

## The Napoleon Series

### The Campaign of 1814: Chapter 18, Part X

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# THE CAMPAIGN OF 1814

(after the documents of the imperial and royal archives of Vienna)

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## THE ALLIED CAVALRY

DURING THE CAMPAIGN OF 1814

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### CHAPTER XVIII.

OPERATIONS OF THE ALLIED ARMIES FROM 25 MARCH 1814 IN THE MORNING  
UNTIL THE END OF THE CAMPAIGN.

FÈRE-CHAMPINOISE. -- SAINT-DIZIER. --PARIS.

**Entry into the line of the left wing of the Allies under the command of the Crown Prince of Württemberg. -- Fight and capture of Saint-Maur and Charenton.** --The Crown Prince of Württemberg, whose infantry had only finished crossing the Marne about 3 o'clock in the morning, while his cavalry was from the evening of the 29<sup>th</sup> in Chelles, had received from the disposition of the Generalissimo the prescription for his infantry to break camp at 5 o'clock in the morning and move by Chelles on Neuilly-sur-Marne. The cavalry brigade of the IV<sup>th</sup> Corps had orders to push on Montreuil Nogent-sur-Marne, Fontenay and Bois de Vincennes, to reconnoiter and search these points and to connect with the left of the VI<sup>th</sup> Corps. At 10 o'clock in the morning the Crown Prince of Württemberg arrived at Neuilly-sur-Marne with the cavalry under the command of Prince Adam, chased after a short skirmish the French posts from Fontenay-sous-Bois and Nogent-sur-Marne, and obliged them to fall back: the one on the Bois de Vincennes, the other on Saint-Maur where the defense had established a battery with 8 pieces charged to cover the edge of the forest and the bridge.

At one o'clock in the afternoon, the infantry of the IV<sup>th</sup> Corps came into the line on the plateau between Fontenay and Nogent. The Crown Prince of Württemberg,<sup>1</sup> leaving a battalion at Nogent, formed his infantry into two

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<sup>1</sup>If we are to believe the memoirs of Lieutenant General von Bismarck, then a colonel and chief of staff of Prince Adam of Württemberg, the sovereigns and the Generalissimo, informed of the futility of the overtures of Nesselrode and the Colonel Orlov and made more cautious by the imminent lack of ammunition, have held a sort of council of war between noon and 1 o'clock. It was decided to renew the attack once again along the whole line, to give the Russian guards the center and, if unsuccessful, to retire on the road of Compiègne, when night came. Also according to Bismarck, the Austrian Colonel von Varnbühler, responsible for forwarding these resolutions to the

columns. The one, that of the left (brigade of Prince Hohenlohe first in line; the brigades of Misani and Lalance second in line), would take an immediate left from the road to Lagny moving against the Bois de Vincennes, making a breach in boundary wall and throw into the wood one of its battalions that was to fall back on the bridge of Saint-Maur, while the rest of the head of brigade would continue its movement along the edge of the woods and alongside the Marne. The right column, formed by the Stockmeyer Brigade supported by four battalions of Austrian grenadiers, was to follow the same road of Lagny up to the edge east of the Bois de Vincennes, penetrate through the principal entrance and take from behind the bridge of Saint-Maur while the Hohenlohe Brigade executed the frontal attack and distract the defenders. The Stockmeyer Brigade entered without much difficulty into the wood and detached a battalion on to the château of Vincennes. The Hohenlohe Brigade already was skirmishing with the 400 conscripts in charge of defending Saint-Maur and serving as support for the 8 pieces, when Stockmeyer, debouching from the wood, threw his head regiment on Saint-Maur. In less than half an hour, Stockmeyer had managed to dislodge the French and to seize 6 cannons.<sup>2</sup>

Master of Saint-Maur, the Crown Prince of Württemberg directed against Charenton, by passing through the Bois de Vincennes, the brigade of Hohenlohe and General Trenck with four battalions of Austrian grenadiers and the regiment of Archduke Ferdinand Hussars, while that a battalion ostensibly marched by the same banks of the Marne. General von Stockmeyer, having entrusted the guarding of Saint-Maur to one of his battalions was moving at the same time on the Château de Vincennes whose commander refused to surrender and where the brigade of Lalance, held previously in second line, was to help complete the investment.

At Charenton, as in Saint-Maur, it was thought sufficient to ensure the defense by building on the left bank of the Marne a small redoubt armed with eight artillery pieces at the entrance of the stone bridge. The guard of this post was given to a company of veterans, a makeshift battalion formed by students of the veterinary school of Alfort, and a few gunners, reinforced at the last moment by the handful of men who had managed to escape from Saint-Maur. With the approach of the Hohenlohe column, the French had brought on the right bank of the Marne five pieces and thus tried to stop the march of the Württembergers. These pieces were barely able to open fire when they were already silenced and the overflowing and converging movement of the Austro-Württembergers, who sought to take the town from behind by the road from Bercy, forced the French to bring them back the redoubt. The Prince Hohenlohe at the head of two battalions entered after them in the village, but did not manage to expel them completely.<sup>3</sup> "I had to finally overcome this resistance," said the Crown Prince of Württemberg, "by having Hohenlohe support the brigade with two battalions of Austrian grenadiers by which we finally seized the bridge, eight cannons and a hundred men." The French had vainly tried to blow up the bridge of the Marne, and the light troops of the Crown Prince of Württemberg could consequently push on the right bank of the Seine, up to the level of Port-à-l'Anglais, hoping to use the ferry which they had fortunately taken care to destroy.

