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Fighting with and against Napoleon: The Memoirs of Jan Willem van Wetering

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JAN WILLEM VAN WETERING (born in Zwolle, 15 September 1789 – died in Zwolle, 1 February 1859) was only 14 years old when he joined the army of the Batavian Republic. He retired from the army in 1848, after a long and distinguished career. Even at 14 he was quite tall, being immediately made a soldier instead of a drummer; he is soon transferred to the grenadier company, and he remains a grenadier during his active service. Throughout the memoir, one finds that Van Wetering was a fine soldier, who not only did his duty, but also took good care of those he commanded, though he never boasts about his actions. Company commanders offer him a place in their companies, and one even goes as far as to trick him into a bar fight, in order to tarnish his reputation and prevent him from being transferred to the Guard Grenadiers, -although he later is still invited to join the Guard. His memoirs are however still full of details such as descriptions of the routes, with distances (in hours) and dates of the marches. He added more information, like an order of battle for the Netherlands army at Waterloo, or a list of names of the Dutch soldiers who returned with the Russo-German Legion.

The hardships he suffers during the campaign in Russia and life as a prisoner of war are the greatest part of this memoir, and it is only too bad he only give as minimal account of his service in the Russo-German Legion. After returning to the Netherlands, he joins the army again, takes part in the 1815 campaign, and ends his career as a respected and decorated officer, but only because he senses he is becoming too old to do his work properly.

Mr. J.A. van Vledder found this handwritten memoir when he was a young boy, "in a dark corner of an attic in Almelo"; it was covered by "a thick layer of dust and eaten by mice". He read the memoirs and kept them. Years later, he noticed the paper was crumbling and the writing was fading ever more, so he decided to make a digital copy. He followed the text closely, including spelling mistakes. All underlining was added by Van Wetering, but Van Vledder also decided to underline the topographical names. He divided the text in chapters. Where the text had faded too much, and he was uncertain of what it read, he put the words between brackets.

I received a digital copy of the text in 2002. When making this translation, I made a new division of the story in chapters. The underlining of topographical names has been left out; the spelling of the topographical names is not the original from the manuscript, but the modern English equivalents. The parts in brackets in the digital version are incorporated into the text, unless there was nothing filled in, or there is doubt about what should be filled in; in that case, only brackets are given without text, like this: [...].

The part of the text regarding Waterloo was translated and published on the Napoleon Series' website earlier by Bas de Groot. This translation has been incorporated in this document unaltered, and is marked at beginning and end with [***].

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Marc Geerdink Schaftenaar

Fighting with and against Napoleon

Joining the Army

“During the time of the Batavian Republic, the general feeling with the upcoming generation seemed to be more and more willing to join the Batavian army. To make this easier, recruiters were placed in all towns of our Republic. My birthplace was not an exception, as one might imagine. I saw many of my comrades go to different units from time to time. The desire to choose that class started to become more and more lively, and but because my parents seemed to have different ideas about me labouring in civilian society (I was already sent as an apprentice to a Master Watchmaker), the attempt I would undertake to enlist would most likely fail. Here, I had to devise a trick, and it worked. I asked my mother (because it was to her and my grandparents I owe my upbringing, because my father had already enlisted with the Prince of Orange in 1780 and was now with the 4th Demi-Brigade garrisoned in Amsterdam), requested my mother to go for 8 days to my aunt in Amsterdam for fun, and also to be able to visit my father. This, I was allowed to do.

My mother came along with the skipper and requested that I was even delivered at my aunt. This was done, and when I arrived in Amsterdam, I was delivered *franco* at the house of my aunt, miss Nieuweveen, where I was greeted with open arms. A messenger was sent immediately to my father, that he had to quickly come over to his sister. He arrived immediately and we embraced each other very heartily. I pleasantly spent 8 days there. The day for my return was decided upon, and I said goodbye to my aunt and went with my father to the ship.

Because we had to travel quite a distance before we would arrive at the ship, I had the opportunity to ask my father to stay with him for 24 hours more, to see the layout of the barracks. This I was allowed to do. When I was alone with my father, I let him know my wish, and asked him not to send me back to Zwolle, but to have me enlisted with him as a drummer. My father had much to object to this, as I had expected. He wanted me to leave the next day I told him that I would do his bidding, but that I would enlist as a drummer with the artillery as soon as I arrived in Zwolle. This made him think, and when he saw that I could not be persuaded to go back on my decision, he finally agreed with my request, under the condition that I would not be a drummer, but immediately enlist as a soldier, which I did.

I was not yet 14 years old, but had already grown quite tall. My father went to the recruiting captain with me. Here some difficulties arose. I was too young to be enlisted as a soldier, but regarding that I was a child of the regiment, he would enlist me, and so my military career began.

Having enlisted as a volunteer with the 1st Battalion, 4th demi-brigade on May 13 1803, and having been taught a little in the manual of arms, I marched with the Battalion to the Camp of *Kraantje Lek* near Zandvoort. In the fall back to Amsterdam. In the spring of 1804 to the Camp near Zeist [also known as] Camp Maramont, where we camped with over 30,000 men of Batavian and French troops.

This was a camp of pleasure, which is always remembered as delightful by the soldiers who had been there. The generals, field officers and company officers, and the men were camped in linen tents, but soon the forest of Zeist took it from view and remade everything into green lanes. The tents of the generals, field officers and NCO's were soon planted with bushes, taken from the aforementioned forest, and upwards growing pine trees. The number consistent with the rank they held, so Lieutenant-Generals eight, Major-Generals six, Colonels four, Lieutenant-Colonels and Majors two pine trees. The tents of the other officers, NCO's and men were planted and covered to taste, so there was a garden as far as the eye could see. Then there were laid out with all the generals and field officers, imperial gardens in the front and in

the back, and it was noticed that some generals had, as a pastime, some miniature fortifications had been made, which were done very skilfully.

The last row was that of the sutlers. Here you could find what you would search for in vain in a small town. Playhouses, coffeehouses, societies, stable holders, taverns, lodgings, watchmakers, apothecaries, butchers, grocers and dance halls. In one word, everything you wished for could be found there.

This camp was visited daily by a large number of strangers. One for family, the other out of love, a 3rd for entertainment, a 4th to make a profit in business, and so on. The greatest entertainment one could find was every Sunday and on Holidays. You shouldn't be surprised then to see 1,000 carts in the camp from all over the country. The reason for the gathering of this enormous mass of spectators was that every Sunday and Holiday either a splendid parade, a general inspection or grand manoeuvres with live firing would take place. When the latter had to be done, we were under arms from 6 in the morning until 2 in the afternoon. When we returned to our tents completely wet from sweat, blackened from the powder smoke, tired and with an empty stomach, a double ration was awaiting us, which was eagerly taken in. Immediately to work to clean the weapons and clothing. Meanwhile, the cooks, who had stayed in the camp, would make the tables ready and we would eat there.

Meanwhile, many had received word that one or more members of their family were waiting for him in the tavern. Also, the day before it was announced what entertainment there would be, like running for a watch, climbing in the mast, goose pulling or goose cutting, and other such games.

Because the tables are at that time well served because of the double rations, they were however soon done. Everyone goes to his tent, puts on his Sundays' best (according to regulations of course), and went to look for the entertainment of his choosing. There was no more roll call that day, and tattoo was beaten one or two hours later. One could not imagine the swarming, singing, dancing, playing, walking or watching that took place. There were entertainment comedies and dance parties that lasted until the next morning. Next day, one could see in the morning people with empty pockets leaving the camp in groups, and the usual duty was again accepted by the men with a merry heart, that is, when it was our divisions' turn to work at the Pyramid. We were given a ration of gin then, the soup was eaten earlier on, and then marching to the Pyramid. Upon arrival, we would find everything ready for work, like: bags, baskets, wheel barrows, shovels, and further everything necessary for bringing sand for building the Pyramid. Everyone chose the tool he could use best for working. Even the commander in chief Maramont¹ was not exempted from this task. In the foundation of this Pyramid is placed a lead chest with all the names of the field- and company officers and men who formed the camp and the surrounding cantonments. In the year 1806, King Louis Napoleon ordered the building of houses near the Pyramid to form a village, which was named Austerlitz.

In fall, the camp was broken up. Every corps marched to their garrison, and we, now the 10th Batavian Infantry Battalion, marched to Haarlem. Garrisoned there until the spring of 1805. From there to the camp near Den Helder, Nieuwediep and Huisduinen. In this camp, the 10th, 19th and 20th Battalion formed the 8th Infantry Regiment and detached to Petten. From there to Den Helder. Here we received orders to advance to Austria.

¹ General Auguste de Marmont (20 July 1774 – 2 March 1852)

Campaigns against Austria and Prussia, 1805-1809

We marched to Nijmegen. There we received the campaign equipment like cooking vessels, buckets, tin plates, axes and forage bags. Every man a linen bag to sleep in when in bivouac and six packets of live cartridges. I then left the fatherland and marched along the Rhine to Cologne, Bonn. In this town, we received the order to cut off our pigtails. From there to Andernach, Coblenz, Mainz, Frankfurt, Ansbach, Weissenburg, Ingolstadt, Augsburg, Ulm. A few days before having laid in bivouac and having bombarded this fortress, she has surrendered to us with 32,000 Austrians. From there again to Augsburg, where a depot of our regiment remained. Because my father and I served in the same company, and he had to stay behind in the depot because of his old age, he requested I'd remain with him there. The captain asked if I was inclined to stay with my father, which I declined and said goodbye to my father and marched with the Regiment to München, Salzburg, Linz and then to Vienna. It was in this imperial capital that we had a few days rest for the first time, and also to wait for the stragglers who came in droves from all corps.

We had had to deal with a lot of difficulties since we had left Ulm. Not only with the enemy, but also with the high mountains, especially in the morning when it had been freezing during the night. It had happened more than once that the horses were not able to pull the artillery pieces up the mountain (due to the frozen roads). The order was then given to tie on the ice creepers (because every soldiers had received a pair). Then we had to pull the artillery pieces up the mountain instead of the horses. It was then that, when we advanced in the morning from the bivouac and having marched for about an hour, we had to march with gravel and small pebbles, thawed by the rain or sun and trodden by the Cavalry, coming up to our ankles. For that, we were provided with new shoes every morning when needed, and every man had to have a pair of shoes on his backpack as well. It is because of this difficult march that so many men stayed behind because most of them ruined their feet, due to the fine gravel mixed in with water seeping into the shoes.

When we had remained in Vienna for about 14 days and the corps had been made replenished, we were ordered to advance to Austerlitz, but we had hardly marched a few miles down the route when we received counter orders. We were directed to enter Steyermark. Our march went through Vienna again to Neustadt, where I became sick and was forced to stay behind a few days. Meanwhile, the Regiment marched across Brück near the Moor to Gratz. Here it remained. Our company was ordered, together with a detachment of French horse chasseurs to capture and occupy a magazine, filled with war necessities, which was guarded by Hungarian hussars and Tyrolean *Jägers*. The Hungarians and Tyroleans were defeated, and we took possession of it and stayed there until the peace was signed. This magazine was situated in the town of Kassenberg. It was here that I returned again to the company, which delighted me very much. I pity all those that have to stay behind. No one cares about the sick. One has to fend for himself, so the straggler is a pitiful creature nobody takes notice of.

When the peace was signed, our regiment was ordered to advance to Italy, but when we were ready to start marching, we received a counter order and marched through Tyrol to Innsbrück (capital of that region). We then marched from town to town, from hamlet to hamlet, until in Heidelberg, where I fell ill due to fatigue. The march from Gratz through Tyrol went across high mountains, which were so high that the clouds drifted so low that one could wash their hands in it. I was taken into the hospital, but after 8 days, those who the doctor thought were capable of being transported, were evacuated to Frankfurt to await their recovery in a hospital there. That included me, and I had to stay there for 14 days until I had recovered. Me and three other men received the marching papers to Nassau where I joined the company. The regiment had been camping during the time that I was in the hospital. Then we broke down the camp and marched about the same route back to Nijmegen. From there to Arnhem, Zutphen, Deventer,

Zwolle, Meppel, Steenwijk, Wolvega, and finally Leeuwarden. Here we remained in garrison, but for a short time, from April 1806 to September².

