

ADDRESS OF MARSHALS

By J. T. HEADLEY.

Profusely illustrated by Reproductions of the Best French Pictures.

CHAPTER XIII. MARSHAL NEY.

HIS EARLY LIFE—TAKING OF MANHATTEN—HIS CHARACTER—BRIEF HISTORY AT JENA—AWFUL DEFEAT OF THE GRAND ARMY FROM RUSSIA—NEY COMMANDS THE REAR GUARD.

Michel Ney was born in 1759, in the town of Sarre Louis. He was the son of a cooper, and at the age of thirteen, became a member of the army...

As soon, however, as young Ney was released, he renewed the quarrel, and having met his father, he was so angry that he would not be disturbed, fought and wounded him in the hand, so that he was unable to practice his profession, and was consequently rendered penniless.

In 1781 Ney was promoted to his bravery and skill, and the next year, being then 21 years of age, was presented with a company. General Kleber having noticed his admirable qualities, he was appointed to the head of a corps composed of 500 partisans, who received no pay and lived on plunder.

It was their duty to reconnoitre the enemy's position, and cut off their convoys, which exposed them to many hairbreadth escapes, and fierce encounters.

Young Ney being resolved on promotion, brought to this purpose service all his mental and physical powers. His iron will seemed to compensate for the loss of sleep, food, and rest. Daunted by no danger, exhausted by no toil, captivated by no stratagem, he was the first to enter this bold band of warriors the title of "The Indefatigable."

Three years after he found occasion to distinguish himself in the engagements of Dierdorf, Altenkirchen, and Montabaur. With 100 cavalry he took 2,000 prisoners, and obtained the rank of captain.

He led two columns straight into the river, and forcing the opposite banks, though lined with cannon, made himself master of the bridge.

For these exploits he was appointed General of Brigade. At the battle of Neuwied he led command of the cavalry, and in a furious charge, he was surrounded by the Austrian lines, but being surrounded by a superior force he was compelled to retreat.

The enemy, however, closed on him with such numbers and impetuosity, that his ranks were broken through, and he and his sword overthrown together. While he lay extended under his horse six men were made at him, against whom he defended himself with his usual daring, and finally springing to his feet, he laid about him till he snatched in two, leaving but the stump in his hand. With this he continued to keep his astonished antagonists at bay, till he was rescued by his comrades.

EXAMPLE OF HEROISM. Taken to headquarters, he was one day strolling through the camp, when he saw several officers standing around his good horse, admiring his beauty, strength, and high spirit, yet utterly unable to mount him. The moment one undertook to mount his back, he reared and plunged so wildly, that the rider was nearly thrown, and glad to find himself safe on the ground again.

Ney stepped up, and remarking that they did not know how to mount his horse, politely asked permission to mount him. It being given, he vaulted to the saddle, when the noble animal, conscious of being his master, stepped proudly away.

After making one or two circular sweeps, dashed off in a straight line, and stretched across the plain a gallop that outstripped the wind. As he continued to flee in that headlong speed they began to fear he would be overtaken, and immediately entered in pursuit, when Ney wheeled and with a smile rode back to his captors.

Having been liberated by exchange, he was raised to the rank of General of Division. For awhile, after the peace of Leoben, he remained in Paris, but the commencement of the revolution drove him again in the field of battle, struggling with the allied forces on the banks of the Rhine. Here occurred one of those adventures which are the glory of a soldier's life, and more romantic than the practical history of our times.

The Rhine flowed between him and the City of Mainz, which was strongly garrisoned and filled with stores of every kind. It was a matter of much discussion how this key of Germany should be captured, and the generals of the army met to consult on a plan of attack, and the proper mode of attacking it.

Ney, in the meantime, thinking it could be better taken by surprise, resolved to visit it in disguise and ascertain its weak points; so, one evening, assuming the garb of a peasant, he rode to the city, and, after satisfying himself as to the best plan of attack, returned. Selecting a hundred and fifty brave men, he crossed the river one night in the evening, and he never felt a furious assault on the outposts. It made a portion of the garrison having made a rally, he repulsed them, and following after the fugitives, entered the town with them, and after a short but desperate engagement captured it. This fixed his rising fame; while at Worms, and Frankenthal, and Frankfurt, and Stuttgart, and Zurich, he maintained the character he had gained.

His marriage. In 1802 he returned to Paris, as Inspector General of Cavalry, and there met and married Mademoiselle Arque, an intimate friend of Hortense Beauharnois. Bonaparte presented him at the nuptials with a magnificent Egyptian sword, which eventually cost the bold Marshal his life.

In 1803, he was sent as Minister Plenipotentiary into the Netherlands, where he exhibited those higher qualities of mind and kindness so uniformly, that the Swiss Cantons presented him with a medal on his departure.

