

# The Napoleon Series

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

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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.

**24 March.** --The Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg establishes his head-quarters at Vienne. --Movements of the troops of the Austrian Army of the South. --Meanwhile, the Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg had decided to transfer his headquarters to Vienne, and to push his advanced guard (Lieutenant Field-Marshal Lederer) as far as Péage-de-Roussillon and Saint-Rambert-d'Albon. On its left the division of Ignatius Hardegg, coming from La Verpillière to Eyzin-Pinet and Saint-Marcel, reached the road from Vienne to Grenoble. Finally, the light troops under the command of General Gall, establishing themselves in outposts at Cour and Buis and at Beaurepaire d'Isère at the same level as the vanguard of Lederer, watched the roads leading, on one hand, from Vienne, on the other from Saint-Rambert to Grenoble.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Corps replaced the Wimpffen Division at Saint-Maurice, and Prince Philip of Hesse-Hombourg, who was not yet persuaded to move forward, was ordered to prepare the movement of his corps on Saint-Symphorien-d'Ozon and to leave after his departure the division of the Prince Wied-Runkel in garrison at Lyons.

On the right bank of the Rhône, the Prince of Coburg, who had just occupied Saint-Étienne,<sup>1</sup> was to report on

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<sup>1</sup>The Count de Montholon, reporting to the Minister of the War of the occupation of Saint-Étienne, insisted on the bad morale of the National Guards. "On hearing the beating of la générale," he wrote on 24 March from Saint-

Annonay in order to be in a position to oppose the feared possible movements of Augereau, to the undertakings of the troops which were feared to be moved by Tournon against Annonay and from there to the Loire.

**Movements and positions of the troops of Augereau.** --These fears had no foundation. As soon as he arrived at Valence on 23 March, the Marshal had confined himself to giving orders to General Rémond to quarter his brigade (gendarmes and National Guards) within a radius of one league on the sides and before the road to Montélimar. At the same time he had ordered General Poncet, commander of the 19<sup>th</sup> Military Division, to leave for Le Puy, taking with him all his troops, with the exception of the Rhône gendarmerie.<sup>2</sup>

On the following day, the 24<sup>th</sup>, the division of Bardet and the 12<sup>th</sup> Hussars had remained at Valence, with the exception of two battalions and a squadron charged to take over the cantonments of the Rémond Brigade on the road to Montélimar, where the Marshal had sent them with the bulk of the baggage and the small depot at Loriol, a day's march from Montélimar.

The Musnier Division had come to camp at Valence. The Pannetier Division had pushed as far as Tain and occupied Tournon, on the right bank of the Rhône, strongly guarding the ferries which ensured the communication between the two banks. The troops from Spain, with the 4<sup>th</sup> Hussars and the 13<sup>th</sup> Cuirassiers, had left Le Péage-de-Roussillon and stopped at Saint-Vallier.<sup>3</sup>

These various movements were still in execution when the Marshal was to order the column of General Beurmann to return to Libourne. Obligated to obey, believing henceforth irrevocably lost, he had nevertheless conformed, this time, without losing a minute, to the formal orders he had just received. While General Ordonneau was leaving Valence, to take command of the infantry of General Digeon to replace General Beurmann, he informed General Beurmann that he should begin his movement on the following day, the 25<sup>th</sup> and that his column, composed of the 79<sup>th</sup>, 112<sup>th</sup> and 115<sup>th</sup> Regiments of Infantry, leaving Saint-Vallier, would pass by Annonay, Le Puy and Clermont-Ferrand where it would take the relays that were prepared for it. He also ordered General Digeon to cover the passage of the Rhône during the movement of the column of General Beurmann, and then to retire from Vallier to Saint-Vallier, leaving at his crossing at Tain the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Hussars at the disposition of General Pannetier, who would use them in the service of the outposts.

Finally he ordered General Pannetier to recall the troops stationed at Tournon and the environs, and to extend on the left bank of the Rhône and the right bank of the Isère as far as Romans.<sup>4</sup>

**Retreat of Generals Marchand and Serrant.** --The sending on Libourne of the column of General Beurmann, motivated by the entry of the English at Bordeaux, was certainly not of a nature to restore to Augereau that ancient vigor upon which the Emperor had been wrong to reckon, to restore to him the self-confidence without which a general is incapable of carrying out the operations with which he is charged. Despairing more than ever of the situation, discouraged and discontented, the Marshal did not even attempt to assist the troops of Marchand and Serrant in executing their painful and difficult retreat on Rumilly and Annecy. The position of these two generals was all the more critical, because, owing to their retrograde movement and the weakness of their troops, they had had to leave free the passages by the Bauges mountains which lead to the Isère and thus exposing themselves to the

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Bonnet-le-Château, where he had retreated, "570 national guards from 1000 to 1100 deserted. I had ordered M. de Damas to take a position at La Fouillouse to cover Saint-Etienne in concert with the battalions of workmen. I wanted myself to occupy the heights with the conscripts and the garrison of Montbrison. I believed the Marshal at Vienne. But at the news that the enemy was marching in three columns on Saint-Étienne and crossing the Loire to Feurs, I had to fall back on the Forez mountains to organize myself there." (*Archives of the War.*)

<sup>2</sup>Augereau, Orders to General Rémond, and Augereau to General Poncet, Valence, 23 March. (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War.*)

<sup>3</sup>Augereau, Orders of Movement for the 24<sup>th</sup> of March. (*Archives of the War.*)

<sup>4</sup>Orders to Generals Ordonneau, Beurmann, Digeon and Pannetier, Valence, 24 March. (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War.*)

danger of being cut off from the bridge of Montmélian.

