

The Napoleon Series

The Campaign of 1814: Chapter 20, Part V

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THE CAMPAIGN OF 1814

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

THE ALLIED CAVALRY

DURING THE CAMPAIGN OF 1814

CHAPTER XX.

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

Positions of Generals Marchand and Dessaix. --This inexplicable weakening of the left wing of the Army of the South was not done to facilitate the operations and march of the columns of Generals Klebelsberg and Zechmeister. Fortunately for the Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg, the French generals had forces too insignificant to take advantage of this fault. The column of General Serrant, of which General Dessaix had taken over the command, had been obliged to return to the left bank of the Isère, after having destroyed an arch of the bridge of Montmélian.¹ It

¹"Time failed me," wrote General Dessaix, from La Chavanne, on 30 March, "to destroy the other arch of the bridge of Montmélian, and I had great difficulty in barricading the cut. It would be difficult to destroy the other arch. The enemy occupies the houses and shoots all that appears on the bridge. Besides, 5 pieces of wood, 55 feet in length, are required to restore the destroyed arch, and there are none in Montmélian or in the vicinity. The enemy will not be able to repair it soon."

"The 11th will go to Barraux as soon as the 8th Light is here. I sent the battalion of the 112th to Pontcharra; it furnishes a company to Les Mollettes to guard some fords and to connect with La Chavanne. I survey all the line from Aiguebelette to Conflans, where I shall place a battalion, but I fear that the enemy may occupy this position before us, for I am afraid that the troops designated will only prove delayed." (*Archives of the War.*)

had taken a position at La Chavanne, on the front of Montmélian, while General Marchand guarded the road from Voreppe to Grenoble.

Thus, although he was aware of the weakness of the French troops who defended the valley of Grésivaudan and that of the Isère, and although Colonel Leiningen had arrived before Pierre-Châtel, the Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg thought it necessary to support Wimpffen, and ordered a part of the corps of Prince Philip of Hesse-Hombourg to reinforce his left, and to march from Vienne to Rives. In short, the Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg continued to remain stationary on his positions, and seemed determined not to go back with the main body of the Austrian Army of the South until Augereau had accentuated his retreat in the direction of Montélimar and Pont-Saint-Esprit.

Affair of Saint-Donat. --General Ordonneau, whose rear-guard still occupied Romans and Bourg-de-Péage, profited by the inaction of the Austrians to attempt against the detachment of cavalry which Lederer had sent to Saint-Donat, a coup de main which succeeded perfectly. The French reconnaissance, surprising the Austrian cavalymen, penetrated into the village without being discovered, cut off all that tried to resist, and rejoined, without having been disturbed, the outposts of Ordonneau, bringing with it five officers, a hundred men and 64 horses.²

31 March. --March of the Austrian reserves on Rives. --Detachment of Lieutenant-Colonel Dora on Saint-Laurent-du-Pont. --The day of 31 March passed without any interesting incident. The Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg, seeing that the French persisted in remaining in their positions, on the one hand at Voreppe, on the other between Romans and Valence, prepared to attack these two points simultaneously, as soon as the troops of Prince Philip of Hesse-Hombourg would have arrived at Rives and would be able to support the Wimpffen Division, and as soon as Bianchi would have joined Lederer.

While the 1st Corps and the corps of Prince Philip slowly and methodically executed these movements, Klebelsberg confined himself to making Lieutenant Colonel Dora, who with eight companies of infantry, a squadron of the Emperor Hussars, and 2 canons, come to establish himself at Saint-Laurent-du-Pont with orders to disturb the French posts of the Grande Chartreuse.³

Augereau, on the other hand, persisted in remaining on a passive defense and waiting for events, without taking advantage of favorable opportunities to raise the morale of his troops, without even trying to thwart or to guess the plans of his adversary. Although, as we have said above, he wrote to the Minister of War on the 29th to tell him that he still held the Isère line, that he would defend the ground foot by foot, and would do "whatever was possible for the glory of our arms and the interests of his Majesty,"⁴ he maintained a different language at his headquarters, and had in no way renounced his plans of retreat on the South.

"Your Imperial Highness must have been informed of the occupation of Lyons," wrote General Vedel to the Viceroy of Italy in a letter,⁵ the terms of which do not leave any doubt, nor the intentions of the Duke of Castiglione, nor the little consideration he enjoyed in his army, nor on the little confidence he inspired in the generals under his command. "The Marshal retired to Valence and took a momentary position behind the Isère. He wishes to retire to Pont Saint-Esprit, and has ordered me to reunite with him. Mount Cenis would then be exposed and your army might be taken in the rear. *Unless compelled by the enemy, I shall not execute this order, and I beg Your Imperial Highness to send me instructions.*"

1 April. --Augereau ignores the movements of the Austrians. --Due to the absolutely passive attitude in which he had been satisfied since his arrival at Valence, the Duke of Castiglione was completely ignorant of what was

²Augereau to the Minister, Valence, 1 April (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War*), and Darstellung der Kriegereignisse im südlichen Frankreich (*Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, 1821, III).

³STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III, 1.)

⁴Augereau to the Minister of War, Valence, 29 March. (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War.*)

⁵General Vedel to the King of Italy, Grenoble, 31 March. (*Ibid.*)

being prepared against him. On the 1st of April, while the Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg ordered the Ist Army Corps to close on its leading division, while Prince Philip of Hesse-Hombourg was marching by La Côte-Saint-André on Rives, the Marshal appeared disposed to believe in a ridiculous rumor.

"It is said," he wrote to General Ordonneau,⁶ "that the Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg has left Vienne to return to Lyons, the garrison of which would have been diminished. Have the news checked. This movement could be caused by the Emperor's march on Chaumont."

New letter from Augereau to Clarke. --Besides, more preoccupied with the choice of the specious arguments which justified in his eyes his conduct, than with the necessity of seeking to remedy a situation aggravated by his faults, compromised by his slowness, his softness and his carelessness, the Duke of Castiglione, to which Colonel Baltazar had just handed over the letter written on the 27th by Clarke, lost once more time in protesting against the natural discontent of Napoleon and against the criticisms which the Duke of Feltre had addressed to him on behalf of the Emperor.

"His Majesty," he wrote to him from Valence on the 1st of April,⁷ "knows better than anyone the influence which the great diversion which has been made by me, and the happy result which it has produced by weakening the army of the Prince of Schwarzenberg, which he had in mind. He will therefore have learned *with pain, no doubt, but without astonishment*, of the evacuation of Lyons, which has been abandoned only foot by foot, and after the most obstinate resistance of the 14,000 combatants against 60,000, made of arms which covers the army of Lyon with glory. It is not, then, with gaiety of heart, as your Excellency seems to believe by the painful expression: "*Not content with having abandoned Lyon*, but with the conviction of the uselessness of my efforts to defend this city against an army quadruple mine ... that I decided to evacuate it."

"Your Excellency seems surprised that I have presented my retreat on Pont-Saint-Esprit as probable. It is, however, in my opinion, however, by defending the ground foot by foot, the most military operation to cover, according to the Emperor's intentions, the south of France. For up to that moment, the numerical superiority of the enemy being always the same, there is no possibility of marching upon Lyons, if the Emperor does not send, as a diversion, an army on Mâcon and on Roanne by the Bourbonnais. A movement on Lyon would cut me off and leave me without retreat. On the contrary, the position I occupy now, if I can live there, I am master of my movements, I cover the South, and I can throw myself at will upon Montpellier, Nimes, Marseilles and Toulon, which will not be threatened by new projects of Wellington."

"The enemy has been marching and marching for two days. He seems to be preparing an operation. On my part, I have made multiplied reconnaissances to endeavor to guess and prevent his designs."

Summary of the measures taken against the national uprising and the last operations of armed partisans and peasants. --Before examining the operations to which the valley of Isère was going to serve as the theater until the conclusion of the armistice, we think it useful to summarize here the measures taken by the Allies to put an end to the partisans, security on their lines of communications and to record the last skirmishes, the last coup de main of armed peasants.

On the side of Dijon, Colonel Illesy, arrived from Beaune at Autun on the 1st of April, had been joined by Major Barthos, from Chalon and Couches, and another detachment from the environs of Montcenis. Notwithstanding the presence of these troops at Autun, one of the posts of correspondence furnished by the Archduke-Ferdinand Hussars, and which Major Barthos had established on the road from Chalon to Autun, had nevertheless been attacked and massacred by the peasants, and the colonel had to charge a platoon of hussars and a section of infantry to re-establish this communication, to reestablish this post, and to chastise the inhabitants.⁸

⁶Augereau to General Ordonneau, Valence, 1 April. (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War*.)

⁷Augereau to the Minister of War, Valence, 1 April. (*Id. in ibid.*)

⁸Colonel Illesy to Feldzeugmeister Duka, Autun, 1 April, 8 o'clock in the evening, and Autun, 2 April. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, IV, 307, and IV, 318.)

At Autun himself, he had succeeded in knowing, by the indiscretions of the mayor, "that a certain M. de Place (here we employ the very terms used by the Colonel in his report), which here possesses the Château de Saint- Martin, was on an expedition with the armed peasants." Colonel Illesy ordered a company of Württemberg infantry and a half-squadron of Archduke-Ferdinand Hussars, to raze and burn down the château on the following day.