The next year Bonaparte made him a Marshal. The year following this, he was created Duke of Elchingen, in honor of the battle he there fought, and he was exposed himself so recklessly, that Jomini says of him, "he seemed to court death."

Dressed in full uniform, he marched at the head of his divisions along streets completely swept by grapeshot; and though constantly surrounded by fire and enveloped in the blaze of batteries, he unaccountably escaped death.

In the campaigns of 1806-7, he reached the height of his fame and power, and ever EDITORIAL NOTE.—The next installment will describe the battle of Waterloo, where this Marshal led the Old Guard, and closes with a graphic account of his heart-rending trial and cruel execution. This fascinating serial will run during the greater part of the year. It tells of all the famous Marshals, as well as of that of Napoleon himself, are yet to appear.

after Bonaparte regarded him as one of the strongest characters of his generation in 1806 he joined the Army in Spain, where he remained till called to take part in the expedition to Russia.

On his return to this, he fought at Buzen, Dresden, and Leipzig, and on the soil of France, in almost every great battle, with his accustomed bravery, noble struggles, and the most heroic conduct.

The three distinguished characteristics of Ney were great personal bravery, an unequalled coolness in the hour of peril, and an excellent judgment. In the first two, all writers are agreed, and the last is not generally conceded to him. No man can deny he was brave, for there can be no appeal from the decision of an army of heroes, who counted him as the bravest of the brave.

Such a distinction among the men and in the times he lived, was not won by ordinary actions. In an army where valor, as that of Bonaparte, Murat, and Lannes, commanded, to be crowned "Bravest of the Brave" was the highest honor a military chief could desire.

Napoleon, when at St. Helena, said, "Ney was the bravest man I ever saw." But his coolness was not the rashness of headlong excitement. Like that of Jomini and Murat, the enthusiasm born in the hour of battle amid the tossing of plumes, the tramping of the hoofs, the shout of trumpets, and the roar of cannon, he always remained sufficient to turn men into a scene of horror or of peril. Jomini could coolly sit and write to Bonaparte's dictation while the shot whistled around him, and laughingly shake the paper as a cannon ball plowing past him threw the dirt over it, with the exclamation, "This is but a little shower of sand."

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NEY'S COURAGE. There was a reason for this. There is a heroism called forth by sudden emergencies, and such as the commonest soldier often exhibits in the heat of battle. Ney's courage was something more and greater; it dared just as much without the least apparent excitement. His thoughts were just as clear, and his eye as quiet amid the falling ranks, as if he were standing on some far observatory and looking over the scene of slaughter.

He would sit almost within the blaze of 200 cannon, and while his horse was sinking under his work, and whole companies melting like frost-work before his eyes, give orders as calmly as though maneuvering at a grand review.

It was his wonderful, almost marble calmness in the most sudden and extreme danger, that struck even heroes with astonishment.

He would stand within musket-shot of a most terrible and hotly-worked battery, and while the storm of bullets swept where he stood, eye all its operations, and scan its assailable points with imperturbable quietness. The fierce shock of cavalry, and the steady charge of English bayonets, could not for one moment divert his gaze, or disturb the clear and natural operations of his mind.

The alarming cry through his own ranks, "Sauve qui peut," or the full belief that all was lost, could not shake his steadiness. One would have thought him an iron man, and strong with no ordinary nerves, had they not seen him in a desperate charge. Then his eye glanced like an eagle's, and with his form towering amid the smoke of battle and flash of sabers, he seemed an embodied hurricane, sweeping over the field.

Such of this doubtless was constitutional, and much was owing to his wonderful power of mental concentration. He could literally shut up his mind to the one object he had in view. The overthrow of the enemy absorbed every thought within him, and he had none to give to danger or to death.

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Where he placed his mind he held it, and not all the uproar and confusion of battle could shake it. He would not allow himself to see anything else, and hence he was almost as insensible to the danger around him as a deaf and dumb and blind man would be. He himself once expressed the true secret of his calmness, when, after one of these exhibitions of composure, amid the most horrid carnage, one of his officers asked him if he never felt fear, he replied, "I never had time."

This was another way of saying that fear and danger had nothing to do with the object before him, and therefore he would not suffer his thoughts to rest on them for a single moment. It would not require much "time," one would think, to see the danger of marching straight into the flash of a hundred cannon, or to feel a thrill of terror, as the last discharge fell almost alone, amid his dead and dying guard.

POWER OF CONCENTRATION. But he had trained his mind not to see these things for the time being; it was devotion and concentration of all his powers to a single object, gave him great advantage in moments of peril, and when the fate of a battle was turning on a single thought. Where other men would become confused in the confusion around them, he remained clear as ever, and was able frequently to reconquer everything, when everything seemed lost.

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