**25 March. --Combat of Alby.** --Pressing near and pursued closely by the Austrians, General Marchand, in order to give himself space and secure his retreat on Grenoble, ordered General Serrant to stop to the east of Alby, to take a position on the right bank of the Chéran, and to attack the column of Zechmeister, whose right he would threaten on his way from Rumilly.

At three o'clock in the morning the advanced guard of Serrant approached the Austrian outposts; at eight o'clock in the morning, the head of the Austrian column, strongly pushed by the French, retreated towards Annecy.

"Arriving in front of Annecy," wrote General Serrant to General Marchand,<sup>5</sup> "I found Baron von Zechmeister in position with 4,000 men, 400 horses, and 8 cannons. A bloody struggle ensued. I flanked the enemy forces twice as strong as he was. The enemy was overwhelmed. I took a hundred men. He gathered his forces outside the city and tried several charges. The city is very damaged. The enemy took a position behind the Brugny bridge, where I observed him. A strong column was cut off. I'm working on taking it." In a second report, General Serrant announced to General Marchand that he had succeeded in taking or drowning this column, that his troops, after having passed the Fiery ford, "having water to the breast, pursued the Austrians to the Pont de la Caille."<sup>6</sup>

Zechmeister, completely beaten, retired behind the Usses, and went to establish himself on the evening of the 25<sup>th</sup> at Cruseilles.<sup>7</sup>

In spite of this brilliant success, Marchand found it impossible to pursue his advantages further, and to think of resuming the offensive. He had obtained the results which he could desire, and given to the columns which had hitherto pursued him a lesson which would afford him some respite. Thanks to this success General Marchand now had the possibility of completing a retreat without too much inconvenience, and it was all the more necessary to continue without delay as the detachment of Colonel Leiningen was marching from Nantua to Belley and Pierre-Châtel, where the garrison consisted of only a handful of men, and the movement of the Hardegg Division on Bourgoin was pointed out to him. Under these circumstances, everything would have been compromised by attempting to hold at Annecy and Rumilly, and General Marchand accordingly sent on the evening of the 25<sup>th</sup>, to General Serrant, the order to follow his retreat on Chambéry the very next day.

**Positions and movements of the Austrian Army of the South.** --The Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg, informed by Bubna of the march of the columns of Klebelsberg and Zechmeister, and of the retreat of the French troops, who could only march on Grenoble, resolved, on his part, to facilitate the operations of the generals responsible for pursuing them by threatening the sides and rear of Generals Marchand and Serrant, and attempting to cut off the roads leading them into the valley of the Isère. He accordingly ordered Count Ignatius Hardegg to push in the day of the 25<sup>th</sup> to Bourgoin and then continue his march on Chambéry through LaTour-du-Pin. Wimpffen, in charge of cutting communications between Grenoble and Valence, and forbidding the enemy from Valence to Grenoble by the right bank of the Isère, was ordered to leave Eyzin-Pinet and Saint-Marcel, to gain immediately the road to Rives. His vanguard, pushed the day before to Court and Buis and to Beaurepaire-d'Isère, remained temporarily there.

The other corps of the Army of the South, on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of March, remained on the positions they occupied, extending over the vast space between Saint-Rambert d'Albon and Le Péage-de- Roussillon, Saint-Maurice, Chuzelles, Saint-Symphorien-d'Ozon and Lyon.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>General Serrant to General Marchand, Annecy, 25 March, 3 o'clock after noon. (*Archives of the War.*)

<sup>6</sup>General Serrant to General Marchand, Annecy, 26 March. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>7</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1), and Tagebuch of the General Baron Zechmeister.

<sup>8</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Aimee im Monate März. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1.)

**Raid of Captain Kleindienst in the departments of Rhone, Loire and Haute-Loire.** --On the right bank of the Rhône the Prince of Coburg had remained with a brigade at Saint-Étienne;<sup>9</sup> but Captain Kleindienst had been ordered the evening before to leave Vienne with a squadron of dragoons, and to execute with his cavaliers a raid in the departments on the right bank of the Rhône. In order to facilitate the operations which he was about to undertake in such rugged terrain, and, consequently, so unfavorable to the action of the cavalry, a company of the infantry regiment Prince-de-Ligne was added to him. While watching more particularly the region between Annonay and Montfaucon-en-Velay, Kleindienst was to remain connected with the Prince of Cobourg posted at Saint-Étienne.

