

# The Napoleon Series

## The Campaign of 1814: Chapter 20, Part III

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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 XX.

OPERATIONS OF THE AUSTRIAN ARMY OF THE SOUTH, FROM 3 MARCH 1814 TO THE END OF THE CAMPAIGN.

**Battle of Limonest.** --In order to lose as little time as possible at the passage of the Azergues, Bianchi formed his troops in two columns which crossed this stream at Lozane and Dorieux, and assembled at Dommartin. On reaching this point, he successively pushed each of his brigades to his right, so as to extend as far as the road from L'Arbresle to Lyon. Towards noon the advanced guard of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps occupied La Tour de Salvagny, and a little before one o'clock, as soon as the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps had completed its deployment in front of this village, Bianchi gave the order to attack the plateau of Dardilly.

Despite the difficulties of the terrain and the steepness of the slopes, Prince Wied, at the head of the infantry regiments Albert Gyulay and Reuss-Plauen, and two battalions of the infantry regiments Hiller and Colloredo succeeded in emerging on the plateau and obliged the Estève Brigade to abandon Dardilly and to withdraw to the left where this general intended to join the troops of Generals Digeon and Beurmann.

Master of the very key of the position, which the movements of Wimpffen had facilitated his taking, Bianchi hastened to advance his artillery, and to set up a battery of 8 pieces whose aim was to take advantage of its first advantages and to outflank the French left.

To the left of the Austrian lines, Lieutenant Field Marshal Wimpffen had recognized that he risked losing too much time and too many people in trying to remove Limonest by a frontal attack. While continuing his march, slowed inevitably by the configuration of the terrain and the poor condition of the roads and paths, he had instructed Major General Mumb to follow the ridge line from Chasselay, to head towards the heights which dominate Couzon at Mont-D'Or, Saint-Romain-de-Couzon, and Salagon, to drive out the French posts, to turn the extreme right of the French lines, and to threaten the rear of the position of Limonest, against which he confined himself to executing feigning attacks. At about one o'clock, the column of General Mumb had accomplished the difficult task with which Wimpffen had charged him and General Musnier, seeing himself threatened both on his left by the artillery of Bianchi who had just taken up a position at Dardilly on his right by the appearance of the Mumb Brigade, did not even attempt to dislodge the Austrians from the heights, and began, under the fire of battery of Dardilly, his retreat on Vaise. Wimpffen, speeding up his march, immediately established himself at Limonest and at Saint-Fortunas, and, on the right, to connect by the flying column of Lieutenant-Colonel Nageldinger, with Bianchi, who had gone to give the order to the 1<sup>st</sup> Army Corps to debouch from Dardilly and push vigorously forward.

But in the meantime, General Digeon, joined by the 2,000 infantrymen and the 6 pieces of General Beurmann, unaware of what had taken place at Dardilly and Limonest, but informed by his cavalry about the movements of Bianchi, had ordered General Beurmann to march with three of his battalions, 300 horses and 4 cannons, to La Tour-de-Salvagny. The unexpected appearance of this column on the road to L'Arbresle, at the level of Dardilly, obliged Bianchi to renounce the movement which he was preparing to execute, and to give to the division of the Prince de Wied-Runkel, the order to stop the progress of General Beurmann. This change of direction in the march of the columns of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps facilitated the retreat of the Musnier Division. Although the Wied-Runkel Division sufficed to prove that the Austrians were masters of the Dardilly plateau, General Beurmann nevertheless did not hesitate to commit himself and decide to retire to La Grange Blanche by contesting the ground foot by foot, when the column of Lieutenant-Colonel Nageldinger was on the point of overrunning his right, and before reaching the crossroads of Roanne and Clermont. General Digeon had recognized the importance of this position. Determined to hold out to the last extremity, he had entrusted the defense of this point to the adjutant-commander Ricard, established two battalions on the height situated north of the road of L'Arbresle, two others on that which rises at the crossroads of both roads and kept the 12<sup>th</sup> Hussars in reserve near the emplacement. Thanks to these intelligent arrangements, the troops of Generals Beurmann and Digeon defeated all attempts made by the Wied-Runkel Division until 5 in the afternoon.

But in spite of the diversion so happily executed by General Beurmann, Bianchi and Wimpffen had continued their movement, the first by obliquing to the left from Dardilly, the other by deploying and advancing towards the south end of the heights of Limonest and Saint-Didier.

At three o'clock the Duke of Castiglione, returning from Lyon, where he had thought it his duty to go to confer with the authorities, found the Musnier and Pannetier Divisions in full retreat, and at no great distance from the gates of the city. "I went," wrote Marshal Augereau to the Minister, "on this point, where everything was in disorder, and I made arrangements, alas, too late." Returning for a moment to his former energy, the Marshal hastily rallied the disbanded regiments of these two generals, and threw them at the bayonet against the positions of La Duchère and the Les Roches-Cardon (Rochecardon). One of these columns of infantry stopped the progress of Wimpffen, crushed a part of his lines, and circled one of his battalions, which was scarcely cleared by a charge of the dragoons of Würzburg. But the intervention of the cavalry gave Wimpffen time to reform his infantry, and to restore the combat, which lasted till night.