When Napoleon had declared war on Prussia, the Dutch army had to advance as well. We marched to Groningen, where we were inspected by Lieutenant-General Daendels and the Voltigeur company was formed. I was enlisted into the first company as Voltigeur. I was really pleased with this small promotion. I gained half a *stuiver*³ a day, we were allowed to carry a sabre for half a *stuiver* a day, sabre epaulettes (green) and a plume. This was all very pleasant.

Our regiment was cantoned along the Prussian borders. We in Bourtange first, then Nieuweschans, then Delfzijl. From there we advanced across the borders and moved to Lier. From there we moved to Embden. This town had a Prussian garrison that we had to drive out and occupy the town, which was done, although not without encountering opposition. Then to Aurich, Jever and Oldenburg where we remained for some time. Then we moved to Bremen. This was warty in 1807. Here I was transferred to the 1st Grenadier Company. From here we marched to Kokshaven, from there to Staaten, then again to Bremen. Then we were ordered to go to Colberg. When we had helped to capture that fortress, we entered Swedish Pomerania. After driving out the Swedes we marched again to Bremen. Having rested there for some time we advanced through Harburg to Hamburg. We were in quarters in that town from late 1807 to April 1809 (apart from a few months we had stayed in the Duchies of Holstein and Sleswick).

Then the Prussian Major Schil⁴ advanced with his free corps, which we had to pursue, and capture if possible⁵. We crossed Leipzig, Dresden, all of Saxony, Bohemia, Prussia, Westphalia and all the way into Mecklenburg, where we captured in Wismar two ships with ammunition and clothing, destined for Schil's corps, which probably came from England. There we also heard that Schil with his corps, now over 4,000 men strong, had moved into Stralsund (which was ours and had a garrison of two companies of French artillery and the Mecklenburg troops, which he captured), where he had the Swedish fortress reinforced as well as possible to put up a defence there.

We advanced on the 31st of May 1809 up to the batteries of the fortress. Here we stood in line and suffered much from the artillery fire. Meanwhile, the 6th Dutch Regiment with the Horse Artillery and Danish troops were making ready to storm the fortress, which failed however. They were beaten back with many dead and wounded. We advanced with levelled muskets until under the batteries. There we were ordered to fall to our knees, so most of the cannon

² In 1806, Napoleon created the Kingdom Holland with his brother Louis as king. The army of the former Batavian Republic was reorganized. The regiment that Van Wetering served in was reorganized into the 9th Infantry Regiment and received new uniforms very quickly.

³ A Stuver was 16 pennies or 8 *duiten*; 20 stuivers was 1 guilder.

⁴ Major Ferdinand Baptista von Schill (6 January 1776 – 31st May 1809), commander a free corps which he led against the Bonaparte regime in Westphalia.

⁵ Order of battle for the 3rd Dutch division in 1809:

Commander: Lieutenant-General Pierre-Guillaume Gratien

Chief of staff: Lieutenant-General Antoine-Benedict Carteret, adjutants: Lieutenants Berg and Stuers

1st Brigade: Major-General Carl Heinrich Wilhelm Anthing

6th Infantry Regiment

7th Infantry Regiment

2nd Brigade: Major-General Johan Coenraad van Hasselt

8th Infantry Regiment

9th Infantry Regiment

2nd Cuirassier Regiment

1 Company of Foot Artillery

2 Companies of Horse Artillery

Total: 6,000 men.

balls and shrapnel that came from the enemy batteries flew over us., while our Voltigeurs clambered up the batteries from all sides and shot the artillerymen that came into range. Meanwhile we fired continually from down on our knees. When the artillery fire diminished, we stood up and stormed across the bridge and up the batteries. We lost a lot of men in this charge. General Kartret⁶, both the Lieutenant-Colonels of the 1st and 2nd Battalions, Batenburg and Dolleman, and several Officers and men died. Because I was a corporal in the Grenadier company of the 1st Battalion of the 9th Regiment, and was part of the 1st Division, we suffered the most. Before we had captured the fortress, our company had suffered 18 dead. Our captain Durink⁷ was wounded in the knees by a bullet when going up the bridge. Lieutenant Lembregts was shot in the foot, which was later amputated, and several NCO's, corporals and grenadiers were wounded⁸. In the town, I was wounded by a bullet which was fired from a house, in the back of my head, but not severe, so I stayed with the company.

Although we had captured the fortress, we had not yet won. We met some fierce resistance in the town. Schil's troops had settled in the houses, from where they fired on us continually, which took a lot of men from us. We arrived (being the 1st Platoon) first on the market square. There we saw a squadron of those old Prussian 'whiskers', Schil's Hussars, stand standing together in line, who, when they saw us, charged upon us, which we beat back with bayonets levelled. They didn't put up much resistance either. During these skirmishes, major-commander Schil was slaughtered by many wounds. The one who shot him remains unknown, and he certainly didn't know that it was Schil, because the King of Holland has promised a 10,000 franc reward for the one who would bring in Schil dead or alive. The corpse was put on display for 3 days, then the head was sent to Holland.

When the town had been cleared mostly of the enemy, a general roll call was sounded. The troops gathered, and the 6th regiment was ordered to cross to the island of Rugen, to pursue and capture those who had fled there. We went into quarters. I was billeted with three others at a cloth merchant, who had us made during the 10 days we were billeted there each a new greatcoat and pantaloons. We needed those very much too, because during that forced march and bivouacs, our clothing had suffered much.

Before I leave this bloodbath, I must tell in a few words that when we stormed the bridge, the batteries were taken as well. All fled to reach a safe harbour, and behind the gate, which was narrow as is often in fortresses, it was soon clogged up by cavalry artillery and infantry. And because we were ordered to give no quarter, all were sabred down and shot by us, and we were soon forced to walk over the dead and wounded, which were stacked in double numbers on top of each other. We marched from Stralsund, taking with us 13 officers that had served

⁶ General Antoine Benedict Carteret (18th January 1759 – 31st May 1809).

⁷ Jan Coenraad Duuring (Rotterdam, 13th January 1779 – Breukelen, 5 December 1834), entered service as a cadet in a Jager Battalion in 1796. After a brief stay in the Navy, he returned to the army in 1802 as a 1st lieutenant in the 22nd Infantry Battalion, destined for the Cape Colony. After the Cape was taken by the British, Duuring returned to Holland. He was decorated for his actions at Stralsund and transferred to the Guard, which was incorporated into the French Guard in 1810. He took part in the Russian campaign in 1812, and the campaigns in Germany in 1813. After Napoleons' abdication in 1814, he wanted to resign, but this was refused. Instead, he was transferred to the Royal Guard Chasseurs. During the 100 Days, Duuring fought with the Chasseurs at Waterloo, where Napoleon took refuge in a square of his regiment. The Chasseurs retreated from the field in good order. After the second abdication of Napoleon, Duuring asked for his resignation, which was granted this time. However, he was not given a commission in the Dutch army, but was instead given a pension from 1819 until his death.

⁸ Casualties of the 9th Infantry Regiment included Lieutenant-Colonel Bernardus Antonius Batenburg (commander of the 1st Battalion), Lieutenant-Colonel Bartholomeus Dolleman (commander of the 2nd Battalion), Captain J.M.E.U. Link and Captain J.B. Bourgois, 2 NCO's and 20 men; 4 officers, 14 NCO's and 88 men were wounded.

Rewarded with the golden medallion for good conduct were Grenadier Sergeant Van Dijk, for leading the attack, being the first to go over the bridge and enter the town, and was severely wounded when defending the colours; Grenadier Landman for saving the life of an officer; and Grenadier Van der Moesel, who kept on fighting despite being wounded five times.

with Schil and who we had captured. These unfortunates who had been spared in Stralsund, had to end their lives in Wesel, where they were executed. We have escorted them until Brunswick and then handed them over to the Westphalian troops.

Because the Duke of Brunswick had come from England at that time with a considerable strong corps, to liberate Germany from the French, we were ordered to advance against the aforementioned Duke and if possible, to capture him or defeat him. For that, we marched past Helmstad to Berlin, Potsdam, Brandenburg, Maagdenburg, until near Halberstad. There we encountered the enemy corps for the first time, notwithstanding we had followed them closely for some time and had captured several of their men. They had entered that town, the Westphalian 5th Regiment had engaged into a fight with them and had already suffered some dead and wounded, when we came up in forced marches and took part in the fighting. This however didn't take long. When they saw they were going to be defeated, they retired to Brunswick, to which we followed them closely with the Grenadiers and Voltigeur company. We marched until Wolfenbuttel. There we had to halt, while in the morning of that day, the Duke had been welcomed by the inhabitants triumphantly on feather beds. Had we not received any counter orders, we could have entered the town without any trouble. But that was not to be, and the reason for that was at that time (as was speculated) that right at that time, the great mass or fair was held in the town, that the many foreign merchants had engaged in negotiations with our general, in order to prevent her from greater damage. We were ordered to break up camp early in the morning and march to Brunswick. Those two hours were travelled quickly. But we found the town all quiet, and the beloved Lord of Brunswick had marched off with his subordinates during the night. We had pursued him to Hannover, because he had taken the route to Helsvliet (in Oldenburg) and was embarked to cross over to England. This part of Germany was cleared of the enemies now, and because the war between France and Austria had not yet ended⁹, we were ordered to march to Bohemia.

Thus we marched from Hannover to Brunswick, Maagdenburg, Dessau, Hall, Leipzig, Dresden, Freiberg and Blauwe¹⁰. Here we halted, because we had advanced up to the Austrian outposts. Here, bivouacs were set up and fires built, and a strict order read that no one would go out of the bivouac. Meanwhile, everybody had to keep busy with checking and cleaning their weapons, in order to attack the enemy at daybreak the next day. But when the twilight of the evening began to set in, I waited with some grenadiers for the opportunity to go unnoticed to a certain village, which was at half an hour distance from the bivouac, which we had discovered during the day, without knowing if it was occupied by the enemy. But because the rations were not sufficient for all the troops in the bivouac, we were more or less forced to this. Because of this, order wasn't strictly maintained.

We went out, armed with our sabres, until I estimated we were about five minutes from the village, when a cannon shot was fired. We remained stiff as stakes, but meanwhile, we heard cannon fire breaking out all along our lines. What to do now? Without weapons, without permission to leave, and against the strict orders that we had been given not to leave the bivouac! This was of great importance, because had the enemy attacked our lines, we could have been regarded as having deserted to the enemy, and then we would have received the bullet. This we all realised all too well, but what were we to do? We finally decided to walk back up to our outposts and to gather information there, and then act accordingly, because we certainly had no intention to be caught as deserters and have a bullet shot through the head. There would still be time for that. When we had arrived at the outposts, completely out of breath, we heard to our great delight that it had been volleys of a *feu de joie*, that a message had arrived that a cease fire had been agreed upon, which would be followed by peace, which

⁹ The War of the Fourth Coalition (1806-1807).

¹⁰ I have not been able to find out what town is meant here.

happened in the end. We were out of it. The danger was now gone and we returned to the camp, where we made do like our brothers in arms that evening and night.

In the Netherlands (1809-1812)

Here us Dutch received another destination, and that was to Holland. The English had landed in Zeeland¹¹. We were ordered to go there in forced marches, passing: Erfurt, Weimar, Kassel, Göttingen, Detmold, Münster up to Enschede. There we were lovingly welcomed on the soil of the fatherland. There were carts, ready to take us along. Here, we were given two hours of rest to have some white bread, cheese and beer. When this cold meal was finished, we climbed into the carts. The ride went on day and night through Delden, Zutphen, Arnhem, Nijmegen, Grave until Bois-le-Duc, where we arrived in the morning where we were again welcomed with white bread and beer, just like we were welcomed in all the other places we passed and switched carts.