The remains of the small garrison of Charenton, after crossing the river at Alfort, then reached the road from Choisy and met there in the evening with the retreating troops on Fontainebleau.<sup>4</sup>

**March of the III<sup>d</sup> Corps.** --Although he, too, had crossed all his artillery on the right bank of the Marne, on the night of the 29<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>, and he had started his infantry from 4 o'clock in the morning, Gyulay had employed nearly

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Crown Prince of Württemberg, joined him in the Bois de Vincennes, when he sought to ensure the passage of the Marne. Questioned by the Crown Prince on the general situation, Varnbühler could not hide from him the anxieties and fears of the headquarters, and have even added that they no longer believed in the capture of Paris.

<sup>2</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1), and Crown Prince of Württemberg, Paris, 13 April 1814, Relating on the Battle of Paris (*Ibid.*, IV, 115) ,

<sup>3</sup>Crown Prince of Württemberg Prince, Paris, 13 April 1814, Relating of the Battle of Paris. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, IV, 115.)

<sup>4</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1). Lacking teams to remove the pieces taken in Saint-Maur and Charenton, the troops of the IV<sup>th</sup> Corps were ordered to spike them.

twelve hours to bring his III<sup>rd</sup> Corps on the Fontenay-Montreuil line. At 4 o'clock the Feldzeugmeister, who had just informed the Crown Prince of his arrival, received from the commander of the IV<sup>th</sup> Corps, the order to attack by the right wing of his corps La Pissotte and Vincennes and extend his wing left to connect with the IV<sup>th</sup> Corps. The III<sup>rd</sup> Corps was, as soon as the French would have evacuated the Bois de Vincennes, be directed towards the gates of Paris.

The light division of Count Crenneville had little difficulty in taking La Pissotte and the village of Vincennes and throwing out some small French posts in the turret. The rest of the III<sup>rd</sup> Corps took no part in the battle of Paris and confined itself to complete on the north side, the investment of the castle keep.

While the brigade of Hohenlohe and the Austrian grenadiers attacked Charenton, the Crown Prince had detached on their right, in the direction of Bercy and La Grande-Pinte, some light cavalry squadrons which came on this side up against some National Guard posts, occupied the Château of Bercy and took position between Saint-Mandé and Bercy, without seeking to get closer to the barrier. Moments later, around 5 o'clock in the afternoon, when he was about to seriously tackle the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, the Crown Prince of Würtemberg was ordered to cease hostilities, entrusted the III<sup>rd</sup> Corps to the line of outposts from the side of the barrier of Trône, and confined himself to occupy Saint-Mandé with some troops of the IV<sup>th</sup> Corps.<sup>5</sup>

**The Allies resume the offensive in the center and take Malassise, Bagnolet, Charonne and the park of Bruyères.** --Barclay de Tolly had only awaited the entry into the line of the left wing, to start the attack with more precision and more effectiveness. To his left, Rayevsky and Gorchakov were moved with the division of General Mezentsev, covered on their outer side by the cavalry of Pahlen, against Arrighi, who still occupied Malassise, Bagnolet, and Charonne. The same configuration of the Malassise position that, if it had been stubborn on this point would have compromised the retirement of his feeble division, forced the Duke of Padoue to evacuate almost without a fight and leave only part of his people in the villages of Bagnolet and of Charonne, against which the Russian artillery was responsible for preparing the attack, opened fire immediately. But in the meantime Marshal Marmont, strongly pressed on the plateau at the level of the park of Bruyères and knowing of the threat on his right, had to give Arrighi the order to fall back on the park of Saint-Fargeau and bring in back the cavalry of Bordesoulle and Chastel which, crossing through the grounds of Charonne, would come and settle on the height between Aunay and Ménilmontant. The skirmishers of Mezentsev, taking advantage of the retreat of the Duke of Padoue, debouched immediately from Charonne and tried, forcing the barrier of Fontarabie, to turn the Mont-Louis (Père-Lachaise). Arrested by the fire from the battery established on the hill of Fontarabie and the fire of the National Guard who served as his support, the Russian skirmishers were forced to return to Charonne. Gorchakov, momentarily renouncing new attempts merely massed his troops at Charonne and at Bagnolet.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time the Russian columns of the left threatened the right flank of the positions of Marmont, their right and their center, formed in three columns, had resumed the offensive on the plateau. The center column, led by Prince Eugene of Würtemberg, who set himself at the head of the division of Pyshnitsky, veered slightly left and marched against the park of Bruyères. It was flanked on the right by the grenadiers of Choglokov, on the left by General Stahl with cuirassiers Astrakhan and Pskov.

Despite the disproportion of forces General Chabert tried to hold on. He sheltered his tirailleurs in houses, behind the folds in the terrain, hedges, walls, but it was not, however, long before he was forced to bend under the numbers. Marmont only had on hand the Ricard Division held in reserve and massed in battalion behind park of Bruyères. All his other troops were either deployed as skirmishers, or otherwise engaged. The backward movement of the brigade of Chabert was increasing. Started in good order, it was about to degenerate into disarray and threatened to undermine the entire line that the Russians sought to puncture at the center. There was no more time to lose if one wanted to prevent a disaster and give the troops time to rally.

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<sup>5</sup>Crown Prince of Würtemberg, Paris, 13 April 1814, Relating of the Battle of Paris (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, IV, 115), and STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März (*Ibid.*, III, 1) .

<sup>6</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1), and Journal of Operations of Barclay de Tolly (*Topographical Archives*, n° 39188).

