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REMINISCENCES OF PETER STUART NEY,
THE GREAT MARSHAL OF FRANCE.

The most important epoch in my school life occurred in the years 1837 and 1838, when I was a pupil of Peter S. Ney, and as I can show beyond the shadow of a doubt, was Napoleon's great Marshal. It was when he was teaching in Iredell County on Hunting Creek, and when I was one ten or twelve years of age. This school was patronized by the Youngs, Houstons, Allisons, Carltons, Gaithers, and many of the most prominent men of the country, many of whose sons afterwards filled the highest positions in social, political and religious life. In the year 1816, Ney first appeared in South Carolina and drifted into North Carolina, where he followed teaching. The pupils and parents without exception firmly believed that he was the celebrated Marshal Ney, Napoleon's "Bravest of the Brave", who according to all history was condemned to death for High Treason, and was shot on the 7th day of December, 1815, in the Garden of Luxemburg. He died in Rowan County and was buried at Third Creek Church, and over his grave is a marble slab bearing the following inscription:†

"IN MEMORY OF PETER STUART NEY, ONE OF NAPOLEON BONAPARTE'S MARSHALS AND A SOLDIER IN THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, WHO DIED November 15th, 1846, AGE 77 YEARS".

The first day I entered school I was forcibly struck with the teacher at his desk. He turned in his seat and called me to him and in his broken French brogue asked me my name. Somewhat awed at his stern and commanding appearance, I told him my name was Henry James Foote. Placing his arm around me as I stood at his desk, he replied: "That is not right! Your name is James Henry Foote". (Reversing the order) And then without a moment's hesitation with the other hand, dashed off the following acrostic:-

"Jehovah made thee what thou art
A youth of warm and feeling heart;
Make then thy genius and thy time
Employ themselves in things sublime.
Sweet are the musings of the just
Heaven always holds their lives in trust.
Forward then! and with a pen of flame
On fame's proud temple inscribe thy name;
Over land and sea thy name be heard.
To win the prize, O, be not afraid
Eternal blessings crown thy head".

It was under his tuition and influence I received an inspiration to obtain an education. In his discipline he was strict and required obedience to all orders as a military chieftian, but I never knew a teacher more idolized by his pupils. He had a military carriage and a form denoting great strength and courage. His features were strongly marked, his eye was that of an eagle and looked into the depths of your soul. He always dressed well, and was remarkable for his charity to the poor. He was nearly bald, and the

hair remaining on his head was of a reddish hue. On his forehead was a large scar which was evidently caused by a sword-cut about four inches long, on his body were other wounds. He has a musket ball in one of his legs. He was a master of fencing. While he was teaching in Mocksville, a ~~Master~~ French Fencing Master appeared and wished to form a class. The boys told the man if he would have a bout with their teacher, and beat him, they would make him up a class. He asked Mr. Ney to his room in the hotel and opened his trunk full of swords, and told Ney to choose his weapon. As soon as his eye fell on a short broad-sword, he seized it at once, and bade him come on the playgrounds. Now it is said this was the favorite kind of sword used by the famous Marshal of France. After a few passes, Ney with wonderful skill cut the mans fine beaver hat in twain, whereupon the latter threw down his sword and said: "Gentlemen, you have a Master, and don't need me". General James Cook, who was a pupil at that time, related this incident to me. History states that Marshal Ney was a famous swordsman, and in 1791 vanquished the fencing Master of a French regiment, Ney being there with the Fourth Hussars, and chosen to vindicate its honor. Here is a striking coincidence of these two being one and the same man. And, as to the ~~xxxxx~~ age, the Great Marshal was born in 1769 and would have been 77 years old in 1846, which, as I have shown was precisely P. S. Ney's age when he died in North Carolina. As to the place of birth, the Marshal was born in Savrimerie in Lorraine, and P. S. Ney claimed this to be the place of his birth, and often wrote his name Peter Stuart Michel Ney. The Marshal's wife was a favorite of the Empress Josephine. Mr. Ney often spoke of his wife to Mrs. Dalton of Fredell, and of her close friendship with Josephine. As to personal appearance Marshal Ney was of powerful physique. His hair was red, so red that he was called by his soldiers "Peter the Red", or the "Red Lion". And P. S. Ney had red hair and a powerful frame. As to wounds they were precisely the same. Marshal Ney at the Battle of Mayence, 1795, was severely wounded in the head by a sabre cut. At the Battle of the Thien, he was wounded thrice, one bullet entering the calf of his leg. P. S. Ney, as we have shown, had a bullet in his leg and a sabre cut on his head.

HOW DEATH COULD BE ESCAPED.

He told Mrs. Dalton in confidence that he was The Marshal. He said the soldiers detailed to shoot him were his old comrades in arms, and that while on his way to the Garden of Luxemburg, the place of his execution, they whispered and told him to fall quickly at the command "Fire", and leave the rest to them. He did as they said and the ten balls passed over his head and lodged in the wall behind him. The officers on their horses galloped off as soon as Ney fell, and the attendant physicians, who ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ pronounced him dead were his old friends. He was placed in a coffin by his friends and shipped from Bordeaux to America, while the empty casket was buried in Piere La Chaise. This you see was in 1815 in December, and early in 1815 we have shown that our Ney was seen in Charlestown, the great shipping point at that time. Marshal Monecy refused to sit in the Council to try Ney for treason, for which he suffered three months in prison. He said, "Should I consign to death the man to whom so many Frenchmen are indebted for life?" There were but few present to witness the execution, it being early in the morning, and all of those present were his old guard whom he had so often led to victory.