Informed also by the mayor of Autun of the presence of armed peasants at Chissey-en-Morvan, the Colonel sent two infantry companies and two cavalry platoons to this point, who found no one else and ordered the setting fire to a mill and a few houses.⁹ But, as the Colonel himself acknowledged, these measures produced but insignificant results. "The bands of armed peasants do not await our approach," wrote Colonel Illesy. "They scattered in the woods and reformed after our departure. For reaching in this rugged and covered area with forest, one would have to act with flying columns of light infantry. I am nevertheless going to scour the woods and beg you to send me some companies that I will leave in garrison here and to whom I will give orders to operate against these brigands ... I have the families whose children joined armed bands that, if they have not returned within 48 hours, I will confiscate their lands and burn their houses."¹⁰

The Feldzeugmeister Duka, however, did not think it necessary to send the infantry to the Colonel as he asked of him. "We must punish severely and have the whole country beaten," he wrote to him.¹¹

But threats, intimidation, violent repression, and even the execution of the peasants caught in arms, were of no avail, and the armed bands continued their attacks, not only until the cessation of hostilities, but for sometime after the conclusion of the armistice. Outlawed, the peasants refused to recognize the treaties, and renounced their undertakings only when their rage had subsided, only when their thirst for vengeance was satisfied.

To the west and south of Lyons, in the whole region between the Saône, the Rhône and the Loire, the national uprising had taken place more slowly and later, and although it could not have been generalized, nor to organize itself as strongly as in Burgundy and the Charolais, it nevertheless had strong roots in the populations. The 2nd of April, General Poncet, announcing to the Minister the arrival at Saint-Étienne of the reinforcements sent to the Prince of Coburg, informed him of the advance of the Austrian scouts, and informed him that he had ordered the Count de Montholon, he found too far from the Loire, to approach this river and to take the direction of Feurs.¹²

The next day, 3 April, the partisans, knowing that the Austrians were throwing over a pontoon bridge at Feurs, and thence sending parties to Roanne, attacked the Austrians three quarters league from Feurs, threw them back, and destroyed the bridge.¹³ But the arrival of the Austrian reinforcements soon put an end to the progress of the partisans. The 10th of April, the Austrians, who had debouched from Saint-Étienne and crossed the Loire near Saint-Rambert, seized Montbrison. Another of their columns threatened Roanne,¹⁴ broke in these districts the last impulses of resistance, and obliged the partisans and the armed peasants to disperse.

2 April. --Night affair at Clérieux. --The reports reaching Augereau in the afternoon and evening of the 1st of April had drawn the Marshal's attention to the preparatory movements of the Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg, and especially pointed out to him the march of the 1st Corps, gradually bringing him closer to Tain. The Marshal,

⁹Colonel Illesy to Feldzeugmeister Duka, Autun, 1 April, 8 o'clock in the evening, and Autun, 2 April. (*Ibid.*, IV, 307, and IV, *ad* 324.)

¹⁰Colonel Illesy to Feldzeugmeister Duka, Autun, 1 April, 8 o'clock in the evening. (*K. K. Kriegs, Archiv.*, IV, 307.)

¹¹Feldzeugmeister Duka to Colonel Illesy, Dijon, 3 April. (*Ibid.*, IV, *ad* 318.)

¹²General Poncet to the Minister of War, Le Puy, 2 April. (*Archives of the War.*)

¹³General Poncet to the Minister of War, Le Puy, 6 April. (*Ibid.*)

¹⁴General Poncet to the Minister of War, Le Puy, 11 April. (*Ibid.*)

however, was far from thinking that his adversary was preparing to take the next day Romans and to drive him out of the right bank of the Isère. He believed all the less in the probability, in the imminence of an attack directed on this point, that one of the reconnaissances of General Ordonneau, informed of the arrival at Clérieux of an Austrian detachment, had obliged him to abandon this post after a short engagement, and had seized his baggage and a number of prisoners.¹⁵

Combat of Romans. --Reassured on this side, Augereau had nevertheless recognized the necessity of covering his right by guarding the passes of the Isère upstream of Romans. Wishing to secure the possibility of watching the movements which the Austrians might think of undertaking in the direction of Grenoble, while distracting him between Tain and Romans, on the evening of 1 April, the Marshal had ordered General Estève to leave Valence at 4 o'clock in the morning, to go and relieve General Ordonneau at Romans, who was to "go up the Isère as far as Saint-Nazaire-en-Royans, and push parties to the little village of La Rivière and the foundry of Saint-Gervais, to oppose the passage of the enemy on these points and to make diversion of his projects on Grenoble."¹⁶