To the south of La Duchère, Digeon and Beurmann, reinforced by the 13<sup>th</sup> Cuirassiers Regiment and half a battery, continued to hold fast despite the dangers which the movement of the Prince Wied-Runkel who, going on their right by Écully, sought to connect with La Duchère with the columns of Bianchi and Wimpffen. The position of Beurmann and Digeon was getting worse at every instant. Their artillery and their infantry had neither ammunition nor cartridges, and Prince Wied, whose left now communicated by Écully with Bianchi, was extending more and more on their right flank, while the extreme right of the Prince, gaining ground southward in the direction of the height of La Campagne, was preparing to envelop them. The night was beginning to fall. It was necessary at all costs to disengage and stop the Austrians, who had just pushed forward two of their batteries, and made them take a position at La Grange-Blanche. While three squadrons of the 12<sup>th</sup> Hussars were overwhelming on the road to Clermont, the battalions of the Hiller infantry regiment, which had deployed there as skirmishers, two squadrons of the 13<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Cuirassiers threw themselves to the right on one of the two Austrian batteries. Unexpectedly

debouching from a fold in the terrain, the cuirassiers cut the supports of this battery in pieces and slashed the cannoneers on their guns. Their appearance had been so sudden, so unexpected, that they would have succeeded in bringing these pieces back if Colonel Baron von Hammerstein, hurriedly joining a few platoons of hussars of the German Legion and a squadron of the Emperor's Hussars, was thrown upon them, and had not forced them to fall back upon their infantry. These two charges, the return to the offensive of Augereau at La Duchère and Les Roches-Cardon, the relentless resistance of Digeon and Beurmann, prevented the Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg from seizing that very day (the *Tagesbegebenheiten* were obliged to recognize) Lyon.

Some light troops pushed alone to Vaise. The bulk of the Army of the South bivouacked at the foot of the heights from La Duchère and Écully to Tassin.

The battle of Limonest had, moreover, cost the Austrian troops a considerable number of casualties, the losses of which alone rose to 1,432 men on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March.<sup>1</sup>

**Operations of Count Ignatius Hardegg and the Prince of Cobourg.** --On the left bank of the Saône Count Ignatius Hardegg, who had gone from Meximieux to Miribel, who was still occupied by the Bardet Brigade, did not consider it necessary to engage him, and merely entertained him by demonstrations. The Lieutenant Field-Marshal thought, in fact, that the French general would abandon his position as soon as he was threatened in his rear by the column of the Major General Prince Coburg, who had slept at Neuville-l'Archevêque (Neuville-sur-Saône) and had received orders from Hardegg to follow the left bank of the Saône and to dislodge the French party of Caluire. But this operation did not produce the results expected by Hardegg. General Bardet had had the task of reinforcing the post of Caluire with two battalions, which brought the Prince of Coburg on the Neuville road with such vivacity that it became necessary to have it disengaged by a battalion of the regiment of the German Banat and two Hesse-Homburg squadrons of hussars. These reinforcements, debouching to the right flank of the French battalions, obliged them to stop.<sup>2</sup> General Bardet, however, evacuated Miribel and Caluire at night, and retired to Lyon.

**Colonel Simony crosses the Rhône by swimming with the hussars of Hesse-Hombourg.** --Lieutenant Field Marshal Hardegg occupied Miribel after the departure of Bardet, and complying with the orders of the commander-in-chief of the Army of the South, who had ordered him to attach himself to the heels of the French when they left Lyon, he succeeded to throw on the left bank of the Rhône some squadrons of hussars of Hesse-Hombourg, who, led by Colonel Simony, swam across the river upstream from Miribel, pushed into the night beyond Meyzieu, and gain the roads from Lyon to Grenoble and Chambéry.<sup>3</sup>

**The army of Augereau evacuates Lyon on the night of 20 to 21 March and retreats to Vienne.** --Returning to Lyon, in order to ascertain whether the town was disposed to defend itself, the Marshal had, without losing a minute, summoned a council composed of Senator Chaptal, the Comte de Bondy, Prefect of the Rhône, and the Mayor. The declaration of the mayor, who begged him to spare the population the inevitable calamities of a resistance which was useless, the want of arms to be distributed to the National Guard, the shortage of provisions, the impossibility of resisting with 10,000 men of troops beaten and discouraged by an army of more than 40,000 men, master of the heights and the confluence of the Rhône and the Saône, persuaded Augereau, who would not allow himself to be left shut up, to order, that very evening the evacuation of Lyon, to retreat on the left bank of the Rhône on the Isère line,

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<sup>1</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1.) -- Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg, relating of the battles fought during the march of the Army of the South on Lyons. (*Ibid.*, III, 312.) -- Relating of the combats delivered by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Column of the Army of the South on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of March. -- History of the Austrian Dragoon Regiment, n° 4 (in 1814, the Würzburg Regiment) (*Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, 1838, 312-316). -- Episodes of the Battle of Limonest (*Ibid.*, 1845, IV, 75), and Report of Augereau to the Minister of War on the Battle of Limonest, Vienne, 21 March, (*Archives of the War.*)

<sup>2</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1.)