Captain Kleindienst traveled with his small detachment to the departments of the Rhône and the Loire, as well as parts of the Haute-Loire, dispersed the armed assemblies and the bands on the point of formation, prevented the departure of conscripts, pushed before them the gendarmes and the couriers, and set free many Allied prisoners. Notwithstanding all the difficulties resulting from the configuration of the ground, he succeeded in remaining almost constantly in communication, both with the Prince of Coburg and with Bianchi.<sup>10</sup>

**Movements and operations of the troops of Augereau.** --The movements executed by the troops of Augereau during the day of the 25<sup>th</sup> are of insignificant interest. The Marshal seems not to have even thought of the possibility of a movement of the Austrians on Grenoble, since, not satisfied to make the National Guards of General Rémond continue their march from Loriol to Montélimar, to send the baggage to Valréas and to Bollène, the grand depots to Orange, he ordered General Musnier to leave for Loriol, to settle on the left shore of the Drôme, to leave in the outposts on the right bank of this river only the 12<sup>th</sup> Hussars at Livron, Alex, Eurre and Montoisson, and a squadron of the 1<sup>st</sup> Hussars a little farther ahead at Étoile, on the banks of the Véoure. He maintained, it is true, the Pannetier Division and the 4<sup>th</sup> Hussars at Tain and Romans, but he was careful not to push everyone into the valley of the Isère, and thought he had done enough by ordering General Bardet "to send to Valence, the two battalions detached to the south of that city, and to send to the bridge of the Isère, two leagues from Valence, on the road to Tain, a company of voltigeurs who was to detach a few men from the ferry at Châteauneuf- d'Isère."<sup>11</sup> The position of Augereau was, moreover, perfectly known to the Allies, and on this date the following sentence can be read in the Tagesbegebenheiten: "Marshal Augereau has withdrawn behind the Isère. His rearguard is between the Rhône and the Isère, at Tain."<sup>12</sup>

**26 March. --Immobility of Augereau at Valence. --Evacuation of Annecy and Rumilly. --Retreat of Marchand on Chambéry.** --Nothing could bring Augereau out of his torpor, his tranquility, and his indifference. He continued to remain, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March, motionless and inert at Valence.

Without even suspecting the movements which were taking place at Chambéry and Grenoble, he had brought back General Ordonneau from Tain on Romans, with the 116<sup>th</sup> Line, a battalion of the 32<sup>nd</sup> and part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Hussars, at the very moment when the Prince of Hesse-Hombourg, before putting his troops in motion, had his cavalry reconnoiter the French positions of Tain and Romans.<sup>13</sup> The danger, however, was no less serious, nor less imminent. From Voiron, where he had just been established on the orders of General Marchand, and from which he had sent an infantry battalion to Rives, pushed some platoons of cavalry to Moirans, and where he had been joined by the detachment which had evacuated Pont-de-Beauvoisin, Colonel Cubieres had signaled to General Marchand the appearance in these parties of the Austrian riders, whom the shots of his outposts had obliged to withdraw. He

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<sup>9</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1), and *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, 1839, III, 51-53.

<sup>10</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1.)

<sup>11</sup>Augereau to Generals Rémond, Musnier, Pannetier and Bardet, Valence, 25 March. (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War.*)

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

<sup>13</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armée im Monate März (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1), and Augereau to General Ordonneau, Valence, 26 March (*Archives of the War.*)

had also announced the entry of the Austrian advanced guard at La Tour-du-Pin, which had been occupied by the cavalry of Ignatius Hardegg at 9 o'clock in the morning.<sup>14</sup>

Threatened in the course of the day of the 26<sup>th</sup> by an Austrian column which had crossed at Guiers à Saint-Genix, by a second column which was preparing to cross that river farther upstream, and which sought a ford on the side of Avaux, his outposts from the appearance of the cavalry of Hardegg on the road of Les Abrets, General Lafosse had come back in all haste and by a night march by Pont-de-Beauvoisin and declared himself "incapable of to hold out for a long time with troops like those he commanded, and who, moreover, lacked food."<sup>15</sup>

Marchand had not, moreover, needed the warnings of his lieutenants to obtain an exact account of the situation. On the morning of the 26<sup>th</sup> he had left Rumilly, and sent to Serrant the order to evacuate Annecy, and to rejoin him at Chambéry, where the two generals arrived without hindrance on the 27<sup>th</sup>.<sup>16</sup>

**Movements and positions of Klebelsberg and Zechmeister.** --The Austrian columns of Bubna immediately resumed their advance, and on the evening of the 26<sup>th</sup> Klebelsberg occupied Rumilly, and Zechmeister returned to Annecy,<sup>17</sup> while General Luxem was passing with his brigade onto the left bank of the Rhône at Seyssel, and Colonel Leiningen, continuing his march on the right bank of the river, approached Belley.

With the exception of the divisions of Wimpffen and Ignatius Hardegg, which had somewhat accentuated their movement in the direction of Grenoble and Chambéry, the bulk of the Army of the South had not moved.

