "Gentlemen, it now behoves us to die with honor." With his little band around him, he dashed on a column of the enemy that crossed his path, and though severely wounded, fought his way through to the Pleisse, a small stream he must cross before he reached the Elster. Dismounting from his horse, he passed it on foot, but finding he was fainting through fatigue and loss of blood, he attempted to mount another horse.

With difficulty vaulting to the saddle, he

spurred boldly into the Elster. His good steel bore him safely across, but as he was struggling up the opposite bank, the earth gave way under his feet, and he fell back on his rider, and Poniatowski disappeared in the water and never rose again. Weary, wounded and bleeding, this last calamity was too much for his strength and he had done as he said, "died with honor."

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[To be continued.]

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