A renewed attack could only temporarily restore the situation. The Marshal, putting himself at the head of the brigade of Clavel whose total number amounted to only 600 men, quickly formed in column of attack and moved to meet the regiments of Pyshnitsky. But this handful of men had hardly debouched from the park of Bruyères when a Russian battery established on a mound in the wood of Romainville, ripped it with grape shot and threw its ranks into disorder. The Russian 20<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Eiger fell on the brigade while the cuirassiers of Stahl charged in on its right flank and crushed it. The fugitives brought their rout to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade of their division and left in the hands of the Russians, General Clavel who tried in vain to move forward. Marmont was himself about to suffer the same fate and owed his salvation to the courage and dedication of the bravest soldier and the bravest man he had, he said, ever known, Colonel Genheser.<sup>7</sup> This officer, debouching from the Bruyères Park, rushed on the rear of the Russian battalions at the head of a handful of soldiers hastily assembled, stopping for a moment their progress,<sup>8</sup> but could not attain the recapture of the park of Bruyères. The intervention of Colonel Genheser and presence of mind of General Compans who hastened to occupy with a battalion of Young Guard the mound of the Télégraphe, had at least allowed the Marshal to take up with his troops one last position and ensure for a while the defense of Belleville. There only remained at this moment to the Marshal barely 5,000 men, with whom he had to deal as quickly as possible and his best position was too wide for his meager effectives and also too considerable for the troops of questionable strength; tired and demoralized both by the efforts and hardships of previous days and by the bitter struggle they sustained since morning.

The Duke of Padoue, who was recalled from Charonne and from Bagnolet, settled in the park of Saint-Fargeau. To his left, the divisions of Ricard, Lagrange, Compans and Ledru, reformed in a hurry, were deployed from the mound of the Télégraphe until towards the mound of Beauregard and connected on this side to the right of the Boyer de Rébeval Division, which still occupied Prés-Saint-Gervais. To the left of Boyer de Rébeval the troops of Michel (Secrétant Brigade) guarded the valley in the space between Les Maisonnettes and the canal of Ourcq. The lack of time alone prevented the Marshal from recalling for his extreme right the cavalry of Bordesoulle and Chastel immobilized under fire from Allied batteries between Ménilmontant and Mont-Louis, and which could have been of real service of defense to the left wing.

Master of the park of Bruyères, Barclay de Tolly was preparing on his side to bring to Marmont a decisive blow by taking away his new position by a general attack, and to throw him back on to the city.

**Taking the battery of Prés-Saint-Gervais by the Prussians.** --The Prussian Guard had not remained completely inactive during the attack that the Russians had to execute on the plateau in the center of the battle line.

Despite the considerable losses that his brigade had had to endure from its entry into the line, Colonel von Alvensleben had recognized that it was impossible to settle for the few advantages he had won. If he had managed to force the French to withdraw to Les Maisonnettes, they would never the less continue to be masters of the canal bridge near La Villette and it was from this village that they needed to be flushed out. On the other hand, his artillery had difficulty in maintaining under the murderous fire directed against it by the French batteries on the hillocks of Beauregard and Chaumont which enfiladed the left of its position. On this side, the situation could, from one moment to another, become extremely serious. It would have sufficed, in fact, from the arrival of some reinforcements to the Prés-Saint-Gervais, for the French to return to the offensive, to wrest from the Prussian Guard and debris of the 14<sup>th</sup> Division the ground that they had been so troubled to conquer, to force them to back down and perhaps even abandon Pantin.

Colonel von Alvensleben, ignoring the dispositions taken by Barclay de Tolly and by Yorck and the placement of troops for support and for relief, began with entrusting the protection of his left to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment of the Guard, the Jäger of the Guard and debris of fusiliers of the Guard that he established on the eastern

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<sup>7</sup>MARMONT, *Memoirs*, VI, 244; STÄRKE, *Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März* (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1.); *Journal of Operations of Barclay de Tolly* (*Topographical Archives*, n° 29188); *Journal of Operations of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps* (*Ibid.*, n° 47344).

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

edge of the Les Maisonnettes. The five other battalions served him to form three columns; one, the right one (Lieutenant Colonel von Müffling with two battalions), was along the canal and was to take the bridge of La Villette; the other two had orders to advance on both sides of the road of Pantin, against the barrier of Pantin.

The right column failed to seize the bridge; after several unsuccessful attacks, one had to push from behind the battalion of the Baden Guard which had more ammunition and throw in the neighboring houses the battalion of the Prussian Guards too feeble to force the passage alone. The columns of the center and left had been best off; they had managed to establish in Les Maisonnettes, in debouching and heading their movements to the barrier of Pantin.

But on the extreme left of the positions occupied by the Prussian Guard, Captain von Nayhauss had managed to climb with a jäger company of the guard the northern slopes of the plateau of Prés-Saint-Gervais and seize halfway four pieces of the battery whose fire had done so much harm to the Prussians. Arrested on this point by the French infantry which were protected by the positional pieces in battery on the same height, the Prussian jäger resumed their movement until they have been joined by the Russian Guard of General Yermolov.