**Retreat of the French on Montbrison. --Affair of Saint-Symphorien-de-Lay.** --On the left bank of the Loire, the few French troops which the Comte de Montholon had assembled on the side of Saint-Bonnet-le-Chateau, reduced to impotence by the want of ammunition, and especially by the desertion of the National Guards, had had to abandon Montbrison. Count Montholon pointed out, moreover, the presence of Austrian troops ranging from Roanne to Saint-Rambert. An attempt by the partisans of Damas had enabled them to reoccupy Montbrison for a few hours, which they had afterwards abandoned to the Austrian cavalry from Sury. On the night of the 26<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup>, Montholon had, it is true, surprised the post of the Austrian dragoons of Sury, had thrown some thirty men out of action, and had taken 12 of them, including an officer; but the French post of Saint-Marcellin, forced by the Austrian cavalry, had been obliged to retire to Périgueux, and to approach Saint-Bonnet-le-Chateau.<sup>18</sup>

Finally further to the north, a band of armed peasants, warned of the presence at Saint-Symphorien-de-Lay of a post of 60 hussars, whose reconnaissances came daily almost to the suburb of Roanne, left on the 26<sup>th</sup> at 11 o'clock in the evening, from Roanne.

Taking the mountain, passing through Régnay and Lay, at 4 o'clock in the morning they debouched on the main road from Tarare to Saint-Symphorien-de-Lay, and although the hussars had been reinforced during the night by a company of infantry, the country folk never the less succeeded in chasing them from the village and obliging them to retire on La Roche. Reinforced by 400 men, the hussars, returned to occupy Saint-Symphorien-de-Lay on the 29<sup>th</sup>, and attempted, furthermore, on the 30<sup>th</sup>, a coup de main on Roanne, which was foiled by the vigilance of the troops of the canton.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Colonel Cubieres to General Marchand, Voiron, 26 March. (*Archives of the War.*)

<sup>15</sup>General Lafosse to General Marchand, Pont-de-Beauvoisin, 27 March. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>16</sup>Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg to Prince Schwarzenberg, Vienne, 27 March. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 471.)

<sup>17</sup>Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg to Prince Schwarzenberg, Vienne, 27 March. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 471.)

<sup>18</sup>Count of Montholon to the Minister of War, Saint-Bonnet-le-Château, 27 March. (*Archives of the War*)

<sup>19</sup>Faure, Commander of the Cantonal Troops of Roanne, to the Minister of War, Roanne, 30 March. (*Archives of the War.*)

**27 March. --Movement of the main Austrian Army of the South towards the Isère.** --Informed on the position and enlightened on the plans of Augereau by the reconnaissance of the day before, the Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg, while warning the Generalissimo that he could begin serious operations on the Isère only when the troops of Bubna had come nearer to his army, nevertheless decided to make execute some preparatory movements with the bulk of his forces. His vanguard, under the command of Lederer, stretched between Saint-Vallier and Tain. The 1<sup>st</sup> Corps went to establish themselves at Péage-de-Roussillon and Saint-Rambert, and the corps of Prince Philip of Hesse-Hombourg came to Vienne. Always worried about what was happening in his rear, warned of the transfer of the headquarters of the Emperor of Austria from Bar-sur-Aube to Dijon, of the arrival of this sovereign in the latter city, informed of the progress on all sides, that the national uprising to which the news of Napoleon's march on Chaumont seemed destined to make into disturbing proportions, knowing by the reports of Prince Alois Liechtenstein that this general officer, who intended to push parties to the left up to Champlitte, on the right beyond Vesoul, had thought it prudent to put Salins in a state of defense; the commander of the Army of the South informed Schwarzenberg of the departure of two regiments of heavy cavalry which he had sent with General Kuttalek. Dijon with the order to protect the headquarters of the Emperor of Austria, and to rejoin the Great Army when there were no longer any fears for Dijon.<sup>20</sup>

The commander of the Army of the South was, moreover, perfectly well acquainted with all that took place in the army of Augereau, and in the same dispatch,<sup>21</sup> announcing to the Generalissimo that the Marshal had been reinforced on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March, by the 115<sup>th</sup> and 116<sup>th</sup> Regiments of the Line, on the 25<sup>th</sup> by the 102<sup>nd</sup>, he pointed out to him, without knowing it is true, the true motive of this movement, the sending on the right bank of the Rhône to Tournon, "of the 79<sup>th</sup>, 115<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> Regiments of Line with artillery and a little cavalry."<sup>22</sup>

**Movements of the divisions of Wimpffen and Hardegg. --Generals Marchand and Serrant continue their retreat on Grenoble and evacuate Chambéry.** --On his left the division of Wimpffen pushed as far as Arzay, and his advanced guard went as far as La Côte-Saint-André, from where it was to send riders to La Frette, Le Grand-Lemps, and in the direction of Rives.