That same day we marched from Bois-le-Duc to Kuilenburg. An uncle and aunt of mine lived there. I requested the quartermaster to travel ahead with him. So it was, but imagine my surprise. When I entered the gate, I met my mother, who was just visiting her sister. She however did not know me. She had not seen me since the year 1806, and I had grown from 5 foot 5 to 6 foot. Also I wore a bearskin cap with a red plume, unlike when she had seen me the last time when I wore a tricorne. She came to me and asked if I knew her son? I asked her what her sons' name was? She mentioned me. I told her it was my comrade, and that he came in advance. But my comrades could watch this no longer and told my mother that I was her son. With much merriment I went with her to the house of my uncle and aunt, where I was welcomed with joy. The regiment was billeted there for the night for the first time. The next day we marched to the Camp at Naarden, where we were resplendently welcomed by the Royal Guard and the whole regiment treated to a dinner with wine. After spending a few days in the camp, we thanked for the warm welcome and said goodbye, and went to Bergen op Zoom. There we offered a helping hand, either in the surrounding fortresses or at other places where such was requested from the defenders of the fatherland. After the enemy had retreated, we marched to The Hague. Having arrived there, we passed in review in front of H.M. the King. At this event, NCO's were promoted to officers, and Gold and Silver Medals were distributed in reward for their conduct at the capture of Stralsund. When this was over, we took up quarters in the barracks, where everything was made ready and the tables for the afternoon meal were waiting for us. Because our stomachs had longed for a good meal, we didn't keep ourselves waiting.

We left this place (as we were used to already for so long) and marched to Utrecht, a garrison of the Guard. This was a favour done by H.M. to the regiment (because we had for some time been renumbered, instead of the number 9 we had been given the number 5), because of her conduct in Germany during the years 1806, 1807, 1808 and 1809. After being garrisoned here for 3 months, we marched to The Hague, where we remained until the spring of 1810. In 1810 we left for Amsterdam. There we occupied the fortifications around the capital and had to defend the Line against the invasion of French troops¹². Our Grenadier Company was garrisoned in Abcoude. A lieutenant, a sergeant, two corporals and 25 grenadiers were detached in the Diemermeer, who in turn took up guard duties with the Guard on the *Botermarkt* and at the Utrecht Gate. I was part of this detachment.

¹¹ The Walcheren Expedition (1809).

¹² Napoleon Bonaparte was unhappy with the way his brother Louis governed the Kingdom Holland. This escalated quickly, up to a point where Louis was forced to secede parts of Holland to France on March 16th 1810. A French "observation force" under Oudinot entered Holland and marched towards Muiden and Weesp. After Louis refused to have the French force enter Amsterdam, he sent negotiators to Paris and suggested Amsterdam would prepare against a French attack. Finally seeing all was lost, Louis abdicated on July 1st in favour of his son.

Because I was in Amsterdam daily, I was addressed by the former captain Durink, who, as I have mentioned, was wounded at Stralsund and was left there in the hospital when we left. His Grace was Lieutenant-Colonel with the Guard. He invited me to come with him, which I did. But because His Grace lived too far away from there, he had taken up housing with a captain of his corps in the Utrecht Street. There, his Grace asked if I was inclined to be transferred to the Guard? I answered yes, under the condition that I'd keep my grade of corporal. He gave me his address, and told me that I would come to him the next morning between 8 and 9 o' clock. I said goodbye to his Grace and returned to my garrison. The other day I was already at 8 'clock at the *Nieuwe Dijk* where his Grace lived. I had myself introduced and was allowed to go upstairs. His Grace was having breakfast, offered me a chair and told me to sit down. When he had finished his breakfast, he read me a copy of the request, which included that I would be transferred to the Grenadiers of the Guard with the rank of corporal. He asked me if I remembered that foolish action in Behren, since I was already destined for the Guard back then. I said I knew nothing about it. "Because you don't know anything of it yet, I'll tell you briefly.

It was there that I, as captain, received a letter to send two grenadiers of impeccable conduct to the Guard. The choice would have been for you and Frans. But I chose rather to keep the two of you and send two others in your place. But because both of you had not yet been registered in the penalty book, and to justify myself, I came up with a scheme to send my valet Van Leeuwen with you to Behren (a hamlet in Germany, where we were billeted in 1807), and to lure you both to the Inn "De Zwaan", and to let you drink as much as you wanted. Although I knew neither you nor Frans were fond of strong spirits, I told Van Leeuwen not to give you any *jenever*, but treat you to something else. All this went as planned.

You and your comrade soon got drunk. Van Leeuwen picked a fight with you two, and this became so heated that the three of you literally shattered two case windows, top to bottom. I was, as you may have guessed, quite near where you were. I came in with an angry expression on my face and immediately ordered the both of you to have you arrested by the watchmen. I had Van Leeuwen released that same evening, you and Frans had to remain imprisoned long enough until two other grenadiers had left for the Guard. I then had you released, and I ordered that you both would report to me the next morning. I then had a talk with you about your conduct, and said that you were charged with 18 guilders in damages, that I would have deducted from your wages, which however never took place because I was the cause of it all. I have asked you both if you could read and write, and when you answered me yes, I have made you both corporal with the company. Frans has been transferred to the Guard as a grenadier at the beginning of this year, and is now a corporal." Here, his Grace ended his story.

Because we had pleasantly chattered for about an hour with each other and his Grace had given me a copy of the request, I said goodbye to his Grace and left for my billeting address in the Diemer Meer with the intention to have the request drawn up within a few days, and to hand it to Lieutenant-Colonel Durink, who had taken it upon himself to bring about my transfer.

But there had been a big change in the meantime. The king of Holland, Louis Napoleon, left the realm. The French advanced into Amsterdam, the Guard marched to Versailles. We moved from our garrison in Amsterdam, were assigned as the Life Guard of the Duke of Reggino¹³, remained there for three weeks until we went to Haarlem and joined the regiment. We then marched to Beverwijk, from there to Alkmaar en Medemblik. Having stayed there for a short time, we marched to Haarlem. There we were incorporated into the French army, and the Dutch 5th and 8th Regiments became the 126th Regiment French infantry. The 1st Battalion marched to Leiden, the 2nd, of which I was part, to The Hague, the 3rd to Haarlem, the 4th to Arnhem.

¹³ Nicolas Charles Oudinot (Bar-le-Duc, 25 April 1767 – Paris, 13 September 1847), Duke of Reggio

Having been garrisoned there for some time, we received orders to prepare ourselves for a campaign, to Spain. The field tools were received and distributed. We marched from The Hague to Breda. Here we received counter orders. Because we were assigned to the *corps d'armée* that camped in Boulogne, and had to occupy this area, we marched to Zeeland, because we were to be billeted in Middelburg and the environs. Early in 1811 we marched to Gent, from there to Brugge, then to Oostende. There we stayed in garrison. One day I was on guard duty in the Fortress Napoleon, I was relieved and ordered to prepare myself with 2 corporals and 25 men to escort 20 cannon boats, which had come here from Dunkerque and were destined for Den Helder. This was done, but I admit wholeheartedly that I did not like the life of a seaman, especially not on board of those cannon boats, since we were short of everything. The crews on board consisted of nothing but *conscrits*, and we were short on provisions. We did not reach our destination, but because of the many adversities, and having been shot to pieces by the English, we came into Vlissingen. Here the boats were unrigged, and we marched in a terrible state back to our garrison.

Having remained here for some time, our colonel Du Moulin was ordered to send me and some grenadiers to Versailles, to be added to the 3rd Regiment of Grenadiers (Guard). I requested the colonel if H.H. could not spare me from this, since I was a sergeant, and had no intention to be incorporated into the Guard as a grenadier. He said he would send a reclamation and I remained a sergeant with the regiment. Some time after that I received a personally written letter by my former captain Durink, now lieutenant-colonel of the Guard, who wrote that I should come over as a grenadier, that he would take care of me like he had always done, as he still did for the former NCO's and grenadiers of his old company, and that I should not worry since I would have the rank of sergeant soon enough within the Guard. I didn't find these promises appealing, I remained a sergeant.

The Russian Campaign

Later in 1811 we moved from Oostende to Antwerp. The 3rd company of fuseliers of the 1st battalion in which I served, was sent to Bergen op Zoom. Early in 1812 I was transferred from there to the Grenadier Company of the 3rd Battalion in Antwerp. Everything was on the move there. We sensed that something important was about to happen, which could not remain a secret for long. The campaign to Russia was at hand, and the 126th Regiment French Infantry of the Line was ordered to march from Antwerp on April 20th 1812.

Feuille de Route

| From | Antwerp | hours ¹⁴ |
|------|-------------|---------------------|
| to | Hoogstraten | 7 |
| | Breda | 6 |
| | Tilburg | 5 |
| | Bois-le-Duc | 5 |
| | Grave | 6 |
| | Cleve | 7 |
| | Gelderen | 8 |
| | Wezel | 6 |
| | Burkarim | 6 |
| | Koesfeld | 6 |
| | Münster | 7 |
| | Glandorf | 7 |
| | Osnabrück | 7 |

¹⁴ The distances are given in hours marching, one hour marching equals about 4 to 5 kilometers or 3 miles.

Because we had a day of rest, it was common to let the troops that enter a town or that were already garrisoned there to organise a fencing demonstration¹⁵ on the resting days. This also took place here. We had a fencing master with each battalion. Bos was with the [...] battalion and Schoen with the [...] battalion. These two, known to be the best fencing masters in our regiment, opened the fencing demonstration. Schoen held back a *touche*, which Bos took up with great reproach, from which a severe dispute arose, followed by a challenge to a duel. And because I was provost, I was obliged to act as a witness. A suitable place was soon found, both sides took up positions and it didn't take long before we saw Schoen fall down with a stab of a floret in the left chest. Schoen was admitted to the hospital, in which he died that same evening. And we returned to the fencing hall and the fencing demonstration went on as nothing had happened. Bos perished in the hospital in Minsk.

| | | |
|------|-------------------|-------|
| From | Osnabrück | hours |
| to | Altendorf | 7 |
| | Preussisch Münden | 7 |
| | Neudorff | 7 |
| | Hannover | 7 |
| | Pheynne | 10 |
| | Brunswick | 5 |
| | KoningsSutter | 7 |
| | Helmstedt | 5 |
| | Erleben | 6 |
| | Magdebourg | 6 |

Here, a *conscript* of the 124th Regiment followed up on me and asked if I happened to know where his brother Jan van Germte was garrisoned? I saw him and recognized immediately that he was my cousin. I answered him immediately: "Yes Thomas, your brother is billeted opposite to me". He looked at me as someone who seemed to have lost his mind. I took him with me and revealed to him who I was. I have seen him one more time after this. This was on the retreat from Polotsk, where he was led to an ambulance. He was more dead than alive. But he recognized me, and said goodbye to me, with the request that I would inform his brother of his disposition. His brother however had already disappeared, and I haven't heard from him since.

| | | |
|------|--------------------------|-------|
| From | Magdebourg | hours |
| to | Burg | 6 |
| | Genten | 6 |
| | Brandenburg | 8 |
| | Woestermark | 10 |
| | through Spandau | |
| | Charlottenburg to Berlin | 9 |

12 days of rest. Here we were on guard duty at the palace of the king. Here I had the honour to see H.H. the Princess of Orange, Widow of Prince William V¹⁶, for the first time. It happened

¹⁵ The original text gives the term *assaut*.