<sup>3</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1.) and the Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg, a relating of the battles fought by the Army of the South during his march on Lyons (*Ibid.*, III, 312).

in order to "be able to move, either on Geneva by Savoy, or on Le Pont-Saint-Esprit".<sup>4</sup>

At midnight, the baggage and artillery traversed Lyon, and proceeded on the road to Vienne, followed by the divisions of Pannetier and Musnier, behind which came the infantry of General Beurmann and the cavalry of General Digeon. The division of General Bardet formed the rear-guard, and commenced its movement at one o'clock in the morning. At 4 o'clock in the morning, the last French troops had left Lyon.<sup>5</sup>

**21 March. --Occupation of Lyon by the Austrian Army of the South. --Positions of the Austrian corps.** --At three o'clock in the morning, the Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg, who had settled for the night at the Maison du Puits-d'Or, was warned by his outposts of the departure of the French posts which had been held up to La Campagne as well as the retreat of Augereau, and addressed the following dispatch to the Generalissimo: "The enemy, who had at first retreated to the heights in front of Lyon, evacuated that city during the night. I have made a pursuit."<sup>6</sup>

A few hours later the magistrates of Lyon brought to the Prince the golden keys of the city, which were sent to the Emperor of Austria. Towards noon the Army of the South entered Lyon.

But instead of pursuing Augereau vigorously to avail himself of advantages which he owed largely to the faults and tardiness of his adversary, to complete the annihilation and dispersal of the French troops by not leaving them any truce, the Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg contented himself with sending to the left bank of the Rhône the division of Lieutenant Field-Marshal Lederer, who stopped at Saint-Symphorien-d'Ozon, half-way between Lyon and Vienne. The corps of Prince Philip of Hesse Hombourg, the divisions Ignatius Hardegg and Wimpffen occupied Lyon, with the exception of the advanced guard of this last who took up position in front of La Guillotière.

The Prince of Coburg remained at Caluire.

Two of the divisions of the Army of the South army remained on the right bank of the Saône, the former division of Bianchi between Écully and Tassin, and that of the Prince of Wied-Runkel at Francheville. In order to be pardoned for this unexplainable halt, the commander of the Southern Army informed Schwarzenberg that "the enemy was withdrawing rapidly from Vienne, that he would move Count Hardegg on Chambéry by the road to Bourgoin, and had immediately sent reinforcements in the direction of Nantua, in order to free Count Bubna and to put himself in communication with him."<sup>7</sup>

**Last offensive movements of Marchand before Geneva.** --This last precaution was certainly superfluous: it was easy to foresee that the evacuation of Lyon would necessarily have as a corollary the retreat of General Marchand. Supplying the weakness of his troops with indefatigable activity, this General, in order to stimulate and support the national uprising in the country of Gex, had sent on the day of the 21<sup>st</sup> a small column departing from fort L'Écluse, first to Farges, then to Saint-Jean-de-Gonville. But 36 hours later, Marchand, informed of the events at Lyon, was also obliged to think of retirement.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Augereau to the Minister, Vienne, 21 March. (*Archives of the War.*)

<sup>5</sup>Augereau. Lyon, Orders of Movement, 20 March, evening. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>6</sup>Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg to Prince Schwarzenberg, Maison du Puits-d'Or, 21 March, 3 o'clock in the morning. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 384.)

<sup>7</sup>Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg to Prince Schwarzenberg, Lyon, 21 March (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 385); Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg, relating of the battles fought by the Army of the South during his march on Lyon (*Ibid.*, III, 312); STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt Armée im Monate März (*Ibid.*, III, 1).

<sup>8</sup>On the 21<sup>st</sup> of March, at 9 o'clock in the evening, the Comte de Saint-Vallier, writing from Grenoble to Marchand, to confirm the retreat of the army on Vienne, informed him of the presence on this point of Augereau, of Cardinal Fesch, of Chaptal, and the Count de Bondy, and added, "What are you going to do under these circumstances? If I may give you my opinion, I advise you to come in person to Grenoble, to bring some troops to cover Grenoble on

**Positions of the army of Augereau on the evening of 21 March. --Movement orders for 22 March.** --On the evening of 21 March the troops of Augereau occupied the following positions: the Musnier and Pannetier Divisions, covered by the 4th Hussars posted at the hamlet of the Pins, north of Vienne, at a short distance from the road to Saint-Symphorien-d'Ozon; the infantry coming from Catalonia and the 13<sup>th</sup> Cuirassiers in Vienne; the Bardet Division and the 12<sup>th</sup> Hussars south of Vienne, on the road to Valence, in the neighborhood of Auberive; the brigade of National Guards, the Guards of Honor and the gendarmes were marching on Le Péage-de-Roussillon.

