



DIARY OF A NAPOLEONIC FOOTSOLDIER

Jakob Walter

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A grunt's-eye report from the battlefield in the spirit of *The Red Badge of Courage* and *All Quiet on the Western Front*—the only known account by a common soldier of the campaigns of Napoleon's Grand Army between 1806 and 1813.

When eighteen-year-old German stonemason Jakob Walter was conscripted into the Grand Army of Napoleon, he had no idea of the trials that lay ahead. The long, grueling marches in Prussia and Poland sacrificed countless men to Bonaparte's grand designs. And the disastrous Russian campaign tested human endurance on an epic scale. Demoralized by defeat in a war few supported or understood, deprived of ammunition and leadership, driven past reason by starvation and bitter cold, men often turned on one another, killing fellow soldiers for bread or an able horse.

Though there are numerous surviving accounts of the Napoleonic Wars written by officers, Walter's is the only known memoir by a draftee, and as such is a unique and fascinating document—a compelling chronicle of a young soldier's loss of innocence as well as an eloquent and moving portrait of the profound effects of war on the men who fight it.

Professor Marc Raeff has added an Introduction to the memoirs as well as six letters home from the Russian front, previously unpublished in English, from German conscripts who served concurrently with Walter. The volume is illustrated with engravings and maps, contemporary with the manuscript, from the Russian/Soviet and East European collections of the New York Public Library.

Honest, heartfelt, deeply personal yet objective, *The Diary of a Napoleonic Foot Soldier* is more than an informative and absorbing historical document—it is a timeless and unforgettable account of the horrors of war.

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