While General Estève executed these orders, and retook the positions of Ordonneau at Romans, the Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg, still believing in the presence of relatively considerable forces on the right bank of the Isère, expecting to see Augereau obediently dispute the passage of the river, had ordered Bianchi to mass at Tain the Lederer Division, and to march against Romans at the head of the two divisions of the 1st Corps. Arriving at Tain in the early hours of the morning, Bianchi had immediately reinforced Lederer with three battalions of infantry (one from the Jerome Colloredo Regiment, the other two from the Esterhazy Regiment) and had given him orders to capture Romans. At two o'clock in the afternoon, the head of the column was stopped at a short distance from Romans by the fire of the French, firmly established in front of the town, in the convent of the Capuchins, and in the houses and gardens which were around. Bianchi, who had rushed to the scene of the fight at the sound of the shooting, and afterwards joined by the Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg, at once ordered the three battalions of infantry, who had formed an intermediate step between the division of Lederer and the troops of Bakony and Quallenberg, to reinforce the frontal attacks of the advanced guard against the convent of the Capuchins and to storm this position as soon as the two other columns detached from the vanguard and charged, one to go around Romans by the north, the other to go south of the road of Tain towards the Isère and to threaten the bridge, would have completed their movement.

Though he had made an accurate account of the intentions of the Austrians, of the danger to which their movement exposed his troops, which were very inferior in number, General Estève decided to retire only on a formal order from Augereau. The Marshal had in fact sent word to him that, "having no intention of occupying and keeping Romans" which he considered to be outside his line, he ordered him, if he could not remain there by fighting obstinately, to retire to the left bank of the Isère by cutting the bridge behind him.¹⁷ General Estève executed his retreat slowly, step by step, and in good order. He began by evacuating the convent of the Capuchins, and returned to Romans, where he vigorously defended himself, executing at all times offensive returns, which, by retarding the march of the Austrians, enabled him to bring back his troops to the left bank, in the ranks of which he had succeeded in maintaining the most perfect order and burning the bridge before the arrival of the regiments of Bianchi.¹⁸

Positions of the two armies on 2 April in the evening. --Master of Romans, the only point which Augereau had preserved on the right bank of the Isère, but more determined than ever to remain on the defensive until the columns of Klebelsberg and Zechmeister had accentuated their movement on Grenoble and seriously threatened this town, the commander of the Austrian Army of the South caused the greater part of the troops of the 1st Corps to be re-

¹⁵Augereau to the Minister, Valence, 3 April. (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War*.)

¹⁶Augereau to General Vedel, commandant of the 2nd Division, and to General Ordonneau, Valence, 1 April, Orders for April 2nd. (*Ibid.*)

¹⁷Augereau to General Estève, Valence, 2 April. (Correspondent of Augereau, *Archives of the War*.)

¹⁸Augereau to the Minister, Valence, 3 April (Correspondence of Augereau; *Archives of the War*); Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg to Prince Schwarzenberg, Rives, 11 April (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, IV, 93), and Darstellung der Kriegsergebnisse im südlichen Frankreich). (*Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, 1821, 11).

entered in their former cantonments between Tain and Saint-Vallier. The Lederer Division was solely responsible for keeping Romans and providing surveillance posts from the confluence of the Isère and the Rhône to the outskirts of the village of La Rivière, near the point where the road from Valence to Geneva ends at the shore Right of the Isère.

On the evening of 2 April, the French troops occupied the following positions around Valence: General Estève had established himself at Péage-de-Romans (now Bourg-de-Péage). General Gudin, with his brigade, guarded the left bank of the river, opposite the destroyed bridge of the Isère, and furnished posts from the Rhône to the environs of Péage-de-Romans.¹⁹

The combat of Romans marks, properly speaking, the end of military operations on the lower Isère. From this moment until the conclusion of the armistice, both sides remained on the defensive in these parts, and, as we have reason to say, they confined themselves to observing and watching the course of the river.

Combat of Voreppe. --The movement of the Ist Army Corps on Romans had coincided with an operation, conducted by Field-Marshal Lieutenant Wimpffen, against the position occupied by Colonel Cubières at Voreppe. The colonel had posted his right on the heights which command the roads of Saint-Laurent-du-Pont and Voiron; his center was entrusted with the defense of the defile of Voreppe, and his left, leaning on the Isère, was flanked by a detachment which, established on the left bank of the river between Saint Quentin and the point of the Échaillon, watched the outlets of Voiron and Moirans.