¹⁶ Princess Frederika Sophia Wilhelmina of Prussia (Berlin, 7 August 1751 – Apeldoorn, 9 June 1820), daughter to August Wilhelm of Prussia, brother to King Frederick the Great. She married in 1767 with Prince William V, the last *Stadhouder* of the Dutch Republic; soon she proved to be the boldest and more decisive of the two. During the Dutch Revolution in 1787, she asked her brother, King Frederick William II of Prussia, to intervene. A Prussian army drove away the Patriotic Free Corps and restored order. The *Stadhouder* and his family fled before the French invasion army in 1795. The family went into exile in England and later in Germany; when Prince Willem V died in 1806, the family moved again, until Princess Wilhelmina took up residence in the "Niederländisches Palais" ["Netherlands Palace"] in Berlin. After the battle of Leipzig in 1813, she raised an "Orange Legion" of three battalions in Schwedt an der Oder, which was recruited amongst Dutch prisoners of war from the captured garrisons like Stettin. She paid for the first expenses and provided the men personally with shoes and clean shirts. She returned to Haarlem in 1814.

quite often that, if an old Grenadier was on guard duty for her, the Princess asked if he had served the Prince. If that was the case, it often happened that they received 1 or 2 ducats as a souvenir. Little did I know I would carry her to her grave in 1820 at the palace Het Loo.

| | | |
|------|-------------|---|
| From | Berlin | |
| to | Barnau | 6 |
| | Neustadt | 6 |
| | NeuAngerman | 6 |
| | Schwedt | 6 |
| | Gaatz | 5 |
| | Stettin | 7 |

where a statue of Frederick the Great with a hat on his head is placed on the Frederick square surrounded by an iron fence. Here we were told that a French soldier had willingly thrown a piece of the hat of the great king with a rock, that the soldier was arrested and by order of Napoleon was shot through the head, in reverence to that Majesty whom he wanted to acknowledge as a great commander. Here we stayed very pleasantly for 6 weeks, although our billets were not to our satisfaction. We received nothing and were forced to live off our rations.

| | | |
|--|----------------------|----|
| | Kalisch | 8 |
| | Duiskronen | 10 |
| | Justro | 8 |
| | Preussisch Friedland | 10 |

Our Battalion was sent to this place. (Because I was the oldest quartermaster-sergeant, I was given the *feuille de route* of the battalion, and the task to organise the billets of the same.) Because the quartermasters were allowed to leave only two hours before the Regiment, we arrived in Friday early in the afternoon. 2/3s of the inhabitants of Friedland are Jewish, and because we had to keep a day of rest on Saturday, this was not good. We had received the *feuille de route* in Stettin, based on how we had marched out. During that time, many men had stayed behind. Because I was put in command of the quartermasters, I followed the Lieutenant-Quartermaster closely. I distributed the billets according to the numbers present. Little wonder that I was left with a good number of billets. This became known very quickly, and within an hour I had exchanged the most of my left over billets for hard cash, which I had great use of afterwards.

| | | |
|------|----------------------|----|
| From | Preussisch Friedland | |
| to | Toegel | 10 |
| | Orszel | 10 |
| | Negenburg | 9 |
| | Marienwerdt | 6 |
| | Marienburg | 10 |
| | Elbing | 8 |
| | Frauenburg | 8 |
| | Bronsberg | 3 |
| | Hoppenbroeck | 5 |
| | Koningserg | 10 |
| | Laboau (bivouac) | 12 |
| | Melauke (bivouac) | 8 |
| | Tilsit | 12 |

Here we had the pleasure of being billeted with the inhabitants for 16 days. Although we had to live from the rations we received daily, we had the pleasure to sleep under a roof, which

would not happen again until we reached Smolensk. From here until the crossing of the Memel near Kovenno, the march went on steadily, since the provisions were sent after us on carts.

| | | |
|------|-------------------------|---|
| From | Tilsit | |
| to | Ragnit | 8 |
| | Brabinnie | 6 |
| | Grubdustehe | 6 |
| | Engeniski | 6 |
| | Phirli | 7 |
| | Kovono across the Memel | 7 |

Before we left from here, every man received flour and biscuits for 5 days. The first was bound on the backpack in a bag for that purpose, and most of the biscuits in a breadbag, worn over the shoulder, and the rest in the shako and greatcoat. When one adds this to his equipment, the cartridges, field tools and weapons, it is not remarkable that there were so many stragglers with the army, and the shortages of rations was soon felt. During the first day of the march, the biscuits were eaten, not just to fill the stomach, but also to be rid of the heavy load which pressed down severely on the shoulder by the breadbag, or the carrying strap of it. The flour was used in the evening in the bivouac to make a "poor boy" (flour and water cooked to a porridge), and used in large quantities, not taking in account it would have to last for 5 days. Some made large fires during the great rests to cook "poor boys". When the beef cattle arrived in the bivouac, and every regiment had received its' share of it, it was butchered. It was handed out to the company, and then divided among the sections and squads. Here a soup was cooked, in which the biscuit was not forgotten. This went well the first days and nights, there were still some supplies the next day, but the shortages were already felt on the third day. The rations had been used up mostly, or thrown away, the beef cattle could not keep up with us and therefore arrived too late in the bivouac. Something had to be done here, despite the strict order which was given not to leave the bivouac, which was upheld very strictly. Because a certain number of gendarmes were added to every division, that had to keep order, and had to take the stragglers to headquarters. But we had to live! So it was finally decided to secretly leave the bivouac with some men, and in the surrounding area, in some village, hamlet or house, capture whatever could be of use to us and bring it to the bivouac. I was young, healthy and strong, I was quick, I was not tired. My officers knew this. I was the first to be chosen for that dangerous task (to go marauding). I undertook this expedition with ten grenadiers I could count on. Armed with our sabres, we departed from the bivouac haphazardly. After having traversed the environs for 2 hours, we finally arrived with our corps with some bundles of straw. Everywhere we showed up, we were sent away. All houses and villages were occupied by troops.

The cattle had arrived in the bivouac, soup was being prepared. After having eaten the meagre soup and the lean meat, we laid ourselves to rest. The march continued in this way until we arrived in Wilna. It is however incomprehensible how a corps could be reduced like that in 5 days. There were companies which counted no more than 20 men. But during that night and the next day, most of the men caught up again, and having received rations like in Kovenno, we continued our march to Minski.

| | | |
|------|---------|----|
| From | Kovenno | |
| to | Wilna | 36 |

We had a day of rest in the bivouac there.

These marches we now undertook to Minski went on almost identical as the last, with the exception that, if we didn't want to perish, we best concentrated on marching, which thus happened. In the evening, we went out under arms, in order to defend ourselves against friend and foe. Because the Russian farmers were not particularly friendly, as one can easily imagine,

whom we no longer searched for in the houses, but in the forests, where they had fled to with their wife and children and whatever they could carry. It therefore seldom happened that we returned in the bivouac with one thing or another, which took a lot of effort. Thus we arrived in Minski at the bivouac, where we were given a day of rest.

From Wilna
to Minski 40

From here on the marched became increasingly difficult day by day. The men became weak because of the bad food. The lean ox meat and the flour that mainly had to be our food, could not give us the energy needed to steadily face up to the marches and bivouacs, because it was useless to look out for further rations when we arrived at the bivouac. In those regions where the Grande Armée had passed through, one could easily imagine nothing could be found for hours around.

From Minst
to Jaggenauki 9

Having marched from here and halted halfway for the main repose, a court-martial was held in the field, and two French soldiers were brought up who were caught robbing a church. They were sentenced to death. Immediately, the regiment to which they belonged, was ordered to command a detachment. The execution was carried out immediately, at a wooden cross that stood by the road. They were shot, and on the cross a paper was attached, on which you could read in large letters their names and the crime they committed, church robbery. We marched past (this strict measure was carried out several times, with us as in other Corps) and we went on our way.

to Scholewieke 10
Borisov before the Berezina 12

Here we passed the Berezina across a bridge about 200 yards long, without thinking about the many innocent victims it would swallow up during the retreat.

From Borisov
to Despadik 6
Lasisse 11
Krupke 9
Kokhonous 15
Orza 6
Dubrouna 5
Liadi 10
Krasnou 10
Smolenski 10

Here we passed the Dniepr and entered the town of the old Russian Empire. It is well known how much was sacrificed to reach unto here, and how much blood it had cost as well to take possession of that town. We camped in and around the town that day and night. Because most of the town had been consumed by fire, there was ample room for housing for the Generals and their staffs, and to organize storage depots. We were ordered to move into quarters. We thus marched 15 *verst*¹⁷, because we were billeted in the villages where no French troops had been before. We had it quite good here, and remained there for 13 or 14 days. Here we rested from our fatiguing marches, and slowly regained our former strength. Also a large number of men, who had stayed behind, returned again to their companies.

¹⁷ A verst was about 1,0668 metres or 0.6629 miles

The general idea was that when we had stayed here for a few days and had recovered from our fatigues, we would follow the Grande Armée to Moscow, which however did not happen. The IX Corps d'Armée, commanded by Marshal Victor (Duke of Belluno) was ordered to depart and move to Poloski as quickly as possible. This was displeasing to hear. We had rather wished to have joined the Grande Armée, to share in the great fame (or so we thought) of helping capture and occupy famous Moscow, that grand capitol of the Russian empire. That disappointment was soon spread, and we had to join the II Corps d'Armée, which was in Poloski and waited for our arrival, in order to march together with those 30,000 Prussians, who therefore were billeted there as well, to capture St. Petersburg. This rumour made a good impression on us, and we advanced with good spirits from our quarters and marched to

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Mistislaw | 36 |
| Orsza | 36 |
| Senno | 30 |
| Poloski | 45 |

Before we had reached to Senno, we encountered several baggage wagons, laden with sick and light wounded. This was a bad omen. We also received the message that French troops before Poloski had departed and had been followed by the Russians, so that they were engaged in skirmishes with them daily, and that we didn't have to advance very far to meet them, which therefore happened the next day near Senno. From Smolenski up to this point, we had not been under a roof. Here also, the sharp winds, the snow and frost became more and more severe. We also were short on provisions. Most of the beef cattle stayed behind, and whatever arrived in the bivouac that evening was in such a sorry state, that one could only feel pity for it. This cattle was butchered and distributed to us, which together with some flower, in lieu of something else, was consumed by us with delight. As a result, there were many sick among us, who had the runs. We therefore united with the II Corps d'Armée and operated together.

Now, the chance to meet the enemy bullets we had wished for had arrived. We engaged them day in and day out, which we lost every time. Added to this was the severe cold, which made many men collapse in the ranks during firing. We were also short of everything we needed. The convoys that were sent to us, were captured by the enemy, thus the horsemeat was our main sustenance. I also left the bivouac with some men several times in the evening, towards some village in the vicinity of the camp, to find us some provisions, but we found nothing. The inhabitants had fled, and had taken the cattle and whatever they could carry with them. And when we had found something, we usually had to throw it away in order to fight our way out of an encirclement by the Cossacks. That meant retreating and attacking. The cold and misery became worse, it was no longer possible for me to take notes of the villages or towns we passed, or mark the distances in hours. I will therefore tell only of the main events.

On November 13th, our Regiment suffered a severe loss. Our 4th Battalion with two companies of Voltigeurs were skirmishing *en tirailleur*, when they were surrounded by a stream of Cossacks of General Witgenstein (because it was him who pursued us), and were literally put to the sword or stabbed to death.

One night, the 22nd or 23rd October, my captain came to me and said that I had to go to the Lieutenant-Colonel at the Barons' mansion. So I went there. Many field- and subaltern officers were billeted there. Here I learned that I would travel with the Baron in a horse-drawn sled to his brother (also a Baron), to gather provisions. That Baron lived 15 verst away. We got into the sled and drove away. When we arrived at the Barons' mansion, the Baron came up to us and asked us to be quiet, because he had an officer and 10 Cossacks billeted with him. He led us to a room, where he welcomed us very well. He told us that we had passed through 3 villages that were occupied by Cossacks. Meanwhile, he ordered the sled to be filled with

provisions, and send one of his servants along who brought us back by another road through the forest. During the time we were in the sled, the Baron offered me to remain with him. He wanted to appoint me overseer of his vast estates. He promised me a good life. He said there was no hope for us ever leaving Russia. But I politely declined this offer. I chose rather to share in the fate of my comrades, instead of leaving them like this. We arrived at our destination without trouble, and I returned to the bivouac. I was well fed, and had wished the same had happened to my comrades.