The division of Count Ignatius Hardegg, who continued on Chambéry by way of the Pont-de-Beauvoisin and Les Échelles, had arrived at the Abrets at the intersection of the roads leading to Chambéry on one side by Le Pont de - Beauvoisin (road from Lyon to Chambéry), on the other to Grenoble, by Chirens and Voiron (road from Bourg to Grenoble). It threatened all the more seriously the side of Marchand and his line of retreat on Grenoble, where the light troops had pushed as far as the Pont-de-Beauvoisin,<sup>23</sup> and appeared to be on the road to Voiron, and where the detachment of General Lafosse, obliged to leave Le Pont-de-Beauvoisin, had been obliged to retire to Saint-Geoire and Chirens.<sup>24</sup> The position of General Marchand was all the more critical as Major Count Gatterburg, commissioned by Hardegg to put him in communication with the column of Lieutenant Field-Marshal Klebelsberg, had come to settle in the afternoon of the 27<sup>th</sup> at Mount Ferrat with two infantry companies of the German Banat and a squadron of hussars of Hesse-Hombourg, and that its riders extended towards Saint-Geoire, Chirens and Le Grand-Lemps.

In the presence of these movements it became impossible to retain Chambéry, which General Marchand decided to evacuate. While he ordered Colonel Cubieres to stand firm at Voiron, as he ordered sending everyone to the Grande-Chartreuse, and to cut off the narrow pass, which is traversed a few kilometers from Grenoble, at the level of the Combes, the highway of Voreppe, he entered on the road from Les Échelles and had made General Serrant

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<sup>20</sup>Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg to Prince Schwarzenberg, Vienne, 27 March. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 471.)

<sup>21</sup>Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg to Prince Schwarzenberg, Vienne, 17 March. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 471.)

<sup>22</sup> The 60<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Line was not part of the column of General Beurmann, to which 112<sup>th</sup> belonged.

<sup>23</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1), and Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg to Prince Schwarzenberg, Vienne, 27 March (*Ibid.*, III, 471).

<sup>24</sup>General Lafosse to General Marchand, Pont-de-Beauvoisin, 27 March. (*Archives of the War.*)

take that of Montmélian.

"The troops of Klebelsberg and Zechmeister are at Rumilly and at Annecy," thus express the *Tagesbegebenheiten*,<sup>25</sup> "and Colonel Leiningen continues his march on Belley." On the same day the Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg sent word to the Generalissimo that General Zechmeister<sup>26</sup> was following the enemy, keeping his outposts on the Fier, and being ordered to go by Annecy and Conflans to the valley of the Upper Isère. "If the enemy retreats to Grenoble," said the commander of the Army of the South, "General Zechmeister will occupy the bridge of Montmélian. The retreating enemy seems to want to concentrate at Grenoble and at Valence."<sup>27</sup>

**Augereau concentrates in Valence and has destroyed the passages of the Isère.** --For the first time since his arrival at Valence Augereau thought of taking care of the fate of the troops coming from Geneva, and of informing General Marchand of the events and of his plans. Breaking at last a silence which he had prodigiously prolonged, he sent no less than two dispatches to Marchand. In the first he decided to inform him of the march on Bourgoin of a strong Austrian column (division of Ignatius Hardegg) which seemed to him destined to attack Grenoble. "The enemy," he said, "must seek to cut you off and be master of this important point before continuing his operations upon me. So cover Grenoble. If the line of the Isère is forced, I would retire to Le Pont-Saint-Esprit, and you should seek to reunite there with me." A little later, when he had been informed by General Pannetier of the presence of the Austrians in the great plains of Saint-Rambert, when this general had told him "that the Austrians were making movements on their left towards Grenoble, he wrote again to Marchand: "It will therefore be difficult for you to join me. In case of retreat by Romans, take the high road from Grenoble to Marseilles up to Serres and from there that of Orange by Rosans and Vaison."<sup>28</sup> Thus, far from occupying himself with the organization of the defense of the Isère line, to combine his action with that of Marchand, to indicate to him the principal features of the operations which ought to be undertaken to try at least to slow down the march of the Austrians, the Marshal persevered more than ever in his idea of retreat on Pont Saint-Esprit and passing onto the right bank of the Rhône.

On the same day he ordered General Rémond to go immediately to Pont-Saint-Esprit, to sleep on the 28<sup>th</sup> at Pierre-latte, and on the 29<sup>th</sup> at Pont-Saint-Esprit to "occupy the bridgehead and to place one or two battalions at the village of Saint-Andéol to observe what may come from the Vivarais."<sup>29</sup> As can be seen, the Marshal feared the appearance of the English of Wellington on the right bank of the Rhône, almost as much as that of the Austrians on the left bank of the Isère.