The next day, the Bardet Division and the 12<sup>th</sup> Hussars were to go from Auberive to Saint-Rambert-d'Albon and Saint-Vallier; the Musnier Division at Péage-de-Roussillon with the headquarters; the Pannetier Division in Auberive; the brigade of National Guards of General Rémond at Tain. General Digeon, forming the rear-guard with the division of Catalonia, the 4<sup>th</sup> Hussars, and the 13<sup>th</sup> Cuirassiers, remained in position at Vienne.<sup>9</sup>

**Considerations on the maneuvers and the slowness of Augereau.** --Before following the Duke of Castiglione in his retreat on Valence, it is indispensable to insist on an essential fact. At the moment when Augereau evacuated Lyon, the Emperor, relying on the co-operation of the Army of Lyon, attaching a capital importance to the effect of the diversion which it was to effect on the rear and left of the Allied Great Army, became impatient and worried about the silence of the Marshal. Without news of the Army of Lyon since the receipt of the dispatch of the 12th from Villefranche, in which the Duke of Castiglione announced that after having pushed as far as the suburbs of Mâcon General Musnier had returned to Saint-Georges, but that he intended to resume his offensive movement the next day, Clarke<sup>10</sup> had found it necessary to remind the Marshal once more of the wishes of the Emperor and to insist again on the usefulness and importance of a diversion which Augereau had long been unable to undertake.

The marshal had not thought it advisable to give a sign of life during the period between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, and neither Clarke nor the Emperor had any idea of the turn taken by affairs on the Saône. The delays and faults of the Duke of Castiglione had deprived the Emperor of the point of support on which he counted to operate with more chances of success on the lines of operations of the Great Army. The silence of Augereau, partly motivated by his failures, was to bring about catastrophes, and it may not be without reason that the Emperor would have probably renounced the battle of Arcis and then proceeded to Vitry and Saint-Dizier, if Augereau had kept him informed of the failures wrought by his army. In these circumstances it is natural enough that the Minister of War had taken seriously the anonymous letter from Lyon on 19 March, which he received no later than the 22<sup>nd</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup>, since the note written about it by Dupont de Vieusseux was, as we have said before, presented to Clarke on the 24<sup>th</sup>. It will also be understood that, owing to the circumstances, he gave an order to draw up, as a matter of urgency, a report summarizing the conduct of the Marshal.

This report, which he found too violent in form to send to the Emperor, was annulled, but we reproduce it verbatim, because it contains, in a concise form, the exposition, the criticism and the condemnation of all the faults committed

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the side of Lyon. You can pass through Saint-Genix and Les Écheltes to touch Bourgoin, while General Dessaix would retire by Chambéry." (*Archives of the War.*)

<sup>9</sup>Augereau, Order of movement for the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Vienne, 21 March. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>10</sup> "I have had no news of you since the 12<sup>th</sup>," Clarke wrote to Augereau on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March, "and I am sorry that I have no account to render to His Majesty in consequence of the important operations with which you are charged. The Emperor hopes for great results, and ought to feel in this respect a very just impatience." And the Minister, after having briefly exposed to Augereau the movements of the Emperor on Méry, the march of Allix and Souham upon the left of the Great Army, after announcing the arrival of Allix at Sens, added: "A good and strong diversion on your part would come out well, and I can not sufficiently remind you that it ought to have a decisive influence on the operations of the Great Army. His Majesty is persuaded of it, and rests with confidence on your zeal, your devotion, and your activity to second it suitably. His Majesty has left you the choice of dispositions, and I have refrained from giving you any instruction relative to your movements. All moments are precious: the slightest delay can have incalculable consequences, and the most proper dispositions would remain without result if they were not executed with all the celerity, activity, and energy which circumstance imperiously demands of you. (*Archives of the War.*)

by the Duke of Castiglione, from the commencement of his operations to the evacuation of Lyon, to the retreat on Valence, to the movements executed on his order on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March.<sup>11</sup>

"I have had the honor of transmitting to your Majesty a letter of the Duke of Castiglione, dated 18 March...Without a thorough examination of the dispositions, His Majesty's attention is drawn to the tardiness with which the Marshal acted in principle, in spite of pressing and repeated orders. The order of 12 February to begin operations immediately, renewed on 13 February. On 16 February, it was written that there is not a moment to lose. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, the new order to leave Lyon and march to the enemy, reiterated on the 21<sup>st</sup>. On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, one was ordered to leave Lyon twelve hours after receiving the letter. On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, and 28<sup>th</sup> of February, the orders were renewed, and he was induced to put into their execution the zeal, activity, and energy which circumstances rendered so necessary. After having received eight consecutive dispatches, the Marshal finally resolved to move, and on 2 March, at Lons-le-Saunier, he gave an account of the operations begun on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February."