Field-Marshal Lieutenant Wimpffen, quite accurately informed by his reconnaissances, resolved to outflank the French right by the mountain and thus oblige their left and center to abandon positions whose frontal attack would have cost too much effort and too many people. He attacked Voreppe in four columns. The right-hand column along the Isère had the task of thwarting the action of the French post on the left bank and threatening Voreppe by the south; the second column, marching at the same level as the first, but by the roads of Moirans and Voiron, which meet at the Crue de Moirans about 1500 meters from Voreppe, was to attack the position of Colonel Cubières, to the west side; the third column, following the road from Voiron to La Buisse, was ordered to fill the heights and advance on the plateau of Grand Bois, which dominates Voreppe, while the fourth column (left column) left from Coublevie and crossing the mountain range, would emerge between Saint-Julien-de-Raz and Pommiers-près-Voreppe and take in the rear the lines of Colonel Cubières. Wimpffen had also ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Dora, who formed his extreme left at Saint-Laurent du Pont, to facilitate the march of his fourth column by diverting the attention of the French troops from the Grande Chartreuse.

Delayed in their march by the natural obstacles which they had to overcome, arrested at all times before the abatis and cuts behind which the French posts held good and which they left only to return behind other shelters, the third and fourth columns were able to advance only with extreme slowness and did not effect their junction in the vicinity of Pommiers until the close of night, at about 8 o'clock in the evening, when the French right had already received from Colonel Cubières the order to fall back on him and follow his retreat. As soon as he had been informed of the difficulties which were opposed to the execution of the turning movement on which he had counted, Wimpffen had Voreppe attacked by his first two columns. After a rather lively battle, which lasted several hours, and cost the Austrians about three hundred men, Colonel Cubières evacuated Voreppe, abandoning a dismounted piece, and retired in the most perfect order to the entrenched position of the Combes.²⁰

¹⁹Augereau to General Gudin, Valence, 3 April. (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War.*)

²⁰Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg to the Prince of Schwarzenberg, Rives, 11 April (*K. K. Kriegs, Archiv.*, IV, 93); Darstellung der Kriegsereignisse im südlichen Frankreich (*Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, 1845, III, 278).

Colonel Baltazar, arrived at Valence, wrote to the Minister of War on the 2nd of April: "Augereau has with him the divisions Musnier and Bardet, and that of General Pannetier, of which General Vedel has taken command, and the cavalry of General Digeon. The National Guards occupy the Pont Saint-Spirit. General Marchand, with the troops of Dessaix and the first column from Italy, was ordered to retire by Grenoble, and was to put itself in line behind the Isère... He had an undecided engagement with the enemy at Voreppe. The enemy appeared before Romans today with 6,000 men, of which 2,000 were horses, and we had to return to the left bank of the Isère. (*Archives of the War.*)

The extreme dispersal of the Austrian troops spread over a disproportionately large front, the lack of cohesion and coordination of movements, a natural consequence of this dissemination, the immobility of the main Army of the South, its reentry into its former positions after the affair of Romans, the sending of the Ignatius Hardegg Division on the right bank of the Rhône, the distance which still separated Wimpffen from the head-echelon of the corps of Prince Philip of Hesse-Homburg, the forced slowness of the march of the columns Klebelsberg and Zechmeister, the difficulty of communicating rapidly and surely with these generals, and finally the real strength of the defensive position on which Colonel Cubières had retreated, made it impossible for Wimpffen to continue the offensive and obliged him to give up a strong attack on the Combes, an attack which had no chance of success, until Klebelsberg and Zechmeister became masters of the valley of Grésivaudan, and would have obliged the French troops of the upper Isère either to fall back on Grenoble or to throw themselves into the Maurienne. The presence of the Wimpffen Division in Voreppe, however, had a real significance and importance. The occupation of this point cut off the road from Grenoble to Valence by the valley of the Isère, and rendered the communications between Marchand and Augereau so long and so difficult, that from that moment the French Army of the South was, properly speaking, cut in half.

3-4 April. --Positions of Wimpffen and French troops. --Field Marshal Lieutenant Wimpffen, on the 3rd of April, established himself on the heights of Chevallon, about three kilometers south of Voreppe, and three leagues from the French positions of the Combes. The Gall Brigade, which he had sent at the beginning of his march towards Beaurepaire and La Côte-Saint-André, had occupied Moirans and Tullins on his order, to cover his communications just until the arrival of the troops of Prince Philip of Hesse-Hombourg.