**Dispositions for the general attack on the center.** --Despite this bold stroke, it was nevertheless absolutely necessary to support faster the brigade of Colonel von Alvensleben which, reduced to a third of its effectives and lacking ammunition, had been reinforced by two battalions from the advanced guard of Katzler established Rouvroy; it was especially important to putting them in a position to take advantage of some benefits it had so dearly bought. The decisive moment had arrived and, to perform with a greater chance of success the general attack against the last position of Marmont, it was to at least coincide with the offensive movement directed from Pantin and from Rouvroy against the barriers of Pantin and of Combat. For this movement, which Alvensleben and Helfreich could only undertake with the support of fresh troops of Prince William of Prussia, that Yorck sent, about 3:30, bringing into the line and pushing forward on both sides the canal of Ourcq. Determined to take from behind Les Prés-Saint-Gervais while Prince Eugene of Württemberg would address this position from the front, Barclay de Tolly only would and only could try anything before the Prussians had completely driven the French from the edge of Pantin, they had ripped away from them the bridges of the Ourcq canal and were able to throw them back on the barrier Pantin. Ignoring however, the orders given to Prince William of Prussia, Barclay had ordered the General Yermolov to push in front of Pantin General Udom with the regiments of grenadiers of the Guard and Pavlovsky, and to occupy the village by the first division of the Guard (General Rosen: regiments of Preobrazhensky, Semenovsky, Izmaylovsky, Eiger and Marines of the Guard).

The Russian Guard, under the command of Miloradovich was responsible for strengthening the brigade of the Prussian Guard of Alvensleben; but, after facilitating progress in the plain, it was to move by the road which passes between the buttes of Beauregard and Chaumont to take Les Prés-Saint-Gervais and Belleville from behind and give assistance to Prince Eugene of Württemberg. In the center, Prince Eugene waited an order or signal to embark on Les Prés-Saint-Gervais. The grenadiers of Choglovkov were responsible to address Belleville. On the left Paskevich would attack Ménilmontant from the front. Finally Gorchakov and Mezentsev, covered on their left by the cavalry of Pahlen, had to move by the heights of Aunay and Mont-Louis against the right of the position of Ménilmontant.

Prince William of Prussia had executed the orders sent directly by the headquarters of the Army of Silesia, which enjoined him to strengthen the Prussian Guard and the vanguard of Katzler; leaving his three cavalry regiments under the command of Colonel von Blücher, in the plain in front of La Villette, the Prince, to prevent his division from unnecessary losses, had ascended the course of the canal of Ourcq, crossed the bridge above Pantin and established his division in front of the village, his left resting on the high road to Les Maisonnettes, the right on the channel, so that they both opposed an attack by the French against the Rouvroy and cooperated with the attack of La Villette.

**Attack and capture of Ménilmontant, of Les Prés-Saint-Gervais, of Les Maisonnettes, of the hillocks of Beauregard and Chaumont.** --The superiority of the forces and the simultaneity of the attacks could not leave any doubt about the final result. On the extreme left, Mezentsev despite the fire from the batteries of Père-Lachaise and some efforts made by the cavalry Chastel that he soon forced to retreat to Paris, entered Ménilmontant. To his left the cavalry of Pahlen chased from Fontarabie and from Petite-Charonne the last French outposts and threatened the right of Bordesouille. The Russian artillery foothold on the heights of Mont-Louis and Ménilmontant, prepared to open fire against the outer boulevards and bombard the city.

Prince Eugene of Württemberg, at the head of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division of Shakhovskiy and the brigade of Vlasov (from the 5<sup>th</sup> Division), had left Belleville to its right and crowned in conjunction with Mezentsev and Paskevich, the heights of Ménilmontant and Mont-Louis.

The position of Saint-Fargeau was now untenable and the Duke of Padoue, threatened in his rear by Mezentsev, pressed in front by Gorchakov, overwhelmed by the side of the Tourelles by the grenadiers of Choglokov, was forced to withdraw to Belleville. Wounded during the retreat, he gave the command of his small division to General Lucotte who went to take position at the butte of Télégraphe.

In the center, the Pyshnitsky Division headed right for the Prés-Saint-Gervais. To its right, while the division of Prince William of Prussia executed a conversion to right to approach the channel of Ourcq, the Russians of Yermolov came to support the Prussian Guard of Alvensleben when it threw back from Les Maisonnettes back to the barrier of Pantin the feeble brigade of General Secrétant. Mortier, pressed at La Villette, had a only few moments to recall to him the troops of Charpentier and Curial, previously held in the reserve at the foot of the bluffs of Chaumont. Master of Les Maisonnettes, Yermolov left the Prussian Guard to continue to the barrier of Pantin and committed his two regiments and artillery, preceded by skirmishers into the gorge between the buttes of Chaumont and Beauregard where they separated and march in two columns: the one climbing the slopes of the butte of Chaumont, flanking the battery which it seized and headed on Belleville; the other, climbing the slopes of the hillock of Beauregard, debouching on the rear of Rébeval de Boyer and Compans when the division of Pyshnitsky the attacked in front. Caught in the crossfire and routed the French battalions owed their salvation to the charge of a squadron of Polish lancers, the only ones who were at the disposal of General Compans. The defenders of Prés-Saint-Gervais manage through this timely charge to retire, not without difficulty to Belleville, where they barricaded themselves hastily the passages, occupied the houses, ready to start the fight. But they had to leave in the hands of the Russians the 17 guns that without hitches, that would have been for them anyway impossible to take.

Masters of Les Prés-Saint-Gervais, of the buttes Beauregard and of Chaumont, Pyshnitsky soon pushed on Belleville his skirmishers that meet at the entrance to the suburb with those of Yermolov.<sup>9</sup>

**Movement of the cavalry of Pahlen. --Charge of the uhlans of Tchougouiev against the artillery of Major Evain.** --Meanwhile, Pahlen had benefited from the entry into the line of the IV<sup>th</sup> Corps, its movement on Saint-Maur and Charenton and the retreat of the cavalry Bordesoulle and Chastel to get off the plateau, to establish between Montreuil and Vincennes and send some parties to the barrier of Trône weakly occupied by the National Guard.