"So there is a delay of 15 days during which a few insignificant movements have been made on both banks of the Saône which had given the enemy an awakening and have persuaded to send Bianchi on Chalon. The Marshal then thought himself obliged to recall the troops marching on Geneva and returning to Lyon. In his letter of the 9 March he explained that he had decided to return to Lyon to take the enemy in the rear, while General Bardet made a false attack on Mâcon. But from that moment on, there was no longer any question of the attack on Mâcon. The enemy remains master of this city and of the bridge over the Saône. He holds the French army divided, and can act as he pleases, on the shore which suits him best, while the Marshal is obliged to pass through Lyon, to go from one bank to the other. It would have been sufficient to guard the bridge of Mâcon in force during the first attack, or to destroy this bridge when the city was abandoned, in order to avoid a great detour to our army, and to oblige the enemy to concentrate entirely on the bridge, one of the banks of the Saône, which enabled the Marshal to act against him with all his forces, without compelling him to divide himself, and to make all his operations depend on the degree of resistance of General Bardet at Miribel. The Marshal then abandoned Lyon to march on Pont-Saint-Esprit, 50 leagues behind, leaving the enemy the 7<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Military Divisions."

The criticisms of the Minister of War were certainly well founded; but Clarke himself was not beyond reproach. From the very last days of February, at the latest, from the beginning of March, he ought to have called the Emperor's attention to the fatal consequences of Augereau's tardiness, on the inevitable consequences of the faulty maneuvering of the Marshal. At the moment when he decided to write to the Emperor, the evil was done, and it was too late to be able to remedy it.

**22 March. --Movements and positions of the French and Austrian armies of the south.** --While, thanks to the time due to inexplicable stop in the operations taken by the Austrian Army of the South, thanks to the total absence of any serious pursuit, the French troops continued unhindered their retreat on Valence, the two generals in chief simultaneously committed fault on fault.

Completely demoralized by the failures he had just experienced, Augereau, far from availing himself of the unexpected respite left to him by his adversary, far from making the most of it to concentrate between Valence and Grenoble, persisted in resorting to the methods which had so badly succeeded him. Increasingly convinced that the Austrians would try to make their junction with the army of Wellington, he resolved to scatter his divisions between Valence and Le Pont-Saint-Esprit, in order to be able to carry himself according to events, either on the Dauphiné or on the right bank of the Rhône.

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<sup>11</sup>Report (not sent) to His Majesty on the Maneuvers and Delays of Augereau, Paris, 25 March. (*Archives of the War.*)

It results from a comparison between this document and the dispatch of the Minister to Augereau, dated 21 March, and Augereau's own correspondence, that the Marshal deemed it useless to account for his operations during the period so full of serious events which lasted from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> of March. Clarke, not wishing to transmit this report which he found too violent, ordered Dupont de Vieuxseux to modify its form. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of March he addressed the Emperor, and on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March he sent Colonel Balthazar to the army of Lyon. Events no longer enabled Napoleon to take measures against Augereau that would have been late and could not have restored a desperate situation.

The commander of the Austrian Army of the South had not understood the capital importance of the possession of Lyon, and seemed to have formed an absolutely false idea of a situation which any general would have envied. Instead of continuing to follow Augereau, to overwhelm him with the weight of his numerical superiority, not only content with letting him take a considerable advance, the Crown Prince of Hesse Homburg, renouncing to apply the great principle of the union of forces in the principal theater of operations, seems to have wished to drag the war into length, and to have confined himself to the unnecessary dissemination of his forces. On his left, he was overly concerned about the situation of Bubna who received reinforcements and that the successes of the Army of the South have also cleared. On his right, he unnecessarily detached an entire brigade in the Forez in order to drive the partisans of Damas from the banks of the Loire. Finally, the armed bands of the Charolais would become for him an object of constant concern, diverting his attention from the main operations and inspire in him a series of false maneuvers.

After having, as we have said, maintained his whole army on the positions around Lyon, the commander of the Austrian Army of the South, although, if we are to believe the *Tagesbegebenheiten*, "he proposed to destroy the army of Augereau," dared not take a final resolution, and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March the I<sup>st</sup> Corps remained entirely motionless on its positions of the previous day. The Prince of Coburg, whose brigade was reinforced by a battalion drawn from the division of the Prince of Wied-Runkel, was ordered to leave for Saint-Etienne, to impair the manufacture of arms, pushing to the Loire, and to pacify the country by dispersing the partisans of Damas.<sup>12</sup>

On the left bank of the Rhône, Wimpffen advanced from Lyon to Feyzin, thus approaching the division of Lederer, which was now held at Saint-Symphorien-d'Ozon, and detached on his left a part of his division which took up the route to Grenoble. Lastly, since it was above all necessary to give a hand to Bubna, to cut off the retreat of the troops of General Marchand, to disarm the peasants, one ordered Count Ignatius Hardegg to march on Grenoble, through Bourgoin and La Tour-du-Pin.<sup>13</sup>