Moreover, he sought above all to escape by the retreat the grasp of the troops of the Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg. He made the Bardet Division return to Valence, and resolved to bring all his people back to the left bank of the Isère, he wrote again to General Pannetier: "Since you can be turned by your right and your position is not tenable, collect your posts and detachments, leave Tain and spend the night on the left bank of the Isère. Destroy the bridges, ferries and boats, and execute this movement at night and in the utmost silence. You will place yourself in battle formation behind the Isère and you will send cavalry parties along the banks. General Ordonneau will blow up the bridge at Romans. He will leave a few men in the town and on the left bank of the Péage, in order to observe the movements of the enemy on the 28<sup>th</sup>, and retire to Alixan."<sup>30</sup>

**Letter from Clarke to Augereau. --Mission of Colonel Baltazar.** --At the moment when the Duke of Castiglione was thus preparing to continue his movement on Pont-Saint-Esprit, Clarke sent from Paris his aide-de-camp, Colonel Baltazar, bearing a letter in which the Minister, penetrating the intentions of Marshal, reminded him once

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<sup>25</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1.)

<sup>26</sup>Tagebuch of the General Baron Zechmeister.

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

<sup>28</sup>Augereau to General Marchand, Valence, 27 March. (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War.*)

<sup>29</sup>Augereau to General Rémond, Valence, 27 March. (*Id. in ibid.*)

<sup>30</sup>Augereau to General Pannetier, Valence, 27 March. (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War.*)

more of the part which the Emperor had assigned to the Army of Lyons, the mission which the faults and delays of its chief had prevented him from fulfilling. "His Majesty," wrote Clarke,<sup>31</sup> "could have learned with great difficulty and amazement the unfortunate outcome of affairs. I will confine myself to reminding Your Excellency that His Majesty's intention in collecting an army corps at Lyons has always been to *cover the south of France, and that it would act in the opposite direction if, not content with having abandoned Lyons, you still wished to retire as far as Pont-Saint-Esprit*, as you have shown. I cannot, therefore, insist too strongly on the necessity of not yielding land to the enemy otherwise than by foot, and by making him buy as dear as possible..."

"The bearer of this letter is Colonel Baltazar, my aide-de-camp, who is charged to go to your Excellency's headquarters and stay there until further notice. This senior officer will supply, by his correspondence, details which you cannot give me."

**28 March. --Movements of the Austrian Army of the South. --Affair of Chirens.** --The Austrian army of the South continued, meanwhile, but with a methodical slowness, its movement towards the Isère. Lederer, arrived at Tain with the advanced guard, immediately sent to his forefront, and more particularly to his left, in the direction of Saint-Donat, parties, who found nothing in front of them. The French troops, in retreating, had burned the bridge of Isère and blew up some arches of the stone bridge of Romans. There remained at Romans only a rear guard charged, in its retiring, to burn the bridge established on the remains of the bridge, and an infantry battalion and a platoon of cavalry stationed at Péage-de-Pisançon.<sup>32</sup>

The bulk of the Army of the South army made but little progress. Wimpffen advanced from Arzay, Champier and La Côte-Saint-André to La Frette, at the crossroads leading to Rives and Voiron. He had orders to combine his operations with Count Ignatius Hardegg, to take with him Moirans, and thus to cut off communications between Grenoble and Valence.

Count Hardegg had, consequently, gone past Les Abrets, stopped his division at Montferrat, and pushed on Chirens the detachment of Major Gatterburg. The Austrian major had just occupied this point when he was attacked by a French column from Voiron, and charged by Colonel Cubieres to retake this post. Major Gatterburg endeavored to maintain himself at Chirens, but he was soon expelled from it, chased and thrown back on the main body of his division.

The bulk of the column of Lieutenant Field-Marshal Klebelsberg had reached Aix, and its vanguard stopped at the gates of Chambéry. Further to the left, Zechmeister sent from Annecy by Faverges and the neck of Tamié, parties to the Upper Isère and Conflans.

Marchand continued his retreat on his way through Les Échelles to Fort-Barraux, while the column of Serrant retreated to Montmélian.<sup>33</sup>

**29 March. --Letter from Augereau to Clarke.** --The sending of Colonel Baltazar, although too late to produce useful results, was all the more necessary, however, inasmuch as Augereau continued to deceive himself, or affected at least to deceive himself as to the gravity of the situation. The Marshal understood so little the importance of the part which his army ought to have played, he thought he had performed so well the mission which the Emperor had been wrong to entrust to him, that he did not hesitate to reply in the following manner, on 29 March, to the letter full of deserved reproaches that Clarke had addressed to him on the 21<sup>st</sup>:

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<sup>31</sup>Minister of War to Augereau, Paris, 27 March. (*Archives of the War.*)

<sup>32</sup>General Vedel took command of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division that day. General Pannetier, appointed to take command of a brigade of the Bardet Division, had fallen ill and had been replaced by General Dupuy.

<sup>33</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1); Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg to Prince Schwarzenberg, Rives, 11 April, and Tagebuch des K. K. Generals Baron Zechmeister (*Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, 1846).