Major Evain, who commanded on that point a large group of reserve artillery with 28 pieces served by students of the École Polytechnique and intended to come at the first signal on the most threatened points, had not received any order. Although having no other support than some gendarmes, Major Evain, tired of the passive role he played in the morning, thought a little after 3 o'clock it was safe to enter the roadway embankment leading to the barrier of Trône and on which he could only march by that column two pieces. The Major hoped to stop by the fire of his 28 pieces the advances of Pahlen and make a useful diversion for Marmont. Arriving at the level of the point where the road from Charenton to Charonne cuts the highway of Vincennes, Major Evain commanded his leading pieces that he established, one on the highway, the other south of this highway, to bombard the cavalry Russian debouching by road from Montreuil. Pahlen immediately answered with his horse batteries whose well-directed fire dismantled some pieces and threw into disorder this long column of artillery led by inexperienced teamsters.

Meanwhile, Pahlen ordered General Kamenev to remove the pieces in battery with the Tchougouiev Uhlans supported by a squadron of Württembergers, arriving on this artillery by masking his movement and concealing his cavalry as much as possible behind the houses of Petit-Vincennes. Performing a conversion right as soon as he reached the level of the pavement, General Kamenev rushed to the battery when Major Evain had ordered to bring limbers and to retreat. The gendarmes had also filed on the barrier as soon as they had seen the Russian uhlans, and the charge, meeting no obstacle, arrived on the pieces, past them and entered the column. The inexperience and fear

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<sup>9</sup>Journal of Barclay de Tolly (*Topographical Archives*, n° 29188); Journal of Prince Eugene of Württemberg (*Ibid.*, n° 47344), and Journal of Boyer de Rébeval (*Archives of the War*).

of drivers, congestion of the road blocked by a portion of the guns that were caught wanting to hastily and clumsily make a half turn, increased the confusion. Despite the valor displayed by the students of the Polytechnic, the whole column would inevitably have fallen into the hands of Tchougouiev Uhlans if the generals Vincent and Laville had not noticed the movement of the Russians. The Polish lancers of Vincent were immediately rushed forward and threatened the rear of the uhlands while Colonel Ordener, head of the 30<sup>th</sup> Dragoons, making his way through the pieces, charged them on their right flank and forced them to retreat abandoning much of their catch. Thanks to the timely intervention of the 30<sup>th</sup> Dragoons, Major Evain, covered by a National Guard detachment, could bring about two-thirds of his artillery to the barrier of Trône. The Russian uhlands too weak to renew their coup de main and anyway, then too far from their division, retired on their part by taking 9 of the 15 pieces they had captured, 6 caissons and a number of prisoners. Pahlen afraid of being taken in the flank by Bordesoulle and Chastel, did not dare support the uhlands of Tchougouiev which he sent orders to join the bulk of his cavalry. He confined himself therefore to watch from a distance the outskirts of the barrier of Trône.<sup>10</sup>

**Marmont sends negotiators to the Allies.** --Swamped to his right and to his left, pressed on his front, Marmont, squeezed in Belleville, fearing at any time being thrown back within Paris, thought it was time to make use of the authorization of Joseph. If we are to believe the story of Prince Eugene of Württemberg, at the same time he sent in to negotiations three officers, including Colonel Labédoyère, and only one, the aide de camp of General Lagrange, managing to penetrate into the Russian lines, the Duke of Raguse had given notice of his overtures to Marshal Mortier. Due to the considerable distance between the two marshals, of the difficulty of communication between them, it is almost impossible to admit that, as he claimed in his letter to the Emperor, Marmont decided not to surrender then after consulting with the Duke of Trévise. The version given by Prince Eugene of Württemberg is much more likely. The Prince says the Duke of Trévise who, we know, had not yet been notified of the orders of Joseph, said to his colleague: "For three hours I unsuccessfully sought out the Lieutenant of the Emperor. I will take no resolution before receiving his orders."

But when Marmont received this reply, the situation had changed for all as all, and the critical moment had arrived.

**Defense of Belleville.** --The division of Shakhovsky and the brigade of Vlasov were masters of the heights of Ménilmontant and Mont Louis. General Choglokov, after chasing the troops of the Duke of Padoue from the park of Saint-Fargeau, continued to push on Belleville, where the 4<sup>th</sup> Division (Pyshnitsky) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division of the Russian guards were about to enter through the west. The column head of Yermolov, debouching from the hillock of Beaugard, had even engaged in the main street of Belleville.

The least hesitation could lose everything. Marmont reunited hastily the few men he had on hand and at their head put himself with the generals Meynadier, Ricard, Pelleport and Boudin. The marshal had his horse wounded, his uniform riddled with bullets; General Pelleport was injured; General Ricard bruised, but this little band "of which the Russians could see the weakness in such a defile,"<sup>11</sup> managed to turn around the head of the Russian column. Retirement was now possible: the Marshal, while pulling back a part of his people from the plateau behind Belleville,<sup>12</sup> was able to regain the position of the troops of Arrighi, Ricard, Joubert and Lagrange and compel the Russians to keep their distance. This return to the offensive gave the option of waiting without compromising the return of parliamentarian sent to Schwarzenberg who, with the sovereigns, followed the vicissitudes of the battle from the heights east of Belleville.