**Measures taken by Bubna and by Marchand before Geneva. --Movements of their troops.** --Informed of the movement of Augereau on Valence, General Marchand had had to retire behind the Arve in the night of the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> March, and to take the necessary measures to ensure the retreat of his troops. Recalling to him the reconnaissance he had pushed on the road to Gex, he devoted part of the day of the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the evacuation of the Fort L'Écluse and the destruction of the bridge of Seyssel. On the evening of the 22<sup>nd</sup>, he gave the final order to retreat in two columns. One of these columns took the road from Frangy to Rumilly; the other, led by General Serrant, who had just succeeded General Dessaix, who was ill, and unable to continue exercising an active command, followed the road to Annecy.<sup>14</sup> The two columns were to join south of Albens, at the crossroads of the roads leading from Rumilly and Annecy to Chambéry.

Bubna, whose communications with the Army of the South had just been restored by the arrival at Nantua of the detachment of Colonel Count Leiningen, already on the point of heading by Belley on Pierre-Châtel, was disposed at this point due to the reinforcements of 17 battalions, 26 squadrons and 30 guns, representing a total strength of about 13,000 men. Completely reassured about the fate of Geneva, he resolved to leave in this city only Lieutenant Field-Marshal Baron Greth with three battalions, and proceeded at once to the organization of the columns which were to pursue Marchand and Serrant. The Generals Zechmeister and Klopstein, crossing the Arve, were instructed to follow the column of Serrant<sup>15</sup> on the road to Annecy, while Klebelsberg would take with the Bentheim Brigade the road to Rumilly. Finally, the brigade of Luxem had received a special mission. It was charged, first, to put a garrison at the Fort L'Écluse, and then to re-establish the bridge of Seyssel, and to cross the Rhône. This brigade

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<sup>12</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, II, 1.)

<sup>13</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>14</sup>General Dessaix to General Marchand, Carouge, 22 March. (*Archives of the War.*)

<sup>15</sup>General Dessaix, sick, had in a letter from Carouge on 22 March, informed General Marchand that he was going to Montmélian to restore his health, and transmitted the orders of retreat to Rumilly and Annecy to General Serrant. (*Archives of the War.*)

was then to rejoin and reinforce the column of Klebelsberg.<sup>16</sup>

**23 March. --Retreat of the army of Augereau on Valence.** --Meanwhile, Augereau continued his retreat on Valence, without taking any part, without troubling himself about what was passing in Savoy, without troubling himself about the fate of the troops of Marchand and Serrant. In conformity with the orders he sent on the 22<sup>nd</sup> from Saint-Vallier, his first two echelons, the Bardet and Musnier Divisions, and the 12<sup>th</sup> Hussars, moved, the next day, the one from Saint-Vallier and from Saint-Rambert-d'Albon to Valence; the other from Péage-de-Roussillon on Saint-Vallier. The troops from Spain, the 13<sup>th</sup> Cuirassiers and the 4<sup>th</sup> Hussars evacuated Vienne to retreat to Le Péage-de-Roussillon and left on the heights of Auberive only a feeble rearguard charged with observing the bridge of the Varèze and covering the retreat of the Pannetier Division during its march from Auberive to Saint-Rambert.<sup>17</sup>

But before he left Saint-Vallier, the Duke of Castiglione, more indecisive and more hesitant than ever, had thought it useful to inform the Minister<sup>18</sup> again that he was going to take the line of the Isère provisionally and establish his headquarters at Valence. At the same time he asked the minister to let him know, "whether His Majesty wished to see him continue to keep this line, and await the attack of the enemy from Lyon, or whether he should move on Savoy to effect his junction with the troops of General Marchand, and to retake Geneva, or whether he should (and this last seemed to him the best) cross the Rhône at the Pont-Saint-Esprit and advance to Toulouse against the army of Wellington."

At first sight it might be astonishing to see the Marshal, who had not, since the beginning of the campaign, paid any attention to the pressing and repeated orders sent to him, suddenly decided to ask for instructions. According to the very terms which he used at the beginning of this dispatch, one should think that he had resolved to stop at Valence, to concentrate his army there, to await the arrival of the orders which he seemed to request. It is enough to read the dispatch to the end, to see that it was not so, and that, seeking only to escape from his adversary, Augereau, determined to continue his retreat, was only looking for a pretext to give a seemingly correctness to the movements to which he had already been decided. This pretext, an intercepted letter, had already furnished him at the moment when he was writing to the Minister of War, and it was probably for this reason that he terminated his dispatch by saying to the Duke de Feltre: "While waiting for orders, I will have the Pont-Saint-Esprit occupied, since the enemy proposes, according to the intercepted letter, to make his junction with Wellington."<sup>19</sup>