The late Rev. R. W. Barber, knew Ney personally, and was confident that he was the Great Marshal of France, and his brother, Col. Wm. Barber, who was slain in battle in the late war, was a pupil of Ney and always affirmed positively his belief in the two being one and the same. So did the Rev. Dr. Rockwell, and

many others, prominent in church and state, and I have never known a case more plainly proven. An expert Frenchman in New York examined the handwriting of Ney, and compared it with that of the Marshal and said they were the same. One reason, it is said, why he avoided all public resorts and lived in seclusion, was the fear of assassination for himself and friends in France, who aided in his escape. He had a large sum of money to his credit in the old National United States Bank, but never carried large sums about his person, and charged only \$200.00 a year for his teaching, which he spent on charitable objects, giving freely to a poor man of woman, boy or girl whom he might meet. He often wrote words of advice and lines of poetry in the school books of his pupils. He wrote this remarkable poem in the autograph album of one of his pupils, a school girl, dated May 26th, 1836.

"Though I of the chosen, the choicest,
To fame gave her loftiest tone:
Though I 'mong the brave, the bravest,
My pleasure and my baton are gone:
My eagle that mounted to conquest
Has stooped from his altitude high
A prey to the vulture, the foulest,
No more to visit the sky.
One sigh for the hopes that have perished,
One tear for the wreck of the past,
One look upon all I have cherished,
One lingering look, 'tis the last.
And now from remembrance, I banish,
The glories that shower in my brain
O, vanish, fond memories, vanish!
Return not to sting me again."

The late Lucius Butler, of Iredell County, was a favorite pupil of Ney, and he told him that when he heard of his death, to come at once and take charge of his old trunk, for in it he would find information that would astonish the world. But a stranger came and got the trunk soon after his death, and before Mr. Butler could get it; and was never heard of again.

While Mr. Ney was teaching and boarding with Capt. Houston on Hunting Creek in Iredell County, a young man and stranger came, and was seen in company with Mr. Ney in private and secret conversation, and took his meals at the table without an introduction, and one night they were seen together at a straw stack all night, and so reported by the negroes next morning, and after the stranger was gone, upon inquiry by Capt. Houston, Mr. Ney said the young man was his son, and he gave him money to go to Philadelphia to study medicine. And now to clap the climax to this story, I saw a notice in a newspaper a short time ago of a Birth Day celebration in the State of Indiana, and wrote and received reply as follows:-

"Saltillo, Ind.
March 18, 1908.

My dear Mr. Foote:-

Your letter of March 14th inst, was received with great pleasure. On the 29th of February last, I passed my one hundred mile post, and the people for more than fifty miles gave me quite a reception, more than 1,000 being present, and had I known that you were still alive, I surely would have given you an extended invitation. Your statement in Mr. Weston's book is correct. Peter Stuart Ney was my father and the identical same Ney who fought under Napoleon. It was Me who met my father in North Carolina, and your statement is correct. We were at a straw stack all night, as you say, in fact, I was in touch with him for a day

of two. He gave me money and I attended Medical College in Philadelphia, and for a number of years have practiced medicine in Southern Indiana, 'till I was 85 years of age. As you know, my father had reason why he concealed his identity, and I likewise. I am very glad indeed to hear from you and to know that there is one of his pupils still alive, who can vouch for a part of this great mystery. I have a manuscript that will be published after my death, which will yet reveal many things yet untold. I would afford me much pleasure. It would afford me much pleasure to meet and converse with you, and if I should live to see another Birthday, nothing would afford me more pleasure than to have you with us.

Thanking you for writing and you must write again. I beg to be your esteemed friend and son of your old school teacher, who was the great Marshal of France,

(Signed) E. M. C. Heyman.

The foregoing is taken from a letter in answer to one written by me, as before stated, and adds to the proof of the assertion that the old Tar Heel School Teacher was the Great Marshal of France.

But last and not least is the fact of his last words on earth. While on his death bed in Rowan County, Dr. Matthew Locke, one of his old pupils, was his physician attending him in his last hours. Dr. Locke said to him: "Mr. Ney, you have but a short time to live, and it is my duty to tell you". He interrupted him saying: "I know that better, I'm not afraid to die. I believe in the Christian Religion". Dr. Locke answered: "I am glad to hear you say that, but it was for this I wished to tell you. You know you have lived among us a long time in great mystery, and as you are about to leave us forever, will you please tell us who you really are?" Dr. Locke said to me that Ney said raised his head and looked him quickly in the face with that eagle eye, and, after a little hesitation, feebly but emphatically uttered these words: "I am Marshal Ney of France". Dr. Locke told me that these were about his last words.

Now take his character for truth and honor as he had always lived among us, for no man was ever more scrupulous for truth and honesty during his life. Could it be possible he would go into his grave with a falsehood on his lips?

The Rev. F. A. Weston's Book: "Historical Doubts" will relieve any one skeptical on the question discussed at length in this story.

Roaring River, N. C.
August 14th, 1908.

"James H. Foote".
Born Nov. 5th, 1825.

By request of my friend
Judge Allen.