**Operations of the right wing of the Allied armies. --Return to the offensive of Mortier before La Villette. -- Attack and capture of La Villette.** --While the Allies threw back the center of Marmont to Belleville, the left wing

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<sup>10</sup>Journal of Operations of Barclay de Tolly (*Topographical Archives*, n° 29188); *Memoirs of Löwenstern*; Journal of General Vincent, operations of 19 to 30 March (*Archives of the War*).

<sup>11</sup>*Memoirs of Marmont*.

<sup>12</sup>Journal of Operations of Barclay de Tolly (*Topographical Archives*, n° 29188); Journal of Operations of Prince Eugene of Württemberg (*Ibid.*, n° 47344), and STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1).

stood at Saint-Maur and Charenton, the cavalry of Pahlen watched Vincennes and the barrier of the Trône, the Russians and Prussians of the right wing had also increased their progress. Seriously attacked for two hours by the troops of the Army of Silesia, Mortier had been obliged to recall to him the divisions of Curial and Charpentier that he had thrown the first into La Villette, the second into La Chapelle.

The Marshal, while seeking to oppose the projects of the Allies who were deployed and extended to his left, had noticed the movement of the division of Prince William of Prussia sent in support of the Russians and the Prussian Guard in Pantin. In order to clear the left of Marmont and slow the progress of the Allies in front of Pantin, the Duke of Trévise, had, about three o'clock, attempted a counter-offensive in front of La Villette and pushed beyond the bridge of the basin the Prussian troops occupying it. Prince William, then pushing his sharpshooters along the levee of the canal, launched with bayonet two battalions of Brandenburg Infantry Regiment and the 14<sup>th</sup> Landwehr Regiment, who threw out the French on La Villette and took their two cannons while the rest of its division was performing a change on the front to the right.

In the end, to cover the right side of his artillery established on the traces of the old entrenchments of 1792, at the moment when he was to place the infantry on the offensive, the Duke of Trévise had prescribed to the dragoon brigade of Christophe to move forward from La Villette and remove the Prussian battery strongly cannonading the debouchments of La Villette and which had to support it a battalion of fusiliers of the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. Crushing the Prussian fusiliers who vainly tried to disengage the battery, the dragoons were about to remove the pieces when the intervention of the cavalry of General von Katzler restored the balance. Without leaving the dragoons time to rally, Katzler made a frontal charge with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lifeguard Hussars supported on the second line and right by the hussars of Brandenburg, placing them in disorder and throwing them back into La Villette. Profiting from the ensuing confusion and distress caused by the success of his charge, it overwhelmed the French battery and seized 14 pieces.

The Prussian artillery retook position and was now preparing to fire for the assault that would be made on La Villette by the Prussians of Prince William and the Russians of Vorontsov.<sup>13</sup>

Without losing an instant and although he was quite advanced, Katzler pushed toward the first houses of La Villette the fusiliers who no longer had to worry now about guarding the batteries of the Prussian 1<sup>st</sup> Corps. He at the same time let Vorontsov whose column head arrived at a short distance from La Villette know of the latest events. Prince William came with the remainder of his division to get across the bridge of the canal. Attacking then La Villette on the side of the basin, he seized the pieces in battery at the village and entered from behind it at the same time as General Krasovsky. The Russian general, supported by the battery of Lieutenant Colonel Vinsper entered the northern part of La Villette at the head of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Regiments of Russian eiger, a part of the Tula Regiment, taking what remained of the pieces and in concert with the Prussians, forcing General Curial to give up the top of the village and approach the gates.

Despite the terrible fire directed against La Villette, although the General Krasovsky would have been reinforced by the rest of the Tula Regiment, by that of Navaginsk and the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment of the Cossacks of the Bug, although the bulk of the corps of Vorontsov would have deployed before Aubervilliers, its left at the road of Senlis, the Duke of Trévise was even less willing to give up La Villette, as on his right, the remains of the Secrétant Brigade and a few veterans still held out on the canal bridge and stopped the progress of the Prussian Guard in front of Les Maisonnettes. Also, determined to make a supreme effort to regain La Villette, the Marshal, sending some small reinforcements to the brigade of Secrétant, launched the Christiani Division on the part of the village occupied by the Russians and Prussians and retaking four pieces that had been lost, when the Prussian Guard, debouching from Les Maisonnettes, threw back Secrétant and the veteran chasseurs onto the right bank of the canal. It was therefore not possible of thinking to remain in La Villette, and the Marshal had to resign himself to give the troops of the right wing the order to withdraw to the barrier of La Villette. This retreat was executed in perfect order, in echelon, under

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<sup>13</sup>*History of the Prussian 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment*; HAGEN, *History of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment of Dragoons of Neumark*; SCHNEIDAWIND, *Prinz Wilhelm von Preussen in den Kriegen seiner Zeit*; BEITZKE, *Leben des General-Lieutenant von Sohr*; C. von W., *Feldzüge der Schlesischen Armee*; COLOMB (Lieutenant General von), *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Preussischen Kavallerie zeit 1808*; STÄRKE, *Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März* (K. K. Kriegs Archiv., III, 1).

the protection of artillery, despite the efforts of the Russians and Prussians and although Prince William of Prussia had at that time made his junction with Prussian Guard with which connected it to the left side of the barrier of Pantin.<sup>14</sup>