This problematic union, and in any case a remotely possible, between Wellington and the Army of the South, preoccupied Augereau much more than the fate of Marchand and Serrant, much more than the movements of the Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg. Although at that moment he had been informed of the appearance of some Austrian hussars in the vicinity of La Tour-du-Pin, although the slowness and timidity of the pursuit should have led him to think that his adversary had probably detached a part of his army to cut off the retreat of the troops withdrawing from the environs of Geneva, he wrote to Marchand only to renew the order to send him General Vedel and the artillery coming from Italy, to Chambéry.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, Marchand and Serrant accelerated their retreat. They cut and burned the bridge of Seyssel,<sup>21</sup> and the advanced guard of General Marchand, having left Rumilly on the morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, was heading for Aix-les-Bains, from where it was to leave on the 24<sup>th</sup> at 5 o'clock in the morning to move on Les Échelles. All the detachments which General Marchand had to make during the last days of the blockade of Geneva, nevertheless

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<sup>16</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armée im Monate März. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1.)

<sup>17</sup>Augereau, order of movement for March 23, Saint-Vallier, 22 March. (*Archives of the War.*)

<sup>18</sup>Augereau to the Minister, Saint-Vallier, 22 March. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>19</sup>Augereau to the Minister of War, Péage de Roussillon, 22 March (*Archives of the War.*)

<sup>20</sup>Augereau to General Marchand, Saint-Vallier, 23 March. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>21</sup>Colonel Cubières to General Marchand, Rumilly, 23 March. (*Archives of the War.*)

succeeded in rejoining his column, with the exception of that of Saint-Rambert, which was ordered to retire by Pierre-Châtel.<sup>22</sup>

**March of the corps of the Austrian Army of the South on the left bank of the Rhône.** --The vanguard of the Austrian Army of the South (the Lederer Division) had taken no less than two days to go from Lyon to Vienne. It did not, therefore, enter this town until long after the departure of the last troops of General Digeon, and did not push any farther. The division of Wimpffen, which alone had been ordered to follow the movement of this vanguard, and was eventually to serve as its support, advanced about ten kilometers, and went from Feyzin to Saint-Maurice, about half way between Saint-Symphorien-d'Ozon and Vienne. Count Ignatius Hardegg pushed on the road to Bourgoin as far as La Verpillière. The other two divisions of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps and the corps of Prince Philip of Hesse-Homburg continued to remain motionless on their positions.<sup>23</sup>

**Movement of the Prince of Coburg on Saint-Étienne, Feurs and Roanne.** --In order to protect himself from the attempts he feared on the part of the partisans, the Prince of Coburg, who had been commissioned to seize Saint-Étienne, had to send on his right a part of his people. Major Falk, to whom he had entrusted this mission, had gone to Feurs and had orders to descend the Loire to Roanne. The advanced guard of the brigade of the Prince pushed as far as Saint-Étienne on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March; but at the request of the mayor, who feared an uprising of the population of the city so long as it was not occupied by a corps of a respectable number of effectives, the Prince entered there only the next day with the bulk of his brigade. Informed of the existence of a gathering whose strength was estimated at 2,000 men, and with whom Damas proposed to march from Montbrison to Saint-Étienne, the Prince of Coburg sent his vanguard to Saint-Priest and ordered it to push as far as the Loire in the direction of Saint-Rambert.<sup>24</sup>

**Anxieties of the Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg for his rear. --Affair of Lucenay-l'Évêque.** --The victory of Limonest and the occupation of Lyon seem, moreover, to have marked for the Austrian Army of the South the end of a period of rational operations, cleverly combined, skillfully and energetically conducted. Although the weakness of his adversary could not leave any doubt in the mind of the Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg on the outcome of the campaign, at least as far as he was concerned, although he should have been completely reassured by the increasingly favorable turn taken by the affairs of the Allies, and by the news which came to him from the main headquarters, as if he had foreseen and guessed the anxieties which Schwarzenberg had had to a certain extent the right to imagine for a few days, the commander of the Army of the South experienced at the same moment the same apprehensions as the Generalissimo. Neglecting the army he had just beaten, the Crown prince of Hesse-Homburg, once arrived at Lyon, seemed to be almost exclusively occupied with his right flank, which was covered by such an important river, too difficult to cross than the Rhône; he was alarmed at the presence of some partisans between the right bank of this river and the Loire; he was extremely anxious about the protection of his rear, for which, however, he had nothing to fear, the safety of his communications with the Great Army, which, notwithstanding their thirst for vengeance and their ardent patriotism, the armed peasants could not seriously threaten.

During his stay at Lyon, as during the days which followed his departure from that city, the Prince was much less occupied with the movements of Augereau, with the direction followed by the French army in retreat, with the march of the columns of Klebelsberg and Zechmeister on Savoy and Dauphiné, as measures to be taken to finish on the side of Forez with the partisans of Damas, as well as the means to be adopted to disperse the bands of Charolais and ensure tranquility on the roads leading to Dijon. The abnormal prolongation of the stop of the bulk of the Austrian Army of the South around Lyon, the divergent directions given to the divisions which he carried forward with inexplicable slowness, the hesitation of the Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg, on the road to Valence, the detachment of the Prince de Cobourg on Saint-Etienne and the Loire Valley, the sending of flying columns in the

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<sup>22</sup>Colonel Cubières to General Marchand, Rumilly, 23 March. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>23</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1.)