"Your Excellency," said he,<sup>34</sup> "speaks to me in his letters of a diversion to be made on the flanks of the enemy. *It is true that this diversion was made, and had all the results which the Emperor expected from it*, since two divisions forming the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps of the Austrian Army of the Prince of Schwarzenberg were detached *in post* (?) under the orders of the General Bianchi, to fight against me; that an army of reserve, formed at Schaffouse, and that all the enemy had scattered in Franche-Comte, Burgundy, and Bresse, joined me, and that I now have the certainty that I had, at the battle of the 20<sup>th</sup>, 60 to 70,000 men in front of me."

"You recommend to me, Monsieur le Duc, to put some *activity, zeal, and energy* into my operations. *I believe I have surpassed all that could be expected of me* since I was at the head of my feeble army. It was necessary to have an unshakeable constancy to resist with 14,000 men all the day of the 20<sup>th</sup> against an army of 60,000 men, even having taken from him six pieces of cannon, many prisoners, preserved my field of battle, and prevented the entrance by main force to Lyons. And notice, Monsieur le Duc, that during this time I was turned by 10,000 infantry and 4,000 horses, who attacked General Bardet, whom I had placed with only 3,000 men to defend the entrance to Lyons on the left bank of the Rhône. According to the report of the prisoners, parliamentarians, and persons from Lyons, the enemy attributed to me at least 30,000 men, and it is certain that I had only 14,000 on this point, since the columns from Spain, by a fatality, delayed their march for a day."

"The sudden departure of 6,000 troops from the same troops for the Dordogne, leaves me again in the same state of weakness, and the enemy's army strengthens each day. A cloud of light troops, who had been on the road for seven months, such as *Croats, Montenegrins, Manteaux-Rouges*, etc., etc."

"I continue to hold the Isère line and I will defend foot by foot the ground. I shall do, as I have already had the honor to send to your Excellency and to the Emperor himself, all that will be humanly possible for the glory of our arms, and the interests of the Emperor and the country; but I have always the opinion that the enemy has plans on the south of France, and that his plan is linked with that of Wellington."

"In this state of things, I await the orders of the Emperor, whom I have solicited by a letter to your Excellency of the 24 March. And on this occasion I notice that he says in his letter to which I have the honor to reply that *He has always refrained from giving me any direction in my movements*, and while He reminded me that by his dispatches of 25 and 28 February he formally ordered me, on behalf of the Emperor, *to retake Geneva, to enter the country of Vaud, and to raise the siege of Besançon*. It was by obeying these orders, and when a part of my army was in front of Geneva and at the gate of the country of Vaud, and the other at Arbois and Poligny, collecting different information, *I succeeded, almost by inspiration, in guessing the plan of the enemy, the formation of the new army directed against Lyons, and that I decided to move rapidly to the right bank of the Saône, a movement which events fully justified its utility and which coincided entirely with those of the enemy who came out of Mâcon, but with triple forces of mine, the same day that I arrived at Villefranche*."

"I cannot insist too much, Monsieur le Duc, on the facts and events to establish in a very distinct manner the continuation and consequence of my operations, which I beg Your Excellency to make known to the Emperor by putting this letter under their eyes."

"The Marchand Division, threatened by a strong enemy column which had moved on its communications with Grenoble, had to evacuate Chambéry and also take the Isère line."

Such a letter is without comment. Moreover, it would be all the more fruitful to point out the contradictions, the voluntary inaccuracies, the exaggerations contained in this dispatch, as in the preamble of his letter the Marshal himself pronounced his condemnation when, in trying to justify his silence, he said to Clarke: *"The armies, having remained from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> in the same positions, and very far from being able to take the offensive against triple forces of mine, I had nothing to communicate with Your Excellency until the fighting of the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of this month."*

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<sup>34</sup>Augereau to the Minister of War, Valence, 29 March. (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War*.)

**Combat of Chirens and Voiron.** --As the *Tagesbegebenheiten* has rightly pointed out on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March,<sup>35</sup> the Austrian Army of the South, extending from Simplon to Saint-Étienne, was too disseminated to be able to operate effectively. The Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg had recognized, but too late, the fault he had committed. In the impossibility of rationally modifying the position of his troops, not daring to accentuate his movement of descent towards the Isère in the fear of increasing the distance which separated him from the Prince of Coburg, on whose fate he was nothing less than reassured, he saw himself constrained to act for the moment only by his left.

Complying with the orders he had received and expecting to be effectively supported on his right by Lieutenant Field-Marshal Wimpffen, Count Ignatius Hardegg, although weakened by the numerous detachments he had been obliged to make and with no more than 600 to 700 infantry men, attacked and removed the French post at Chirens on 29 March at 11 o'clock in the morning, whose defenders he threw back on Voiron. Joined at this moment by Lieutenant-Colonel Baron Häring, whom Wimpffen had sent from the environs of Apprieu with an infantry battalion and a company of jäger, knowing that the division of Wimpffen, arrived at the Grand-Lemps, found himself to move and could sustain its movement, Hardegg resolved to push on Voiron and drive out the French. But Colonel Cubieres, on his side, had gone to meet the Austrians, and had established himself on a good position commanding the road to Chirens. In spite of all his efforts, Hardegg, abandoned to himself, could not succeed in dislodging him, and succeeded only in dragging the fight into the night. Colonel Cubieres, to whom the march of Wimpffen on Rives had been pointed out, only left his position in the night, and retired on the orders of Marchand to Voreppe, by way of La Buisse, while Hardegg returned to Chirens.<sup>36</sup>

