

The Napoleon Series

The Germans under the French Eagles: Volume IV

The Regiment of the Saxon Duchies – Chapter Three Part IV

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THE

REGIMENT OF THE SAXON DUCHIES

THIRD CHAPTER

WAR AGAINST AUSTRIA (1809)

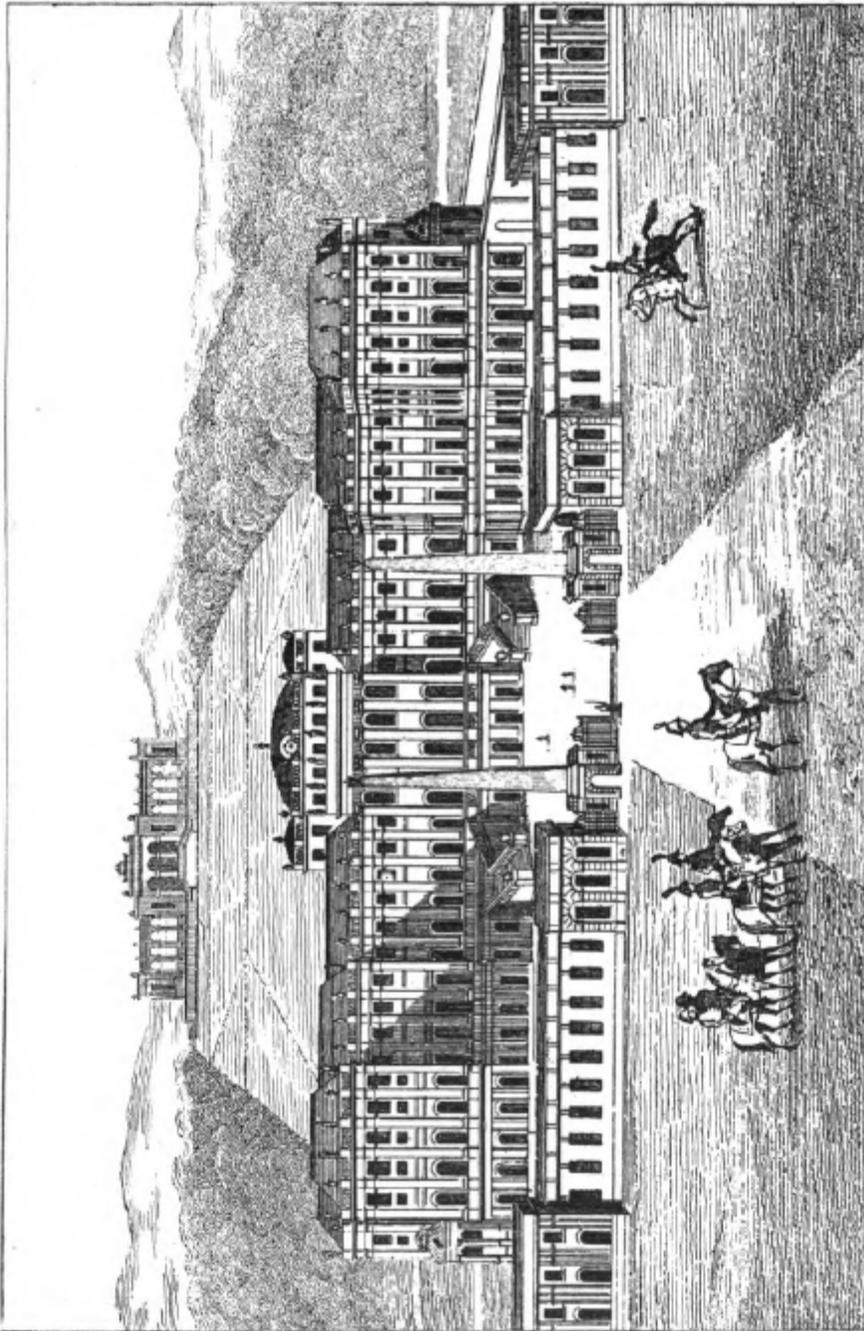
IV. -- Vienna.

The Rouyer Division remained at Salzburg until 1 September; it set out on this date to proceed by Amstetten and Melk to Sankt Pölten, where it arrived on the 8th, and remained until the 20th of the same month. During this time the music of the regiment of the Duchies was recompensed so well as most of the musicians remained prisoners of the Tyrolese at Ober-Au. It was at Sankt Pölten that each soldier received the fifty-sous allowance granted by the Emperor on the 15th of August, on the occasion of his feast.

After having been in pain, the Germans of General Rouyer were going to be honored. On the 21st of September, the division entered Vienna, and was placed there at the palace of Lichtenstein; General Dumas passed a preparatory review on the glacies of the suburb of Mariahulf, and on the 23rd a review of the Emperor took place at Schönbrunn.