On the side of Valence, Augereau had supported General Vedel with two battalions of the Bardet Division sent from Valence to Bourg-de-Péage and by the Ordonneau Brigade, which had been ordered to move obliquely to the right to approach the Estève Brigade. The Marshal had also ordered General Musnier to return from Loriol to Valence, the Pouchelon Brigade, on the same day, but nevertheless to keep the post of La Voulte securely on the right bank of the Rhône.²¹

Without news of General Marchand, he invited General Vedel, on the evening of the 3rd, to try to communicate with Grenoble, and although he had been engaged for nearly three weeks against the Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg, the Marshal was so ill-informed about the means and resources of his adversary that he wrote to Vedel: "I do not think that the enemy is attempting a river crossing; but I would need to know whether he possesses a pontoon bridge."²²

They remained on both sides of the Isère from Grenoble to the Rhône, in the most absolute stillness throughout the day of 4 April.

5 April. --Arrival of the corps of Prince Philippe of Hesse-Hombourg at Rives. --Prince Philip of Hesse-Hombourg continued, alone and without hurry, his movement, and arrived on the 5th of April at Rives with the commander-in-chief of the Austrian Army of the South. At that moment, the French occupied no more on the right bank of the Isère than the strong position of the Combes, the Grande-Chartreuse and Fort-Barraux. After having destroyed the bridges and the means of passage, Marchand and Dessaix concentrated all their resources at La Chavanne.

In spite of the inaction of the Austrian Army of the South, Augereau was determined not to attempt anything again, and as Colonel Baltazar said in his letter of the 4th: "There is no longer any hope that this army will recover the offensive."²³

²¹Augereau to General Vedel, at the Péage-de-Romans; to General Musnier, at Loriol; to General Bardet, at Valence; to General Ordonneau, at Saint-Nazaire, Valence, 3 April. (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War*.)

²²Augereau to General Vedel, Valence, 3 April, 7 o'clock in the evening. (*Ibid.*)

²³Colonel Baltazar to the Minister of War, Valence, 4 April. (*Archives of the War*.)

5-6 April. --Correspondence of Augereau with the generals placed under his orders. --As if he had watched as a spectator indifferent to all that was going on around him, the Duke of Castiglione became more and more indifferent to the command and fate of his army. Writing on 5 April to Marchand,²⁴ he complained that he had not received news from him for ten days and reminded him that he had pointed out to him the movement of the Austrian columns marching by Bourgoin and La Tour-du-Pin and that he had prescribed to fall back upon him. He announced to him that communications were no longer possible except on the left bank of the Isère. But, no more this time than the others, he did not give him his ideas on the situation, he only sent him orders and instructions. The next day, however, he resolved to let him know "that he had given instructions to General Ordonneau to *unite with him without too much delay, and with orders to bind himself* to the left with the Vedel Division."²⁵

In the mind of the Duke of Castiglione, therefore, a small brigade was sufficient to guard all the left bank of the Isère in order to hold and to guard a line projecting northward, then bending towards the south, and which the sides do not measure less than 56 kilometers of development from Saint-Nazaire to Royans until the confluence of the Drac. The Marshal was so deluded that he did not hesitate to add these significant sentences: "My system of operations is established on the defense of the Isère line ... Your division (the 4th in my army) is intended to cover Grenoble and the upper Isère. If you are forced, you have your retreat assured by the left bank, by supporting you to General Ordonneau."²⁶

The movement of the Brigade Ordonneau had, moreover, far less to connect with General Marchand, as the Marshal was trying to make him believe, than to seek to know, by extending the right of General Vedel, whether it was true that "the Austrians would have decided to make everyone cross over at Romans."²⁷

7 April. --Movements of the French troops on the lower Isère and towards Grenoble. --A few hours later the Marshal knew what had taken place and as the Austrians had executed part of their movements under the very eyes of the French outposts on the left bank during the course of the 7th of April Augereau was able to inform Marchand that a column of 1,500 to 1,800 men and 5 guns had left Romans to ascend the Isère and that it had been replaced by other troops from Clérieux.²⁸

From that moment on, doubt was impossible. It was evident that the Austrian Army of the South was preparing to carry out a movement of concentration on his left, that it was preparing to attack Grenoble, and that it had no intention of threatening Valence. It seemed therefore logical and natural to immediately support the Vedel Division, to reinforce the posts upstream of Bourg-de-Péage by the divisions of Bardet, Musnier and Digeon and to reduce the number of troops employed downstream and employ in the surveillance of the lower Isère until its confluence with the Rhône.

The Marshal, however, did not dare to take such a rational course. Fearing to uncover Valence, he ordered General Bardet "to reunite his whole division on the 8th of April, with the exception of the three battalions detached with General Ordonneau, to the burned bridge of Isère, and to relieve the brigade of Gudin there, who was to join Vedel at Péage-de-Romans (Bourg-de-Péage)." In doing so, the Marshal did not in any way reinforce Vedel, since he at the same time ordered the two battalions of Bardet, established just from there to Bourg-de-Péage, to rally their division at the burned bridge immediately after the arrival of the Gudin Brigade. On the other hand, instead of a

²⁴Augereau to General Marchand, Valence, 5 April. (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War*.)