We arrived at Borisov on the 23rd or 26th of November, having lost a lot of men, not to let us rest here but to have us deal with the Russians, in order to gain time until Napoleon would have crossed the Beresina with the remains of his Armée. Napoleon arrived with the remains of his great Armée with which he had captured Moscow, but it was heart wrenching to see this unruly mob. He viewed one thing or another to rebuild that bridge (because it had been demolished, and was covered by the fortress on the other side, which was occupied by the Russians). So he had to abandon this idea and come up with another plan, which he soon had thought of. Two bridges were erected across the river on quite a distance from Borisov, over which the emperor expected to cross with his armée, which succeeded partially. Before he had left Borisov, he had ordered Marshall Victor, duke of Bellino, commander of the IX Corps d'Armée, to cover the retreat of the army. The Général de Division Pantouneau was ordered to occupy and defend the town of Borisov. We were part of that division. We remained, no, not in the quarters or the bivouac, but in the town, under arms. From time to time, men were sent out to see if they could obtain some corn from the storages, which succeeded now and then. However, not without a lot of effort, and at perils' risk of one's life. Thus, the corn was eaten raw from our hands, there was no time to cook it.

The Russians, who occupied the fortress on the other side of the river, had become so bold by their fortune, that they visited us by way of boats across the ice floes and across the demolished bridges (probably with the goals of capturing us), but this turned out very bad for them. They were driven out of the town with severe losses, and because their crossing was not as organised this time, as it was when they advanced, everyone had to fend for himself as best as he could, and many of those who were not killed, wounded or taken prisoner, perished in the river. I have seen 8 to 10 men who tried to get on an ice floe and reach the other side with it, and drowned. During these skirmishes, I received a bullet in my right leg. The wound was however not dangerous, because I have kept the leg, but was in pain. I already was used to that, since that already for 8 days the toes of my feet had been frozen, and I couldn't wear any shoes anymore, which had been replaced by rabbit furs and old rags, which drenched in blood from the wound was soon frozen. I made quite a spectacle with my feet, but we had become used to that, moreover since I soon would exchange these rabbit skins and rags for pieces of bandages. Now another destination awaited us. We heard the artillery coming nearer and nearer. We had to leave Borisov, but how to get out of there? The houses were all made of wood, the streets had been blocked. Powder carts, caissons and other such vehicles were there, the burning houses were filled with wounded, sick and stragglers, and yet we had to pass it. In this, we succeeded. We didn't have to march far to encounter the Russians, because we had been surrounded by them. And we were destined to hold off the enemy as long as possible, to give our troops time to cross the bridges, we had to engage them immediately, that on November 27th we engaged them the whole day until 10 o'clock in the evening, with consistent firing. That day, thousands on our side were hit by enemy bullets, not only of the military personnel, but also the majority of those unfortunate who had left their units, hired staff, sutlers, women and children who had ventured into the column. At 10 o'clock in the evening, the firing ended. Our regiment was ordered to occupy a hollow road (near a mountain, where the other troops of our Corps d'Armée would take up positions). Our Regiment had suffered a lot that day. We were divided into three platoons, in order to take over from each other every two hours. The NCO's and corporals had to do sentry duty like the soldiers, and the other two platoons who were not on sentry duty, could warm themselves near the smouldering, wet pine branches. We would not, could not think of food. All troops needed that, and there was nothing

that could be provided. There were some among us who dared to visit the battlefield, not to bury the dead or help care for the wounded or transport them to the hospitals, but also not to loot and plunder, but to search for something to strengthen their starving bodies. I would have done so myself, if I had not been hindered by my frozen feet and the wound. We waited impatiently for dawn. We still heard nothing at daybreak, but soon the heavy artillery in the distance made themselves heard. We were ordered to join the Corps that stood on the mountain in square. We soon arrived on the mountain, the units deployed in line, and we moved to the designated position.

Here we heard the terrible fate that our Général de Division Pantoureau with two battalions of the Division had been captured by the Russians. That night, he had, as we were told, agreed with General Witgenstein to a surrender, that his Division along with all that was in the plains of Veselovo would surrender on the 28th of November, which came to pass now, so 10 à 12,000 men of all branches, with artillery and many different vehicles, hired staff, Sutlers, women and children, stragglers, all those who would not or could not go across with the Armée, became prisoners of war. These unfortunate people, who had not already had perished by the firing, or had been crushed under the hooves of the horses or by the wheels of the carts, had to share in our misfortune.

From Captivity to Paris (1812 – 1814)

We were driven together divided in a column of 3 - 4,000 men and women and children, of almost all nations, and bivouacked that day at Borisov, where our indescribable misery started, because it seemed there was no time to think of all that us, unfortunates, so desperately needed.

My Sergeant-Major van B... was fortunate enough to buy a piece of bacon from a Russian. I asked him to donate half of it to me, that I would pay him the full price that he had given for all of it, but he turned that down, saying that everyone had to take care of themselves, and God for us all. I stoically sat down in the bivouac near the smouldering fire and started to unwind my feet, because the pain was unbearable. I found my toes to be in a terrible state. The wound to my leg was not dangerous. I took out the clean shirt that was still in my backpack, ripped it to pieces and dressed my feet with it, which completely refreshed me and gave me some comfort. I had thus sacrificed the last shirt I had (save the one I was wearing). I had carried it in my backpack from Smolenski, without being able to use it, and who was to tell when we would be so fortunate to have the opportunity of cleaning ourselves. The silver coins I once had, I had already traded for gold, and while I was dressing my feet, had divided it in between the bandages and pieces around them, hoping to be able to keep them, in which I fortunately succeeded.

The next morning, our column advanced, with bowed heads and empty stomachs and stiff from the cold, escorted by several hundred Bashkirs and Russian Infantry, who had no other name to call us but French dogs. Who did not hesitate to stab through the body with a lance, those who wandered but the least from the column, or because of desperation about the misery they had endured could not continue the march; which seem to leave us all indifferent, because death was preferable to the dark prospect of our lives.

This spectacle lasted 15 days. At night in the open plain, marching by day through snow that was 3 à 4 feet high, without straw, fire or food. We had to bivouac on a plain, surrounded by our escorts, and patiently wait for the morning. Although they sent 2, 3 or 4 old, emaciated *conjakken*¹⁸ (small Russian horses) in the bivouac, but that would not be enough for so many

¹⁸ From: *Konik*, which literally means "small horse". The Konik is also a primitive breed of horse that originated in Poland. It has a strong and stocky build, small head and deep chest, with mostly a dun coat and dorsal stripe.

starving mouths, and who could have a share of it? Even if he, who still possessed some small bit of courage and had hidden a sabre or knife with him, would secretly would venture into a wood at night (if we were near one) to gather some miserable branches, to therefore make a fire and hold the horsemeat in the flame, or should I say the smoke, in order to consume it. But this favour, as they said, would be paid dearly, because he who dared venture out of the column by day, or out of the bivouac by night, and was caught by them, if he came out of it alive he was robbed of everything, so that he would return to the troop, or remain on the ground wounded, being almost naked and having been treated with the *careschoe*¹⁹ dearly. This all lasted until we reached our destination in Withupki, except for the last four days, the first day of that we received only 1/4th lb bread, the other days a reasonable ration, and were not guarded so strictly. This could be easily done, as during the transport our troop had diminished to 1/3rd. Regarding myself, when we arrived in Withupki, I checked my feet, since I had not had the desire nor the opportunity to do so. I found that the wound I received on the 27th had almost completely healed, and the toes of my feet wwhich had been frozen, looked most miserable.

I requested the Israelite, with whom we were billeted with 6 men, to look for a surgeon who could dress my feet. And so there arrived one. He dressed them and gave me medicines, and made sure he was paid very well, as did the Jew. Here, the money that I had saved so carefully and had kept by the grace of God, proved to be very useful. Although we were billeted with 4, 6 or 8 men, we could not ask anything, but had to pay very much for everything. And because my comrades had little to nothing, , it was my duty to take care of them, which I did. We had thus been saved and under a roof, for the first time since Smolenski, thanks to Providence for preserving us so far.

I immediately got to work in order to provide us with linens and other necessary clothing. I had myself made a pair of large shoes in which my bandaged feet would fit. My comrade Peereboom, who had been completely undressed and plundered, was put in order to withstand the cold. We became totally different men within days. Because we had not even thought about changing in months, it is no small wonder if I tell, - and without shame, - that we were ridden with vermin and infected with many filthy diseases.

Two of my brothers in arms, sergeants Froger and Smit, were admitted into the hospital on the same day that we arrived. I had visited them, and had offered them some refreshments, but there was no more longing nor desire to use it, and the next day they were but a corpse, and were with 20 or 30 others piled upon a sled and taken outside the town, to be burned on a field or thrown in a pit with quick lime. One had to have a heart of stone to witness it all with dry eyes. Troops of 40, or even more, wandered every day through the streets, who looked like skeletons, without clothing, starving and brown from the smoke. It seemed all those unfortunate that had been captured at the Beresina had to gather here. After a few days something was done about it. Transports left alternately to other places, and the men who remained in the town were given rations and a little money.

On the first day of our prisoner transport, I had an unpleasant meeting with a Russian soldier, who demanded the gold ring I wore in my ear. I did not understand him. He pointed at my ears, but because I didn't think of the rings, I didn't understand him. It seemed he lost his patience. He approached me, and with a tug, the first ring was pulled from my ear. I then comprehended and understood everything. I unfastened the other ring as quickly as I could with my fingers, that were frozen stiff, and gave it to the greedy Russian. A few days later, the Sergeant Major, the same who had refused to give me the bacon, left the bivouac that evening with 2 or 3 other men, with the idea to find some shelter in a house here or there, but they were caught by the Russians. The Sergeant-Major was robbed of all his money, and as a reward received some fierce strokes with the *knut* and sent back to camp. He reported this to the commander of the

¹⁹ From *Khorosho* [хорошо], meaning "good". Van Wetering probably is mistaken here and most likely means "knut" [кнут].

Bashkirs that escorted us. This officer spoke French, but because the Sergeant-Major could not point out the culprit, the commander could not do anything about it.

It also happened one night that me and 5 of my comrades (we were usually with a group of 5), decided to leave the bivouac, to find something for our nourishment, because we had not eaten anything that day besides some peas or beans that could be found here and there, that were hanging out to dry in the open air, and which we had to husk and eat while marching; and some stalks, from which the cabbages had already been cut, and were still sticking out from under the snow. We went into the dark from the bivouac, and fortunately reached a hamlet where we expected to find a safe shelter for the night. But imagine my surprise when I stepped into the room and was greeted by German swearing. I had stepped on the leg of the man, who shouted the curse at me, and no wonder. It was dark inside as well as outside, and the room was crammed, so that not even a mouse could fit in. Soon I heard from different directions: "Throw this man out the door!" At the same time, several figures rose up and grabbed me. Meanwhile, my comrades were in the hall, fighting other men. Meanwhile, the residents of the house had lit up a straw to see what was happening. I received most of the blows, kicks and punches. I defended myself as best as I could, but there were too many. I retired backwards, but there I was trapped. The entrance to the room was low, the threshold was high, and I was tall. To me, this was a difficult position, but those inside were quick to act, they kicked my body and I fell out of the room, like a pocket knife folded in. My comrades had already been thrown out the door. I followed them closely and marched in the quick step to the bivouac.

The other day, my comrade bought a goat from a Russian soldier for two French crowns, which we thought we would feast on that evening. But we had owned it hardly half an hour, before it was again taken from him by a Bashkir, and as a reward he was given several blows to the head with the *knut*. A few days later, we were informed that the Sergeant-Major of the 2nd Grenadier Company had left the camp in the evening with 3 men, and that they arrived at a peasants' house, which was already occupied by troops. And out of fear of being thrown out the door, they crawled into the oven. The following morning, before the break of dawn, everyone was up and running in order to prepare to march off. The housewife wanted to fire up the oven, but what did she find when wanted to collect the ashes with a large iron hook, specifically for that purpose? Four suffocated corpses. This was soon rumoured, and it was soon known to be these aforementioned persons.

