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# Masterful Men

by Eugene V. Debs

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Men confide in leaders. The bold man, the man of action, the man who grasps situations and masters them, he is the man whom his fellows love to honor; he is the man who becomes the standard-bearer in any great moral or political movement; he is the man who brings succor in the hour of danger, and upon him all hearts rely. Few men in moments of personal danger, or in days of national turmoil, act intelligently if left to their own resources. Some leader always springs to the front and assumes a command questioned by none. Such men are self-poised, heroic, calm. The swirl and clash of contending intellects, the mighty shock of arms, the hour fraught with fear and destruction, have no power to disturb the masterful balance of mind possessed by these leaders of men.

Alexander crossing the river of Granicus in the face of the mighty hosts of Porus, is an example. The calm, self-assured, indomitable Greek intellect mastered a million foes simply by the power of leadership. Every Greek soldier became an unconquerable hero when fighting under the influence of the master mind.

Caesar at Pharsalia became the master of Rome, not because his army was stronger than Pompey's, for it was much less, not because he was a better general, but because his was the master intellect. Under his leadership his legions became as one man with but a single purpose. Fearlessly, blindly, they moved upon Pompey's ranks and won. From the beginning the result was inevitable, the leader of men was there.

There is something grand about the heroism of great warriors, who on the battlefield, amid smoke and carnage, remain the same stern, relentless, unstampedable leaders. Marshal McDonald, at the battle of Austerlitz, when commanded to storm a certain point, massed his forces and carried out his great emperor's command. The terrible fire of the enemy for hours mowed down rank after rank of his soldiery, but McDonald sat upon his horse, cold, impassionate, pale, but as relentless as death; the only command he gave during those terrible hours of blood was, "close on the center, forward." Even Napoleon turned away with a shudder, saying: "My God, what slaughter." McDonald carried out his commands. Such leaders never fail.

These are examples of great leaders, men whose names are upon the lips of all; there are others who deserve no less of the world's honor. Men who risked life in the service of others. Men who saw the needs of the moment and grasped the golden opportunity. The engineman who stands by his engine in the hour of danger, going down with her in order that the lives entrusted to his care may be saved, is no less a hero, is no less a masterful man, than is the hero who dies for his country. To stand grandly at the post of duty, knowing the danger but flinching not, calm, alert, and active to avert destruction, is a picture of heroism as great, if not as tragic, as McDonald at Austerlitz.

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

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