²⁵Augereau to General Marchand, Valence, 6 April. (*Ibid.*)

²⁶Augereau to General Marchand, Valence, 6 April. (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War*.)

²⁷Augereau to General Vedel, Valence, 6 April. (*Ibid.*)

²⁸Augereau to General Marchand, Valence, 7 April. (*Ibid.*)

brigade, he would henceforth have an almost entire division at the extreme left of his lines.²⁹

8 April. --Movements of the Austrian troops on the right bank of the Isère. --The Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg, having arrived, as we have said before, on the 5th of April at Rives, where he had established his headquarters, had for his part given up expecting results from the intervention of the columns coming from Geneva, the appearance and march of Klebelsberg and Zechmeister in front of Montmélian, their progress in the valley of Grésivaudan and their passage on the left bank of the Isère. He had accordingly resolved to move the division of Wimpffen and the corps of Prince Philip of Hesse-Homburg to Grenoble, and ordered the 1st Corps (Bianchi) to draw nearer to him on the right bank of the river, Isère.

It was besides this movement which had motivated the instructions sent to Generals Vedel and Bardet on 7 April, that the Marshal alluded in his letter to the Minister, dated the 8th:

"My position is remains such as I have made known to your Excellency by my letter of the 3rd," he wrote to Clarke.³⁰ "Since that time, the enemy appears to make a movement on his left and threatens Grenoble. I have General Marchand, who covers this town and the upper Isère,³¹ supported. I have learned from a letter from the Duke of Bassano to the Prefect of the Drôme, of the occupation of Paris, and the arrival of his Majesty at Essonnes."

In conclusion, the Marshal asked for both news and instructions. It seems, moreover, that he counted very little on an answer, since on the same day he consented to receive an Austrian parliamentarian at Saint-Marcel-lès-Valence on the road from Valence to Romans.³²

Concentration of the troops of Klebelsberg and Zechmeister upstream of Montmélian. --Zechmeister passes the Isère to Conflans. --It would have been all the more necessary, however, to support General Marchand, as his position grew worse from day to day. The columns of Klebelsberg and Zechmeister, which one left on 29 March in Chambéry and Annecy, now bordered the right bank of the Isère upstream of Montmélian and came, at the order of Bubna, arrived in person at Chambéry, to concentrate between Saint-Pierre-d'Albigny and Fréterive. The height of the waters swelled by the melting of the snows, the rapidity of the current, and the want of sufficient means, had thwarted all their attempts at passage, both at Montmélian and on the side of Fréterive, and prevented the Austrian generals from troubling the position of the French at La Chavanne. But on 8 April Zechmeister, who had succeeded in building a number of rafts, succeeded in crossing the Isère upstream of Conflans, and throwing on the right bank of the Arc three battalions, artillery and two squadrons.

He detached at the same time three companies of infantry on Moûtiers and the upper Isère. Their leader, Lieutenant-Colonel Wahler, was, in passing through Saint-Martin-de-Belleville to the valley of the Arc, in the vicinity of Saint-Michel, barring the road to Mont Cenis and taking in the rear the troops French people who were withdrawing from Aiguebelle.

9 April. --Battle of Bonvillaret. --The next day, 9 April, the bulk of the troops of Zechmeister attacked the French detachment stationed at Bonvillaret, obliging them him to return to the left bank of the Arc, but could not prevent it from cutting behind them the bridge of Aiguebelle and establishing on the spur of Aiton.³³

²⁹Augereau to General Bardet and General Vedel, Orders of Movement for 8 April, Valence, 7 April. (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War*.)

³⁰ Augereau to the Minister of War, Valence, 8 April. (*Ibid.*)

³¹The reinforcements, of which Augereau speaks here to the Minister, consisted only of the weak brigade of General Ordonneau.

³²Augereau to General Vedel. (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War*.)

³³Kriegsereignisse in Savoyen; Tagebuch der K. K. Generals baron Zechmeister. (*Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, 1846).

Klebelberg had been less fortunate than Zechmeister. The speed of the current, the vigilance and the activity of General Serrant had foiled all his attempts to cross at Fréterive and upset the repair work on the Pont de Montmélian.

The Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg sends to his army marching on Grenoble the order to stop. --On the same day, while Augereau was only thinking of sending from Valence to Saint-Péray, on the right bank of the Rhône, a company of voltigeurs from the brigade of Pouchelon,³⁴ whom he had recalled from Loriol, to prescribe to this company to retreat if it were compelled to do so on La Voulte, where General Musnier had a battalion, the Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg, tired of waiting for the operation of Bubna, had given Wimpffen and Prince Philip of Hesse, the order to march by Cornillon and Saint-Égrève against the Combes. The Austrian troops had already begun their movement, when the Crown Prince of Hesse-Hombourg received official notice of the events of Paris and Essonnes, the constitution of the Provisional Government, and the signing of the armistice. Stopping his columns at once, he made them return to their former positions.

10 April. --Last orders of Augereau. --At that moment neither Augereau, Bubna, Marchand, Klebelberg, Serrant, or Zechmeister knew anything of the cessation of hostilities. Thus the commander of the Austrian Army of the South, knowing the character of his adversary, was careful not to communicate to him at once this grave and important news. It is certain that the Duke of Castiglione and Marchand were completely ignorant on 10 April of the reasons for the sudden termination of the movement of Wimpffen, since, in reply to the letter in which Marchand reported to him the impossibility of leaving a garrison at Grenoble,³⁵ the Marshal authorized the general to evacuate that town, should he be compelled to do so. He added that Generals Vedel and Ordonneau informed him of the presence and concentration of 10,000 Austrians at Saint-Paul-lès-Romans, and expected to be attacked from one moment to another. The Marshal concluded his dispatch by saying, "that he *had no news from Paris*, and that he believed his majesty on the Loire towards Blois."³⁶ The last orders which the Marshal sent to General Vedel were, moreover, conceived in analogous terms: "The enemy," he wrote to him, "still on the 10th, seems to wish to attack Grenoble. It will undoubtedly make a diversion on you. Be on your guard."³⁷

11 April. --Last military operations in Dauphiné and Savoie. --In pursuing a goal which it is only too easy to guess, the Crown Prince of Hesse-Homburg had naturally refrained from informing Bubna, Klebelberg, and Zechmeister of the news he had just received from the general headquarters. He knew that these generals had only a handful of men in front of them. He risked nothing, therefore, by letting them continue their operations on the upper Isère, and, moreover, he had every interest in procuring them the means, and allowing them time to set foot on the left bank of the Isère, to give them the opportunity of compelling the French to evacuate Grenoble, and then to reserve to themselves the advantages resulting from the taking and possession of that great city.

Passage of the Isère by Bubna and the Arc by Zechmeister. --Movements of Zechmeister on Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne. --It was indeed on the 11th of April only, that the Austrian troops of Klebelberg and Zechmeister settled on the left bank of the Isère. During the days of the 9 and 10 April General Serrant had succeeded, not without difficulty, in arresting Klebelberg, in preventing him from completing the bridge of Montmélian and attacking La Chavanne. But on the morning of the 11th, Bubna, relinquishing the necessity of forcing the passage at Montmélian himself, made the bulk of his forces cross over the bridge which had just been completed at Fréterive, and proceeded against La Chavanne. Thanks to this movement, which diverted the attention of the French and

³⁴Augereau to General Pouchelon, Valence, 9 April. (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War*.)

³⁵General Marchand at Augereau, Grenoble, 9 April. (*Archives of the War*.)

³⁶Augereau to General Marchand, Valence, 10 April. (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War*.)

Augereau had paid little attention to the organization of the defense of the Dauphiné, that he had not thought of supplying Grenoble, and had no notion of the absence of any kind of resources in terms of food and munitions in this city.

³⁷Augereau to General Vedel, Valence, 10 April. (Correspondence of Augereau, *Archives of the War*.)

compelled them to divide their already extremely small forces, Major General Bentheim finally succeeded in completing the rehabilitation of the bridge of Montmélian and pushing straight on La Chavanne while Zechmeister crossed the Arc in Aiguebelle.

Threatened both on his front and on his right, recognizing the impossibility of maintaining himself longer at La Chavanne, General Serrant went to take up his position at Pontcharra. General Dessaix, for his part, had withdrawn with two battalions on Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne, and had been followed at a distance by Zechmeister. This general, charged with observing the valley of the Arc, and watching the movements of the French, stopped the bulk of his brigade at Aiguebelle, and pushed on La Chambre and Pontamafrey parties which advanced a few kilometers from Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne³⁸ and retreated on the following day, as soon as they had received notice of the suspension of hostilities which Bubna signed on the 11th in the evening with Serrant.³⁹

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³⁸Darstellung der Kriegereignisse im Südlichen Frankreich. (*Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, 1821, III.)
Kriegereignisse in Savoyen; Tagebuch der K. K. Generals baron Zechmeister. (*Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, 1846).

³⁹Bubna to Marchand, Chambéry, 12 Apr 1814 (*Archives of the War*) and General Serrant, Order of the Day for 12 April. (*Ibid.*)