Meanwhile that we were at Withupki and had gathered all things necessary, we enjoyed ourselves with the greedy Jews. My comrades had passed me as being very rich, and told him that I carried a treasure of 10,000 in my briefcase, which I had found in Moscow. (The Jews in Russia are fond of paper money. They gladly exchange it and will give even a small profit.) The Jew offered me daily to exchange it for silver, and although I kept insisting I did not have it, that my comrades were only pulling his leg, it did not help. If I did not want to exchange it with him he would report me with the Authority, it would then be taken from me, and I would be sent to Siberia. I had to keep the Jew satisfied, I let him search my whole briefcase, and bought him some liquor and bread. From then on, the Israelite was content.

For many, a solution had come during the first days of our arrival here. Namely, that a notice was read, that all those who chose to do so, could enlist in the Russo-German Legion, except the French. Me and many others took this opportunity and volunteered with the aforementioned Legion, in the same rank that we had in the French army, for as long as it took until our Fatherland was rid of the French. As soon as I entered the bureau (where the enlistments that I preferred were to take place), I was spotted by an officer, who said to me in German: "There's the damned [...] who punched me." And he addressed the Lieutenant-Colonel, requesting that his Grace would not deny him the favour of handing me, "that rascal" (and he pointed at me), to Adjutant Krouze for half an hour, that he would have me as his servant for 3 days in reward

of the 'favour' I had done to him, and that he would have me tickled with a *canschoe*²⁰ by a Bashkir or a Cossack. The Lieutenant-Colonel, who was also a German, but who had been in Russian service for some time, did not grant this request; and I was taken into the *lijfkompagnie*²¹ of his Grace. And because it would be impossible for me not having to see adjutant Krouze now and then, more so because he had been appointed 1st Lieutenant with the company, I felt very uncomfortable. Yet I comforted myself, because I was convinced that I was not willingly guilty of such a crime. But I soon learned that he had had to share our fate, when that same officer told me how he had been a Westphalian officer at the Berezina. He then was billeted with an officers transport and their servants in that hamlet, which the five of us had visited that night; that he had been present in that room, that I had given him a blow to the face, that he had to carry a cloth in his eye for three days. I had asked his Grace for forgiveness, and have had in him an excellent commander from then on.

Since we remained here for a few more days, I met my old Sergeant-Major one day, who asked me to lend him some crowns, which he would repay me once we had returned to Holland. I told him that I had been fortunate to have kept the money, but that most of it was spent on items of clothing, not only for me, but also for some comrades that I had taken with me, and I had to take care of, and thus could not grant his request, but I advised him to join the Legion. That this to me was preferable to being transported to Siberia. He chose not to do so, and thus we parted from each other. I could have said him in retribution to his earlier statement "every man for himself and God for us all", but I thought: "We have suffered enough, and God knows what we shall have to endure. Let me spare him this reproach".

After we had stayed here for a few days, we received orders to leave Withupki. We were garrisoned with our company in Jannewitski, where the staff remained and we were billeted in the surrounding villages and hamlets. Me and my comrade Peereboom and 22 men came to a village where we were received quite well by the inhabitants, given the circumstances. We took up our quarters, and since the peasants are usually skilled in healing frozen feet, I had soon recovered. Many of our men, who immediately laid down near the hearth or stove, which was always warm, when they took up their quarters, and who would not come off other than when absolutely necessary, became weaker by the day. This was the reason why, when the Corps was gathered in spring, it had diminished remarkably. Regarding myself, I walked my daily rounds in the village. And from time to time visited the others. It may not have been very pleasant to have walked through the harsh cold and the snow, but it was necessary for my health, and I have felt very good by it.

One day, when I walked my usual round to a village, which was 3 *verst* from mine, having spent the days with my comrades there, I went back to my quarters in the evening with another 3 men, among them a drummer (named Post). Along the way, drummer Post had to do something which required haste. He notified us. In the mean time we continued and reached our quarters. After having eaten, we laid ourselves to rest. Early the next morning, a soldier came with whom the drummer was billeted, asking me if Post had slept in my quarters that night. I said no, and asked if he had not come home last night around six o' clock. He had not seen him. I immediately got dressed and went with the soldier to the place where he had stayed behind. But what did we find! The boots with the feet inside them, and some shredded clothing. I assume he collapsed from the cold when he sat there relieving himself, and was devoured by the wolves.

Having spent some time here, I was ordered to go to Jannewitski, with 6 sleds, each sled with a man of our Corps and two armed Russian soldiers. I went on my way to cover these 12 *verst* to Jannewitski, where our staff was quartered. I arrived there, and received the necessary

²⁰ As in note 19; I think the words *careschoe* and *canschoe* are both misread by Van Vledder when he made his transcription.

²¹ The Colonels' Company of the Regiment.

items of clothing, like coats, greatcoats, winter- and summer pantaloons, shako's and boots, all cut, but not yet sewn together. This had to be done by the tailors that were with our company, a small payment was made for each item of clothing. I went with the received items to our garrison. We went on foot, but that was difficult and very slow through the thick snow. I got on one of the sleds. This, however, was a mistake, because when I came home that evening, I could not take them off anymore. They had to be cut from my feet. When this was done, I found my toes to be frozen again. I had to call in the help of my landlord. However, it took 6 weeks for me to recover. During that time, I was very busy. I was given the supervision of the tailors, who had been billeted in the village for that purpose, and a appropriate work place had to be set up in my quarters. This was done, and most of the winter, as well as these chores, passed quite dreary, yet also pleasantly.

In the beginning of spring 1813, when we had rested a bit from our fatigues and were equipped with several necessities, we were ordered to begin our march to Orel, and when we arrived there, we would be united with a Russian Corps, in order to advance to the south of Russia, to advance against the Persians²² there. This could not be, since we had enlisted to go with the Legion to Germany and to help liberate our fatherland, but not to march to the south of Russia and advance against the Persians. It was all to no avail. Those who would not voluntarily chose to march, was forced to do so in the Russian manner with the *knut*. We had to obey, if we did not want to choose to be beaten half – or completely to death, or to be sent to Siberia as a troublemaker. But Major Logger van Koch (a Dutchman) departed in secret. Meanwhile, we marched to Orel. The first days the advance was very dismal. Our thoughts were that there was no more hope, that we would never see our beloved fatherland and our family again. Because of that, I had not continued making notes of the towns and villages that we passed. But after having marched along that road for a few days, our courage started to revive. The regular marches and the warm reception from the inhabitants with whom we were billeted, added much to this. I know from experience that the Russians, specifically those from the rural areas, are over all good people. Having arrived at Orel, we were billeted with the inhabitants. We would have stayed here for a long time, had it not been for the message that Major Logger van Koch brought us, that informed us that we were to march to Germany. Said Major had secretly left us, and had travelled immediately to the headquarters, which was in Konigsberg. When he was there, he had requested to be allowed to see H.M. the Emperor Alexander. In this he succeeded. He brought forth his concerns. He explained to H.M. the terms on which we had agreed when we enlisted, and asked H.M. if these terms could be upheld. H.M. thanked him for the effort he made for the fate of Europe and of his fatherland in particular. He would give his address to H.M.'s Adjutant, and await H.M.'s decision, which soon came, accompanied by an order for the Major, which stated that said Major had to join his Corps as soon as possible, and that all government personnel should give him the help and assistance he needed, and provide him with the necessary transport. His Grace arrived in Orel with this joyous tidings, which as one can imagine, was greeted with cheers. The next day, we started our journey back to the following places and towns to Germany.

From Orel to Moscow. Here we had an opportunity to partly see the disasters that hit the town the year before. A lot had been rebuilt already, and with all this rebuilding, it was very busy. There were a lot of foreigners from all nations among the builders, which had been taken prisoner.

From Moscow to Czarevo, Viesma, Boglovestme, Dorgsbonge, Smolenski, Dubrouna, Orza, Borisov. Here we were told more than 30,000 bodies had been recovered from the Berezina.

²² Despite Napoleons' invasion, Russia continued the war against Persia that started in 1804. With Napoleon defeated, the Russians now pursued a more aggressive campaign. The war ended in 1813.

Minski, Bialystok, Konigsberg, Dresden, the capital of Saxony, where we arrived in October and were incorporated into the Russian army, under the command of General Tolstoj²³, who commanded the siege of the town. Marshall St. Cyr surrendered to the Allies with the garrison, which consisted of 31 generals, 1,750 officers and 28,000 men, 4,000 sick and 250 artillery pieces. After having witnessed several attacks with the Legion in 1813, we crossed the Rhine on January 1st 1814, and after several harsh battles on French soil, the decisive victory was won before Paris by the Allies by the bloody killing and wounding of 11,000 men, and thus we entered Paris on March 31st 1814. After having spent a short time there, all voluntary corps were dismissed, and us Dutchmen returned to our homes under the guidance of Major Logger van Koch.

Our destination was Nijmegen where we arrived happily. We remained here to await our next destination. During that time, the Emperor of Russia came to that place. Our officers, with the Major at their head, were seen by H.M. and seemed to have heard of the decision made by H.M. of awarding the silver medal to those soldiers in Russian service who had taken part in the campaigns of 1812, 1813 and 1814; and that we from then on had the right to wear its ribbon, the medal would be sent to us from St. Petersburg²⁴.

Here we received our destination. The officers were ordered to go to The Hague, we received our marching orders for Amersfoort, where I exchanged my Russian uniform for that of the Dutch. I was assigned to the Land Militia Battalion nr. 4, and was garrisoned in Arnhem, where I stayed until March 24th 1815.

Supplement to the Russian Campaign²⁵

At the start of this bloody campaign, which has now ended, the French Armée, combined from different nations, consisted of 460,000 men.

The Russians took as prisoners of war about 150,000 men, 50 Generals, 31 Colours, 500 cannon.

Died in several battles 130,000 men, died and perished from shortages 28,000 men.

From Krasnoy to the Berezina 40,000, those who drowned and were crushed under the hooves of the horses and the cart wheels when crossing the bridges over the Berezina 14,000 men. As far as is known, 362,000 men were left in Russia.

At the beginning of 1814, the French army, except those in the fortresses, consisted of 669,000 men, and those of the combined allies 1,230,120 men.

On 6 July decorated with the Silver Medal, established by H.M. the Emperor Alexander for the campaigns of 1812, 1813 and 1814, and on 9 August 1828 decorated with the Silver Medal, established by H.M. the Emperor Nicholas, and awarded by Himself to all soldiers in Russian service who took part in the campaigns of 1812, 1813 and 1814 and were present at the entry into Paris.

²³ Count Alexander Ivanovich Osterman-Tolstoj (1772 - 12 February 1857), a general who took part in all the major Russian campaigns in the Napoleonic Wars. After the siege of Dresden, he fought in the battles of Leipzig and Bautzen. He was wounded at Kulm and lost his hand; however, his troops captured Marshall Vandamme.

²⁴ This medal was presented in 1828 by Czar Nicholas. All recipients were given permission by the Netherlands government to wear it (see also note 35).

²⁵ It is not known what the sources are that Van Wetering gathered his information from, and the actual numbers are still subject to debate.

Having arrived with the Legion in Nijmegen, my dearest wish was to see my beloved parents in Zwolle, if they were still alive. But at my arrival I soon learned that my dear mother had already been buried in 1813. I found my father in a weak state, and I heard in September (in Arnhem) that my father wished to speak to me. I left immediately, but was too late, my father was no more. He had died the day before.

The Waterloo Campaign and it's first anniversary (1815 - 1816)

Feuille de Route from Arnhem to France, with several remarks; and back to Brussels. Starting on March 25th and ending on December 14th 1815.

| Date | | hours |
|-------|---|-------|
| 25 | Wichem | 5 |
| 26 | Boxmeer | 6 |
| 27 | Deurne bij Helmond | 7 |
| 28 | (day of rest) | |
| 29 | Venlo | 8 |
| 30 | (day of rest) | |
| 31 | Horn | 5 |
| April | | |
| 1 | Bree | 6 |
| 2 | Hilligteren | 4 |
| 3 | Steevoort | 4 |
| 4 | Velu bij St. Tron (garrisoned) | 5 |
| 9 | Turlemont | 4 |
| 10 | Leuven | 5 |
| 11 | Brussels | 5 |
| 12 | Ittre (garrisoned) | 6 |
| May | | |
| 7 | Steenkerken (garrisoned) | 5 |
| 10 | Guttenguir (garrisoned) | 5 |
| 13 | Gournier | 5 |
| 14 | Haine St. Paul St. Pierre en St. Paul (garrisoned in barns) | 2 |
| June | | |
| 15 | Fau, again to St. Pierre | 4 |
| 16 | before Nivelles | 2 |
| 17 | Braine-la-Leu | 4 |

*** The march wasn't long, but the heat that day was oppressive, and the march had to be executed in quick-time. Thirst and fatigue were wide-spread within the Battalion. Staying behind, however, was not to be thought of, not even by those who were known to make occasional use of that option, as we were all afraid to fall into the hands of the enemy.