**Taking of La Chapelle and movement of the Prussian II<sup>nd</sup> Corps on the hillock of the Cinq-Moulins.** --To the right of Krasovsky and Prince William, General von Horn, followed by the division of Prince Augustus of Prussia, had crossed Aubervilliers and was in battle formation front of La Chapelle that his artillery and that of the II<sup>nd</sup> Corps riddled with shells.<sup>15</sup> Obligated to use all his reserves in La Villette and on the Ourcq Canal in front of Pantin, Mortier could only deploy on his left the division of Charpentier posted at La Chapelle and Robert Brigade established between this village and Montmartre. Despite the inferiority of numbers, Charpentier made such a good show at La Chapelle that a brigade of Prussian Prince Augustus had to deploy to the left of the division of Horn. The entrance into the line of these fresh troops failed to dislodge the French, and Charpentier only evacuated La Chapelle when Marshal Mortier, forced to abandon La Villette, sent the order to withdraw. Like Christiani, Charpentier withdrew under the protection of artillery, slowly, orderly, stepwise, on the Saint-Denis barrier, while the brigade of Robert would take position on the butte of the Cinq-Moulins.

The Horn Division, as expressed to Prince Augustus of Prussia in his report,<sup>16</sup> received at this moment (4:30 in the afternoon) the order to attack Montmartre in debouching from La Chapelle. The 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade served as his support; the 9<sup>th</sup> Brigade followed and formed the reserve. When the Prussian troops, advancing at the charge to shouting cheers, began to rise on the slopes of the hill of the Cinq-Moulins, they were ordered to stop.<sup>17</sup> "We concluded the armistice already," said the Prince; "Paris had asked to surrender. Our troops occupied the heights of La Chapelle and the suburbs to the Montmartre barrier."

On the right of Mortier, Prince William of Prussia and Colonel von Alvensleben were also preparing to break the last barrier that still stood in front of them.

They were preparing to storm the barrier of Pantin, when they received orders to suspend their movement. Prince William was therefore confined to push up to 200 or 300 meters of the palisades a string of skirmishers, supported by the rest of his division, formed by battalions in mass. The brigade of the Prussian Guard stood a little behind, in a second line.

**Movements and operations of the right column of the Allies. --March of Langeron on Montmartre. --Taking of the hillock.** - Meanwhile Langeron, having, to use the same expressions that served Chrapovitzky in his Journal,<sup>18</sup> at first been bogged down, then marched at a snail's pace, however, had ended up gaining gradually ground towards Montmartre, Les Batignolles and the Bois de Boulogne. Immediately after taking Aubervilliers, General Emanuel, reinforced by the dragoon regiments of Kargopol and Mitau and a squadron of cavalry of Chernigov, had been directed by Clichy on the barrier of the Étoile and Neuilly.<sup>19</sup> At the head of a cavalry body of a little over 2,000 horses, the general officer was to seize the bridges of Neuilly, Saint-Cloud, Sèvres and Jena. At the same time, the generals Kapsewitsch and Rudzewich executed in front of Aubervilliers and Saint-Ouen, a grand

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<sup>14</sup>Journal of Operations of Barclay de Tolly (*Topographical Archives*, n° 29188); SCHNEIDAWIND, *Prinz Wilhelm von Preussen in den Kriegen seiner Zeit*.

<sup>15</sup> Report of Prince Augustus of Prussia on the battle of Paris. (*Kriegsgeschichtliche Einzelschriften herausgegeben vom Grossen Generalstabe*.)

<sup>16</sup>*Id. in ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>We will resume a little later all the negotiations related to the conclusion of the armistice and capitulation of Paris.

<sup>18</sup>Journal of Councilor of State Chrapovitzky on the 1814 campaign.

<sup>19</sup>Journal of Operations of General Emanuel and Journal of Langeron. (*Topographical Archives*, n° 29103.)

turning movement to finally approach Montmartre, the first by Clignancourt, the second more to the west, by the slopes on the side of Batignolles. The Duke of Trévisé, when all troops were already committed to the barrier Pantin, La Villette, La Chapelle, against the Prussians of Prince William of Prussia and Alvensleben, against the Russians of Yermolov, against the infantry of Vorontsov and the divisions of Horn and Prince Augustus of Prussia, could only oppose Langeron and Emanuel with the cavalry of Belliard. This general, as soon as he noticed the movement executed by the cavalry of Emanuel on the road of the Révolte, and the approach of the infantry of Rudzevich and Kapsewitch, had approached the foot of the hills and supported his right at Clignancourt, his left at the route of Les Batignolles in Saint-Ouen. Some cavalymen from the depots of Guard and 300 National Guardsmen were his reserve.

Belliard's cavalry was clearly unable to stop the march of the two Russian columns on Montmartre. The taking of the hills also was more certain from the moment of departure when Joseph had sent, first to Les Batignolles then to the plain of Clichy, the bulk of the National Guard who were established there since the morning; there only remained thirty pieces of ordnance that was not fully served by hundreds of veterans and conscripts and the battalion of firefighters (sapeurs-pompiers) from Paris, about 280 strong men, who had arrived on the hillock in the afternoon. Although he had met no resistance, Langeron had not even tried to take Montmartre by a coup de main. He methodically prepared his attack by the fire of artillery and waited to plan his movement when all his columns, including that of Rudzevich which he had ordered to push to Les Batignolles by the road from Saint-Ouen, so he would arrive at an equal height and the cavalry of General Emanuel who had pushed on Les Batignolles the tirailleurs of the National Guard which had been established in front of Monceaux and Ternes and was already about to appear at the Porte-Maillot. All of this part of the line, from Montmartre to beyond Neuilly, was still defended and guarded by the National Guard of Marshal Moncey. A little after 4 o'clock, when the columns of Langeron completed their deployment, Moncey, who had held until then in the Clichy barrier, made progress on the road to Saint-Ouen a battery charged with countering the Russian battery in position at the foot of the mound Les Guards at the point where the road to Saint-Ouen cut through the rump which slopes gently toward Clichy, and to stop the progress of the infantry. The National Guard turned back on Les Batignolles, occupying the town; the other detachments established themselves at Ternes and Monceaux. The battery stationed at the Place de l'Étoile was brought forward and was covered by abatis.