The division was formed before the Palace, General Rouyer on foot, to the right. Soon the Emperor appeared, followed by a numerous escort: he immediately went before the front of the 4th Regiment, making the superior officers advance, he inquired into all the peculiarities relating to the regiment; then he made conversation with the 1st Battalion, on the right, deployed by company; the officers and non-commissioned officers being placed to the right of the companies, he inspected each of them. Napoleon inquired successively all the officers, wishing to know their name, rank, country of origin, number of years of service; to the commanders of companies, he demanded the number of their troops, the number of the sick and the wounded, where they were; nothing escaped the eye of the Emperor; he looked with satisfaction at the holes which the bullets of the Tyroleans had made in the shakos of many officers and soldiers, and addressing them, inquired whether they have their provisions and their effects, if the pay is regularly paid to them; he took several men out of the ranks, ordering them to unpack their packs and visiting the contents in detail. The inspection of the light battalion took place in the same way.

At the order of the Emperor, Colonel von Egloffstein caused the column to be deployed to the left, and the regiment being in battle formation, to present the arms and cross the bayonet; then the regiment, formed on the right in



Château de Schönbrunn.

Palace of Schönbrunn.

column by platoon, marched before the Emperor, who expressed his satisfaction to the Colonel, and ordered him to send a letter to the Governments of the Duchies, expressing his desire to maintain in their provisional command, or to appoint to the higher rank all Saxon officers present at this review after having escaped death or captivity.

The division returned joyously to Vienna, where each soldier received a pair of shoes as a present of the Emperor. It was a very valuable gift after the long marches of the preceding month.

The regiment of the Duchies soon after received new marks of Imperial satisfaction: on account of its fine conduct in the Tyrol, two pieces of artillery were attached to it, and on 2 October Colonel von Egloffstein received the star of the Legion of Honor to the great joy of the whole regiment.

Released on 10 October for Linz, the Rouyer Division stayed in this town, or in the neighborhood, until 20 December.

It was here that the conclusion of the peace signed on the 14th at Vienna was learned on 17 October; this news was celebrated by a great military fete, with salvos of artillery.

The regiment of the Duchies received an additional detachment at Linz on 20 November. On the 24th of the same month, the company of sappers returned to the corps, again consisting of 2 officers and 78 men: it had made the whole campaign at the reserve of the great park of the Grande Armée, in a small battalion of 300 to 400 men formed with the sappers of the regiment of Würzburg, the regiment of the Saxon Duchies and that of Nassau. This company, part of Gotha, on 11 April, rejoined the regiment during its stay at Ingolstadt; it was 140 men strong, of which 56 were from Gotha, 39 from Coburg, 15 from Meiningen and 30 from Weimar and Hildburghausen. Headed on Linz and Vienna where it arrived on 21 May, it remained in the Austrian capital until 4 July, attached to the third echelon of the artillery park of the Grande Armée. It then proceeds to Lobau, crossed on to the left bank of the Danube, where it remained during the whole battle of Wagram; on the 6th of July it is called to the front; but it did not take part in the combat.

Following to the movements of the army, it bivouacked at Neusiedle, when it was suddenly announced that the Austrian cavalry had arrived and marched on the park... The latter was immediately formed on a height, the cannons were placed behind shoulders previously constructed by the enemy, and every one waited under arms for the arrival of the Austrian cavalry. It was only a false alarm; the reported cavalry was Württemberg and an ally! The company of sappers followed the reserve park to Znaïm and returned to Brunn on 15 July; it had returned to Vienna at the end of September, and at length joined its regiment, as we have just seen, at Linz, after having accompanied the Grand Armée until the peace in the celebrated campaign of 1809; the sappers were divided into their respective contingents.

On 15 December, the German division of General Rouyer left Linz to go to Mannheim, where it arrived on 10 January 1810 by the Eferding, Passau, Neunkirchen, Straubing, Ratisbon, Abensberg, Ingolstadt, Neuburg, Ettingen and Heilbronn.

During this long march there was a rumor that division was passing into the service of France, and was about to be employed in Spain. Numerous desertions immediately began to occur, and the colonel was obliged to issue an order, saying that "the commanders of the company had to inform the soldiers that the object of the march was Mannheim, a city situated in Germany, though on the left bank of the Rhine; that the whole division was concentrating on this point, where a corps of observation was organized; that there was no question of a march on Spain; the men were to continue to serve faithfully as in the past, and not to throw disgrace upon their sovereign, upon their officers, and upon themselves."

Reassured by this declaration, the regiment arrived at Mannheim, where it found an order from Major-General Berthier, announcing that the division was destined for Spain; the departure was to take place on 17 January. The night before, 200 men deserted, including 135 from the Gotha contingent - and among them the Colonel's own secretary ...

It was under these conditions that the regiment of the Duchies was about to begin a new campaign, under a very

different climate, and against implacable adversaries; we shall see, after a brilliant expedition, melt and disappear little by little, destroyed by the privations and fatigues of the Spanish war.

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