We arrived at our destination and were quartered in barns, as close to each other as possible. The 1st Flanker company, of which I formed a part, was put up in a farm on the great road of Waterloo, or Brussels. All of the afternoon that road was choked with vehicles of all sorts. All who could left the scene of war. It looked much like a retreat, like there was no hope of recovery. At nightfall the Battalion was assembled and bivouacked on a height near a mill. Here the pickets were posted: a lieutenant, a sergeant, two corporals and twenty-four flankers.

The post we were to take up was pointed out to us, safety required this. Even if this had not been the case, we wouldn't have been able to sleep anyway. Because it rained heavily all through that night, we were absolutely soaked by the time we were ordered to fall in in the morning. I formed part of this picket. Once we had arrived back with the Battalion, we cooked our food, checked our muskets, discharged and reloaded them, and dried our clothes as best we could. I changed into my best set of clothes, and since I felt that something important was going to happen this day, I gave my watch and money to the wife of a sergeant in the 19th Militia Battalion²⁶. She was the wife of Sergeant van Kempen, a comrade that I'd known for several years, who had served alongside me in the Legion. His wife had endured the Russian campaign. Her first husband had died in Russia, and she had been taken prisoner on the Beresina, and had placed herself under the protection of Sergeant van Kempen. He had wed her whilst serving in the Legion. I had been present as a witness at their marriage, therefore I trusted these people, and gave her my little treasure to keep safe, on the condition that if I should fall, it was to be their property, if I was to be wounded, or escaped this campaign unscathed, they would return it to me, and if I was to be taken prisoner, they would keep it safe until I would ask for it. My testament being made, I now advanced on the enemy in good cheer.

The thunder of cannon, the rattling of musket was to be heard on all sides. We advanced and took up our station in the second Line. The first had been taken up by English and Scotch. We stood in line, our arms supported, and could do nothing. We suffered many casualties both dead and wounded, for we stood within reach of the enemy cannonballs. Because of this we had to change positions frequently, or change formation to close column of companies or square, to deploy in line again afterwards. This lasted for quite a while. The first line suffered much. We saw nothing but wounded approaching us from there. The whole line was covered in powder smoke. Our officers as well as our experienced NCO's, who knew more of these situations, had to strain themselves to the limit to encourage the young soldiers, who had never seen battle before, by pointing out to them our brave crown prince and other commanders who galloped up and down the frontline through a hail of bullets, and risked their lives for the fatherland. Because I was in charge of the distribution of provisions (we only had two NCO's present with the company at that time, the sergeant-major having been sent back with the administration, the quartermaster-sergeant being sick, another sergeant having the duty of orderly on the staff of General Chassé, having been sent back to his company, never arriving, and the other sergeant being employed with the battalion quartermaster), I still had some small distribution barrels of jenever with me in reserve. I now served each man a ration. This somewhat encouraged our men.

We were still standing in order of battle with supported arms. I stood, as senior sergeant or executive NCO, behind the Captain. The blade of the Captain's sabre was shot through just above the hilt. He thought he was injured, and retired behind the lines. I stepped up to take his place. At that moment, Corporal Nitering on my left, was shot through the arm, which had to be amputated later on. This bullet also hit the man behind him, and killed him. The Captain retook his post, and we suffered many more casualties in this position.

While we stood here, Adjutant Gerritsen got a message, stating that his wife, *cantinière* and washerwoman of the company, had given birth to a son. The Captain sent her husband to her, ordering him to stay with his wife, but he couldn't find her. She, in the meanwhile, had arrived, with the newborn in her lap, at our position, looking for her husband. Not being able to find him, she thought, notwithstanding the Captain's assurance that he had sent him back, that her husband had been killed or wounded. It took us some trouble to remove her from the battlefield. The next day she rejoined the company on the march²⁷.

²⁶ See also the Waterloo memoir of P.P. Roorda van Eysinga, lieutenant in the 19th National Militia Battalion.

²⁷ This incident is most likely the inspiration for the painting "The Sorrows of War" by J.J. Eeckhout, painted in 1826 and now in the collection of the National Military Museum. It shows a *cantinière* with a baby, sitting next to the body of her fallen husband, while the battle still rages in the background.

The firing began to grow heavier around us. We advanced to the frontline and took part in the fighting. This lasted for quite a while, until the much wished-for "Forward" was heard. Captain de Rechteren van Hemert received orders to advance speedily with his company of flankers, and press the enemy hard. We started skirmishing and took many prisoners. We ran into an enemy battery of 4 pieces. Some of the artillerymen were killed or wounded by us, and we took two guns.

What the battlefield looked like, I probably won't have to explain, because it had been fought over bitterly throughout the entire day. Thousands of dead and wounded covered the battlefield. The rain that had fallen the night before added its awful part. In some places, we were forced to walk ankle-deep through puddles of blood mixed with rainwater. We pursued the French until the paved road to Jemappe. There our Brigade Commander, Colonel Ditmers, caught up with us and ordered our Captain to halt and prepare our bivouac. He asked the Captain to relate to us his satisfaction with our behaviour, especially while skirmishing, and that he would give notice of this to the General commanding our Division.

By this road there stood a farmhouse. This had been converted into an ambulance, and was filled with wounded. A fire broke out here that night, and the whole building was soon consumed by the fire. (Oh those poor wounded.) ***

| Date | | hours |
|------|-----------------------|-------|
| June | | |
| 18 | Jemappe | 5 |
| 19 | Bois Seigneur de Izak | 6 |
| 20 | St. Warst | 6 |
| 22 | Maubeuge | 6 |
| 23 | Foré de Mromel | 6 |
| 24 | Peronne | 8 |
| 25 | Faiel | 4 |
| 26 | Cressi | 6 |
| 27 | Plaisir du Roi | 2 |
| 28 | Senlis | 6 |
| 29 | Blaumenis | 6 |
| July | | |
| 6 | Grandgranje | 2 |
| 7 | Bois de Boulogne | 1 |

We came before Paris, de barrier had been closed, the soldiers stood guard with the national badges on their shako's. We moved around the town, and were camped in the Bois de Boulogne. We now had the time to rest and visit the town.

Before we left this camp, we held, with all the troops from the camp as well as those from the surrounding areas, a grand review before the emperor of Russia, the emperor of Austria, the king of Prussia, the king of France, and several other monarchs. After the review, our captain as ordered to make a recommendation of those who, in accordance with his conscience, had acted the most brave during the battle of June 18th. 1st Lieutenant Misse, and me being the senior NCO present at the engagement, were summoned to the captain. His Grace informed us of his order, and requested to assist him in this. The three of us made a list of 18 persons, being officers, NCO's, corporals, flankers. This recommendation was sent in. After only a few days, all those were decorated as Knights in the Military Order of William, 4th class.

The camp was taken down, the corps were given their destinations and were assigned their garrisons in the environs of Paris, and we marched to Duil on the 17th.

| Date | | hours |
|------|-------------------------|-------|
| July | | |
| 17 | Duil, garrisoned | 3 |
| 22 | St. Gratien, garrisoned | 1 |

Our battalion was ordered to transport with a squadron of the 6th Regiment of Hussars the works of art that were in the museum of Paris to our states. The art works of several different sizes, which Napoleon had taken from the several countries he had conquered, had been sent to Paris to enrich the museum, and now had to be returned to the monarchs to which they belonged. This treasure of art works was packed on carts, and so high, that we had to halt before more than one town on our route to the Netherlands, in order to pass the gates which would otherwise be too low. We therefore marched to Paris on October 31st, received the carts and then moved on

| November | | hours |
|----------|---|-------|
| 1 | Pont Ste. Maacoone | 7 |
| 2 | Cuvalle bij Caurne | 7 |
| 3 | Roye, waited for the road to be repaired | |
| 8 | Noyenguischre | 6 |
| 9 | St. Quantin or Chatelet | 7 |
| 10 | Bouxvoue, day of rest | 4 |
| 12 | Cambrai | 4 |
| 13 | Anzien near Valenciennes | 7 |
| 15 | Bossu | 5 |

Here we handed the tableau to the Belgian Chasseurs

| | | |
|----------|------------------------|---|
| 18 | Vieuxcondé, garrisoned | 1 |
| 28 | Leuze | |
| December | | |
| 1 | Chèvres | 2 |
| 2 | Ath, garrisoned | 1 |
| 12 | Enghien | 4 |
| 13 | Lennink St. Quantin | 4 |
| 14 | Brussels | |

Having arrived at Brussels on December 14th, we were billeted with the civilians, because the barracks had not yet been furnished to receive us, because they had been used as hospitals to receive the wounded of the 18th of June. During a period of 14 days, we were fed by the civilians. During that time, the barracks "*Het Kleine Kasteeltje*" was prepared. They cooked for us here, because we had to eat there every day. Meanwhile we remained billeted with the civilians. After everything was taken care of, we moved into the barracks "St. Elisabeth".

On June 18th, the first anniversary of the glorious victory of Waterloo was there. The town did not spare any costs in order to enhance the entertainment that would be held that day, mostly for the soldiers that were garrisoned there. The 18th of June 1816, there were festivities in the *Allée Vert*, which was over half an hour long and stretched from the Brussels' barrier to the *Laken* Bridge, and consisted of a broad lane with broad paths for the pedestrians. On one side, there was the canal that came from Vilvoorde.

This *allée* was intended by the authorities to festively welcome the soldiers. For that purpose, tables were placed on the side road, with benches on both sides. There were three elegant victory arches. An orchestra was placed on each arch. The tables were set, and for every man a plate, knife, fork and bottle of wine. The dishes with hams, cooked and grilled meat were

dished up, and the mustard and spices which was to be used with them, were not forgotten. There was white bread in abundance. All this was brought up by the board of aldermen.

Our *afdeeling*²⁸ (the 7th) consisted of the 8th Line Battalion, the 4th and 6th Militia and the 2nd *afdeeling* Cuirassiers²⁹. We arrived with the music of the *Schutterij*³⁰ and the sounding of trumpets to storm that battery. We placed ourselves at the tables, the music of the arches and that, which punted up and down the canal on three ships intended for that purpose, began to play, and we enjoyed the meal that was offered to us so generously. There were many, especially among the Militia, who knew the wine by name and did not like the taste, who enjoyed themselves with the white bread and ham, whereas the boozers enjoyed themselves with the wine, and so everything, which there was in abundance, was consumed with eagerness and joy. One can imagine that there were enough spectators. Thousands, of all classes, from the town and the surrounding villages, had come together, and had the pleasure of seeing us enjoy the meal. The meal ended with pleasure, and we marched back to the town with glee, whilst singing patriotic songs. The evening and night were also pleasant, All buildings were illuminated, the communal assemblies on the public squares commenced, and almost lasted until morning. The festivities of the joyous 18th had ended merrily³¹.

I was ordered the next morning (having taken over the duties of the Adjutant-NCO) to go with the *fouriers* and the necessary men that were on guard duties, or those who had stayed behind in the barracks, to gather their rations. After receiving the wine, bread and the ham, I returned to the barracks and divided it amongst the company.

Later Years (1817-1843)

We were ordered to leave Brussels. We marched on January 10th 1817 to Mechelen, 11th to Antwerp, 12th to Westwezel, 13th to Breda, 14th to Gorkum, 15th to Utrecht (day of rest), 17 Nijkerk, 18 Nunspeet, 10 to Zwolle where we were garrisoned.