<sup>24</sup>The Prince of Coburg to the Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg, Saint-Étienne, 24 March (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 471 a), and Count de Montholon to the Minister of War, Saint-Bonnet, 24 March (*Archives of the War*). In this dispatch, Montholon announced to the Minister that the desertion of more than half of the National Guards, as soon as the general was beaten, obliged him to evacuate Saint-Étienne and to retreat on the Forez mountains.

Charolais towards Autun and Semur, had no other decisive cause than incomprehensible apprehensions especially at such a moment, than excusable excuses, perhaps from the Generalissimo, but inadmissible on the part of the commander of a victorious army superior in number, and to which a defined objective had been assigned and attributed a theater of war clearly determined.

A simple glance at the correspondence of the commander of the Austrian Army of the South will, moreover, make it possible to appreciate the state of mind of the Crown Prince of Hesse Homburg, and the exaggerated importance he attributed to the last convulsions of the national uprising.

In a long dispatch he sent on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March from Vienne to the Generalissimo, and on which we shall have to return later to the operations of Generals Zechmeister and Ignatius Hardegg, he insists above all on what happens between the Rhône and the Loire and further north, in Burgundy. "My detachments of Charolles, Autun and Feurs tell me that the enemy is still at Digoin and Roanne, and that there are at Moulins 10,000 men under the orders of General Vialard, who sends parties on our communications. There are, moreover, in the woods around Autun, numerous bands of armed peasants, led and commanded by officers."<sup>25</sup> Then, referring to the affair of Lucenay-l'Évêque, in the ambush of Serrières, where the armed peasants had killed a corporal and four men, he concluded this dispatch by saying: "All this, joined to the necessity of leaving a rather strong garrison at Lyon, hampered my march towards the Isère."<sup>25</sup>

Because of the importance that the commander of an army whose effectives, including the troops of Bubna, amounted to more than 60,000 men, attributed to the events that had taken place at Lucenay-l'Évêque and at Autun, we think it proper to reproduce the very report<sup>26</sup> which so alarmed the Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg.

"I had Autun occupied on 23 March," wrote Major Barthos to Colonel Illesy, "by the velites of the Archduke Ferdinand Regiment of Hussars, with the order to watch the road from Paris to Lyon by Moulins, and to seek to connect by Auxerre with Prince Maurice Liechtenstein. I sent at the same time a half-squadron with Captain Ferentzy on the road to Paris. This detachment arrived at night in Lucenay-l'Évêque and was greeted by a gunfire which, starting from a ditch at a short distance from a mill, killed 7 men and 6 horses and wounded 3 men and 2 horses. Captain Ferentzy adds that it was followed by fusil shots from the sides of the road from Autun to Dijon by Arnay-le-Duc, up to a short distance from the camp. For this reason the whole detachment evacuated Autun and retreated to Couches, occupying Saint-Émiland with a half-squadron and La Selle with another half-squadron which sent patrols to Autun and outposts on the road to Autun at Cluny."

"On 24 March Lieutenant von Hamann went on patrol to Autun with a platoon. At the exit of the defile of Cluny,<sup>27</sup> he was surrounded by about thirty armed men who fired on his troops, seriously wounded him, killed 1 man and 3 horses and wounded 6 men and 9 horses. The enemy, emboldened by the results of its fire, showed itself in number near Couches and threatened my outposts. Due to the configuration and nature of the ground, I brought back all my detachment to a height from which I could charge the peasants if they had a mind to move against me. I immediately informed the Lieutenant-Colonel Count Blankenstein of these facts and requested him to inform the headquarters of the Army of the South."

"I also learned that during the night 300 armed peasants had moved to Bourgneuf (the Bourgneuf de Chalon). I sent a captain, 20 horses, and a section of infantry. They had succeeded in taking an armed peasant; but he was almost

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<sup>25</sup>Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg to Prince Schwarzenberg, Vienne, 27 March. (*K. K. Kriegs, Archiv.*, III, 471.)

<sup>26</sup>The report of Major Barthos is dated the 1<sup>st</sup> of April; but before sending it to his colonel, the major had informed the headquarters of the Army of the South of the affair of Lucenay-l'Évêque.

<sup>27</sup>Here, or at the debouchment of the road from Autun to Mâcon by Cluny, crossing the Royal forest of Planoise on this point and taking place between the heights covered to the west by this forest, to the east by the woods of Monchauvoise, or *more probably* by the defile in which the road from Autun to Chalon-sur-Saône is enclosed and which is bordered to the north by the Bois de la Feuillie, to the south by that of Monchauvoise.

immediately delivered by his comrades..."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Major Bathos to Colonel Illesy, commander of the Palatinate Hussars, 1 April (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv., IV, ad, 307.*)