The dispositions of the Marshal had not escaped the Russian generals.

While the column Clignancourt remained at the foot of the butte, in support of his artillery, General Emanuel arrived at the Porte-Maillot. Stopping before engaging in the Bois de Boulogne and pushing towards the Pont of Neuilly, he sent to the barrier of the Étoile cavalry and some pieces that were confined to skirmishing with the National Guard. Preceded by their artillery the troops of Langeron had continued their converging movement on Montmartre and had come within fusil range of the cavalry Belliard; it was here that their column heads were charged by General d'Autancourt: but his chasseurs are thrown back by the fire of the Russians and forced to rally behind the second line; another charge led by General Sparre (5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Dragoons) was not more successful. Overwhelmed on its two wings, cut off on the plains through which he wanted to retire, raked by the grapeshot of the artillery of Langeron, Belliard has no choice but to remount at a gallop the paths that led to the top of the hill. He threw in a hurry into an enclosure on the left of the mound, the battalion of sapeurs-pompiers who alone could delay the progress of Kapsewitch and Rudzevich, and give the horse time to go into Paris.

Moments later the Russian infantry crowned the heights of Montmartre. During this time the two squadrons of Belliard were moving in haste by Les Batignolles to the front of Monceaux, the extreme right of Langeron was about to capture.

But soon, pressed by numbers, these two squadrons, that the National Guard refused to support, were forced to fall back on the barrier of Monceaux while the Russians penetrated Les Batignolles and pushed in disorder on the barrier of Clichy the National Guard posted in this suburb. To the left of Langeron, Horn and Kleist in finding no longer anyone before them had occupied the hill of the Cinq-Moulins.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Gneisenau in his letter to Eichhorn, dated from Paris, April 20, 1814, cited by *Kriegsgeschichtliche Einzelschriften*, 1884, V, 136, writes about it: "We were going to storm Montmartre when we received the official notice of the armistice. I wanted to stop the assault, but it was no longer possible to stop the troops, and so we took by force the positions that had been transferred to us as a result of negotiations."

**Fighting at the barrier of Clichy.** --Despite the gravity of the situation and the confusion caused by the progress of the Russians, Marshal Moncey, decided to attempt the impossible by checking the Allies from forcing the gates of Paris, had joined the National Guard chased from Les Batignolles and completed the organization of the defense of the Clichy barrier, at which the troops of Langeron seemed to converge. Behind the little redoubt raised at the same barrier, he improvised a second entrenchment. The pieces served by the Invalides had been brought in the embrasures of the redoubt, the best shooters of the National Guard lined the battlements. The grenadiers and chasseurs of that guard were posted in the windows and on the platform of the great building of the barrier. The rest of the National Guard was formed in line on both sides of the Rue de Clichy.

The old Marshal had succeeded by his example to restore confidence in the National Guard to energize the hearts of these improvised soldiers.

A heavy fire welcomed the column heads of Langeron and forced the Russians to settle in the houses of the suburb where they strongly responded to the National Guard and veteran gunners of Moncey and continued to skirmish with them until they receive, also, the order to cease fire.<sup>21</sup>

**Last shots taken at Saint-Denis and the barrier of the Étoile.** --Kornilov, detached on Saint-Denis that he had vainly tried to take three times after making a breach in the walls, had some difficulty in maintaining against a vigorous sortie of the small garrison with which he skirmished unsuccessfully up to night and he could not persuade to capitulate.<sup>22</sup>

Finally while the Russians of Langeron climbed Montmartre, General Emanuel had sent a party to occupy the bridge of Neuilly; the bulk of the column continued to skirmish with National Guard posted at l'Étoile. Separated from the rest of the line of battle by some French cavalry squadrons heading to the Bois de Boulogne, Emanuel received last the notice of the armistice and the fire only ceased on this side with the night.<sup>23</sup>

The Battle of Paris had been costly to the Allies; losses of Russians (including the corps of Langeron and Vorontsov belonging to the Army of Siberia) totaled more than 100 officers and 7,000 men. The Baden and the Prussian Guards had left on the battlefield 69 officers and 1,286 men; the corps of Yorck and Kleist had been less tried and lost only 700 men; the corps of the Crown Prince of Württemberg had only 216 men out of action. 86 guns (if we do not include in that number the 29 pieces left at Montmartre and which Langeron took without a fight) had fallen into Allied hands.<sup>24</sup>

Placed on the Napoleon Series: January 2017

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<sup>21</sup>Journal of Operations of General Count Langeron. (*Topographical Archives*, n° 29103.)

<sup>22</sup>*Id. in ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Journal of Operations of General Count Langeron. (*Topographical Archives*, n° 29103), and Journal of Operations of General Emanuel.

<sup>24</sup> Journal of Operations of Barclay de Tolly (*Topographical Archives*, n° 29188.)