Hardegg, meanwhile, had become connected with Klebelsberg, the main body of which occupied Chambéry. The vanguard of Klebelsberg had pushed through Saint-Joire and Les Marches towards Montmélian, about which its scouts pointed out to him the evacuation. The advanced guard of Zechmeister watched the valley of the Upper Isère from Saint-Jean-de-la-Porte to Conflans.<sup>37</sup>

**30 March. --Anxiety caused by the progress of the national uprising. --Measures taken by the Prince of Hesse Homburg and by Duka. -The Hardegg Division goes to strengthen the Prince of Coburg on the right bank of the Rhône.** --Informed 30 March, in the morning of the retrograde movement Colonel Cubieres, the two Austrian columns resumed their march and settled, that of Wimpffen at Moirans and that of Ignatius Hardegg at Voiron.<sup>38</sup>

In the meantime, the Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg had received disturbing news from both the Prince of Coburg and the Feldzeugmeister Duka and Lieutenant-Colonel Count Blankenstein. The national uprising seemed to assume increasing proportions on the right bank of the Rhône, on both banks of the Loire and throughout the region between Dijon and Lyons. The armed peasants, the partisans of Damas, became more and more enterprising on the left bank of the Loire, from Roanne and Montbrison up to the valley of the Ance, on the right bank of that river, as far as Annonay.<sup>39</sup> The Prince de Cobourg was immobilized at Saint-Étienne, and had difficulty in coping with incessant attacks against his posts on all sides, as well as the attacks on his detachments.

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<sup>35</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1.)

<sup>36</sup> Prince of Hesse-Homburg to Prince Schwarzenberg, Rives, 11 April (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, IV, 93), and STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armée im Monate März (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1.)

<sup>37</sup> STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1), and the Tagebuch des K. K. Generals Baron Zechmeister (*Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, 1846).

<sup>38</sup>STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März. (*K. K. Kriegs, Archiv.*, III, 1.)

<sup>39</sup>General Poncet, commanding the 19th Military Division, writing at about the same time to the Minister (Le Puy, 31 March), and informing him of some small skirmishes which had taken place on the side of Annonay, said: "There's nothing organized here for defense and we have only 200 pounds of lead to make bullets." (*Archives of the War.*)

In the valley of the Saône, the situation was even less reassuring. Major Barthos, who had come to establish at Chalon with his hussars, wrote to Lieutenant-Colonel Count of Blankenstein, of the staff of the Army of the South, left at Dijon by the Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg, that "several hundred armed peasants menaced his detachments of cavalry on the side of Autun, attacked them and forced them to fall back." On 29 March he added: "They are now advancing in greater numbers, and are already on the heights of Couches-les-Mines. On the night of 28-29, they sent patrols to Nolay. As they seem to wish to throw themselves on the road from Dijon to Lyons, I hasten to inform you so that you may take the necessary measures."<sup>40</sup>

The Feldzeugmeister Duka, prompted by Blankenstein, had immediately made his arrangements, and, pending the arrival of the brigade of the cuirassiers of General Kuttalek, he had addressed to Colonel Illesy the following dispatch: "To disperse the armed bands which, from Semur and Of Autun, intercept and disturb the communications between Dijon and the Army of the South on the side of Chalon and Beaune, today I send a battalion of Württemberg infantry and a company of independent riflemen (*francs-tireur*) to Nuits. You will join this infantry with three squadrons of your regiment and you will act in concert with it. This column was joined by the squadrons of the regiment of Archduke Ferdinand Hussars, Major Barthos posted at Chalon-sur-Saône. Do not maltreat unarmed peasants; but *shoot all that are taken in arms. Burn, if need be, a few houses, take and destroy the arms, and threaten to burn a few villages.*"<sup>41</sup>

On his part, the Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg had thought fit to support the Prince of Coburg; but instead of sending him from the corps of Prince Philip of Hesse-Homburg, which was at Vienne, and who might have arrived more quickly on the side of Saint-Étienne, he preferred to have resorted to the Hardegg Division,<sup>42</sup> posted on his extreme left, although it had made contact with the enemy, that had succeeded corresponding with Klebelsberg, and that had long marches to make to return to the right bank of the Rhône.

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<sup>40</sup> Major Barthos (of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment of Hussars) to Lieutenant-Colonel Count of Blankenstein at Dijon, Chalon-sur-Saône, 29 March. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 488.)

<sup>41</sup>Feldzeugmeister Duka to Colonel Illesy, commander of the Palatine Hussars, 30 March, 9:30 in the morning. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 488.)

<sup>42</sup>Darstellung der Kriegsergebnisse im südlichen Frankreich (*Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, 1821, III).