On the 15th of September of each year, those on leave were called up to exercise that month (from September 15th to October 15th). This was done, and we marched to Deventer, where we joined the 8th Line Infantry Battalion which was garrisoned in Zutphen, and the 5th National Militia Battalion, which was garrisoned with us in Deventer, for daily manoeuvres on the heath near Gorsel. At the end of a month of exercises, we marched back to Zwolle, and the men that were destined to be discharged and go on leave, left for their homes.

In 1818, those on leave were called up again, as usual. We marched to the camp near Zeist. We met up with several other *afdeelingen* for manoeuvres. Here I found several fine old comrades, and time flew by quickly and with pleasure. I had after some trouble found the old camp of 1804 again, which was hardly recognizable except for some cooking pits, which were overgrown with heather and grass. The Pyramide, that colossal building, could be seen in the distance, but it was dilapidated, and only surrounded with several farmhouses. This was the so-called village Austerlitz.

²⁸ Afdeling or Afdeeling (Eng.: Section, Division) is the term used instead of Regiment by the Netherlands army from 1815-1841.

²⁹ The 7th Infantry *Afdeling* was formed by combining the 8th Line Infantry Battalion (standing army, consisting of volunteers,) with the 4th, 5th and 6th National Militia Infantry Battalions (units of conscripts, with professional NCO's and officers); it did not include the 2nd *Afdeling* Cuirassiers (the former 2nd Carabineer Regiment). Van Wetering probably mentions them because they were also garrisoned Brussels at the time.

³⁰ National Guard.

³¹ The 18th of June, the date of the Battle of Waterloo, became a national holiday. It was celebrated each year until 1940. After WWII, it was replaced by May 5th, known as Liberation Day.

We returned to Zwolle. Early in 1819 we marched to Deventer to be garrisoned there. Because I had been charmed with promises for years, and since the colonel had assured me he had personally recommended me for a commission as 2nd Lieutenant, I transferred however to the Royal Corps of *Marechaussée*³². Having served as a *Marechaussée* for 4 months with the Company of Antwerp, I was commissioned by the War Department as a Brigadier³³ in the Company of Southern Brabant, with the staff in Brussels.

The next year, I was promoted to *Wachtmeester*³⁴ and in 1823 commissioned and transferred as 1st Lieutenant with the 1st Infantry *Afdeeling* in Brussels.

When those on leave were called up, we marched to the camp near Maastricht, where we were united with the 11th and 14th *Afdeelingen* for manoeuvres. After having spent a month there, we marched back to Brussels.

In 1828, me and some married officers and their wives (including mine) made a trip to Waterloo, to see the village of Waterloo, the battlefield, the Pyramid with the Lion and the several monuments of which there are so many on the battlefield as well as in the church. We arrived after a delightful trip in the village of Waterloo. Here we got out in front of the Hotel 'The King of England', where we settled for the day. And after having enjoyed some refreshments, we hired a guide to lead us to the places which displayed artefacts from the 18th of June. I don't have to tell what went through my mind when seeing these objects, and also when walking over the battlefield, which the last time that I left it, it was covered in dead and wounded and blood, and now it displayed the most abundant wheat which the eye could see. After having visited everything, we returned to our lodgings, and after having enjoyed the meal, we had the horses harnessed and rode back to Brussels.

Decorated with the Russian medal by H.M. emperor Nicholas³⁵.

In the summer of 1829, we had to move over for the grenadiers and *jagers*³⁶ and marched to Antwerp, the reserve battalion to Vilvoorde.

Because I had requested to be promoted to *Plaatsmajoor*³⁷ and there had not been a vacancy yet, I had been placed on 2/3rd pay while waiting for a position, and went to Zwolle. In 1830, I was appointed to recruiting officer in the Zwolle district, under direct command of the local commander, Colonel De Bruin. After having served there with pleasure for some time, I was commissioned as *Plaatsmajoor* in Bois-le-Duc. Having arrived here, I was welcomed with open arms by my colleague, Captain Van Ankeren. The reason was this. He was old, and since the

³² Military Police.

³³ Equivalent of a Warrant officer or Sub-officer. The ranks in the *Marechaussée* were always one grade higher than in the other branches, i.e. a *Marechaussée* equalled a Corporal in the army, a *Marechaussée*-corporal equalled a Sergeant, etc.

³⁴ Sergeant or Maréchal-des-Logis in the *Marechaussée* and Cavalry.

³⁵ See note 24. The edition of the "Nederlandse Staats Courant" of 14 November 1828 gives a list of all recipients.

³⁶ On July 7th 1829, a new Guard *Afdeling* of Grenadiers (3 battalion) and *Jagers* (Jägers, Rifles; 2 battalions) was raised; that same year, the four Swiss Regiments (nrs. 29, 30, 31 and 32) were disbanded. Until then, the 32nd had performed guard duties around the Royal Palaces, since at the formation of the new Netherlands army in 1814, no Royal Guard units had been raised. Besides acting as a Guard Regiment – a role it still performs today,- the regiment was recruited from among the best soldiers and was also meant to be an example to the army, and serving in it was considered an honour. The *Afdeling* moved to Brussels, the second capitol of the United Netherlands.

³⁷ Lieutenant-Commander (with the rank of Major) of a garrison, performing mostly administrative duties.

Belgian Uprising had just begun³⁸, there was much business and a lot of work to be done in the fortress, especially for the *Plaatsmajors*. So there were two of us, and I was up and running day and night. And because I lacked much of my former strength, I felt burdened by the duties. The local commander, Colonel De Fremery, had to notice this. H.H. requested for a third *Plaatsmajoor* to be appointed, which was granted. This brought some relief, but the work increased every day. The fortress was set under martial law. A fourth *Plaatsmajoor* was appointed. I was relieved from outside duties and would daily work at the office of the garrison commander. This went well for some time, but it became harder, since I became increasingly weak. The commander noticed this and responded to this.

The desk activities appointed to me I could do in my own home. This was good. I performed these duties until the Belgian unrest had ended. I was placed on 2/3rd of the active pay (as appointed in 1831).

Decorated with the Metal Cross for the campaigns³⁹.

I left Bois-le-Duc and moved to Zwolle, where I remained and was awarded a pension by H.M. I was given permission in 1843 to wear the Gold Clasp (established by H.M, for officers that had been in active duty for 15 years), which was sent to me by H.H. the Minister of the War Department.

Thus the beginning and end of my military career.

In the *feuille de route* from Arnhem to France, the following towns were left out:

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------|
| 28 th June | Serlis | 6 hours |
| 29 th | Wernis le Petit | 2 hours |

Division of the Netherlands Army in the 185 Campaign against Napoleon.

1st Division

Lt.Gen. Stedman

1st Brigade

Maj.Gen. D'Hauw

16 Jagers, 4 and 6 Line, and 15 Land Militia

2nd Brigade

Major-General De Eerens

18 Jagers, 1st Line, 1st, 2nd and 18 Land Militia

Indian Netherlands Division

Lt.General Anthing

5th Line Infantry Regiment, 1st Flanker Bat.

10th and 11th Jagers

Cavalry

Lt.General Collaert

Commander of the Cavalry

1st Brigade Heavy Cavalry

Major-Gen. Trip

1st, 2nd and 3rd Carabiniers

1st Brigade Light Cavalry

Major-Gen. Van Merle

³⁸ The War of Belgian Secession (1830 – 1839), which led to the independance of Belgium.

³⁹ The Metal Cross was a remembrance medal for all military personell that served during the War of Belgian Succession. The crosses were cast from the metal of five cannon, captured from the Belgian armies.

5 Light Dragoons, 6 Hussars
2nd Brigade

4 Light Dragoons, 8 Hussars

2nd Division

Lt.General De Perponcher

1st Brigade

Major-General Van Bijland

27th Jagers, 7th Line, 5th, 7th and 8th Land Militia

3rd Division

Lt.General Chassé

1st Brigade

Colonel Detmers

2nd Line, 25th Jagers, 4, 6, 17 and 19 Bat. Land Militia

2nd Brigade

Major-Gen. D'Aubreme

36th Jagers, 3rd, 12th and 13th Line, 3rd and 10th Land Militia

The artillery consisted of 8 batteries

Report on the losses of the allied armies.

English and Hanoverian

Dead, wounded and missing 13.833

Prussian

Dead, wounded and missing 33.120

Dutch

Dead, wounded and missing 4.136

Total 51.089

French

Dead, wounded and missing -----

In reward of this campaign the following number of knighthoods have been awarded:

6 Grand Crosses

to H.R.H. Prince of Orange

to H.R.H. Prince William of Prussia

Field Marshall Duke of Wellington, Prince of Waterloo

Prince Blucher von Waltstadt

Count Bulow Dennewitz

Von Gneisenau

Commanders' Crosses

H.R.H. Prince Frederick of the Netherlands

Lt. General D.H. Chassé

Lt. General J.H. Collaert

Lt. General H. De Perponcher

Major-General De Constant Rebeque

Major-General A.D. Trip

Lt. General Lord Hill

Lt. General Count Uxbridge, Marquess of Anglesia

Lt. General Don M.D. Aluva

to Knights of the Order, 3rd Class: 58

to Knights of the Order, 4th Class: 815

The strength of the French army on the 18th of June was estimated to be between 130,000 and 140,000 men and that of the English and Dutch between 80 to 90,000 men.

Prussians -----

Nominative list of the gentlemen officers, NCO's and men of the Russo-German Legion, which left for their homes under the guidance of Major Logger van Koch.

| | Name and surnames | rank |
|-----|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. | van Koch Logger | Major |
| 2. | Voogt Willem | Captain |
| 3. | Lasonder Cornelis | 1 st Lieutenant |
| 4. | Bitter Herman | " |
| 5. | Nonmant Karel Lodewijk | " |
| 6. | Reijntjes Willem | 2 nd Lieutenant |
| 7. | Dumasson | " |
| 8. | Meewes Willem | " |
| 9. | Champier Phillipus | " |
| 10. | Holstein | Batt. Surgeon |
| 11. | Halsch | Sgt. Major |
| 12. | van Rijn Willem | " |
| 13. | Schmidt Joseph Willem | " |
| 14. | Teunissen Willem | " |
| 15. | Jacobs Christoffel | Sgt. |
| 16. | van Leuven Pieter | " |
| 17. | Pachlig Jacob | " |
| 18. | Samot Jacob | " |
| 19. | Spruijt Bernard | " |
| 20. | Ooijkaas Arie | " |
| 21. | de Valk Willem | " |
| 22. | Heeris Joseph | " |
| 23. | de Haan Hendrik | " |
| 24. | Kempers Johan | " |
| 25. | Draak Reindert | " |
| 26. | van Elsakker Derk | " |
| 27. | van der Horst Albert | " |
| 28. | Jansen Teunis | " |
| 29. | Poelman Hendrik | " |
| 30. | Mathysen Frederik | " |
| 31. | van Kempen Jacob | " |
| 32. | Scheffer Christiaan Lodewijk | " |
| 33. | Broeders Jacob | " |
| 34. | van Wetering Jan Willem | " |
| 35. | Klaasen Bernard | " |
| 36. | Doornbos Willem | " |
| 37. | Wilson Willem | " |
| 38. | Lans Netto | " |
| 39. | Appelman Nicolaas | " |
| 40. | Erenstein Hohan | " |
| 41. | Bersloo Johan | Corp. |

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------|---|
| 42. | Dane Gerrit | “ |
| 43. | Bommers Johannes | “ |
| 44. | Dossere Hendrik | “ |
| 45. | Kriesing Isaak | “ |
| 46. | Lops Adam | “ |
| 47. | Junik Johan | “ |
| 48. | Kram Hendrik | “ |
| 49. | Kempen Gerard Nicolaas | “ |
| 50. | Mimmer Bernard | “ |
| 51. | Vogelzang Johan | “ |
| 52. | Wyrick Johan | “ |
| 53. | Hofman Jan Pieter | “ |
| 54. | Gusten Pieter | “ |
| 55. | Koolep Johan Lodewijk | “ |

Placed on the Napoleon Series: August 2015