

THE FIRST NAPOLEON.

The Campaign of 1814. It may be interesting at the present crisis of the affairs of France to turn to the pages of Jomini for a clear description of the manœuvres by which Napoleon, in 1814, resisted the allied armies in their march on Paris. Such a description will be easily intelligible by the help of any of the numerous maps of the seat of the pending war which are published in the newspapers. At the outset of the campaign Blücher passed the Rhine near Mayence, and advanced on Nancy. Wittgenstein passed the Rhine at Birsach, and crossed the Vosges mountains. Schwartzberg, with the grand allied army, entered France on the side of Switzerland. The various corps of the French army, yielding to the enormous superiority of the enemy, concentrated towards Chalons. The campaign opened with a battle at Brienne, about midway between Troyes and Joinville, in which Napoleon was defeated, so that ill-success at the beginning combined with numerical inferiority to depress his troops. After this battle, if the allies had followed in mass the road to Paris by Troyes, they might have reached the gates of the capital. This was the opinion of the Emperor Alexander, but the allied Generals wished to manœuvre Schwartzberg, with his army, acrossed the Aube, and marched with slow and uncertain steps on Troyes to act in the basin of the Seine. Blücher was to operate in the valley of the Marne by Epernay, Dormans, Chateau-Thierry, and La Ferté-sous-Jouarre. The desire of preceding his colleague to Paris drew him into a series of false movements, of which Napoleon immediately resolved to take advantage. He left Troyes on the 6th of February, and passed the Seine at Nogent on the 7th. Blücher continued to extend himself along the Marne, threatening Meaux. Napoleon left twenty thousand men with Oudinot and Victor to defend the course of the Seine, and the roads from Troyes to Paris, against the grand allied army, and with the remaining twenty-five thousand marched from Nogent to Sezaine. A Russian division posted at Champ-Aubert was first attacked and destroyed. The position thus gained cut Blücher's army in two. The corps of Sacken and York were defeated at Montmirail, and Blücher himself was defeated at Vauchamps. "The Prussian Marshal, distinguished for his operations in Silesia and Saxony, seemed blinded by hatred and presumption." Blücher retired after defeat on Chalons, where he was joined by the corps of Sacken and York, who had made a long detour by Rheims. His army was weakened by the loss of twenty thousand men, but a reinforcement received at Chalons restored its strength. Notwithstanding this, the disorder in his army was so great that if Napoleon had pushed it warmly he would have annihilated it. But the danger of the capital called him in another direction. "This was unfortunate, for in war, as in smithery, it is necessary to strike while the iron is hot." While Napoleon was thus occupied on the Marne, Paris was threatened on the side of the Seine. The marshals whom he had left on the Seine, from Troyes to Paris, were too weak to arrest the grand army of the allies if it acted together and with vigor. Schwartzberg was tied down by the instructions of his Cabinet, which had ordered him not to pass the Seine. All military dispositions were made subordinate to the political thermometer of the Congress of Chalons. Nevertheless the grand army of the allies made such progress as filled Paris with alarm. Oudinot and Victor had fallen back from Nogent by Nangis on Guignes. Courier after courier entreated Napoleon to come to the assistance of his capital. He was now ready to do so, as Blücher's army, thrown back on Chalons, gave him no more inquietude. He left Marmont with ten thousand men at Eloges to observe Blücher, and with his Guard he quitted Montmirail, and marched on Guignes. Convinced that it was only by extreme activity that he could compensate for his inferiority in numbers, he attacked the allied army successfully at Nangis and Montereau. These attacks discouraged the allies, and Schwartzberg retired on Troyes, soliciting Blücher to fly to his assistance. Napoleon passed the Seine at Montereau, and marched on Troyes. The grand army of the allies concentrated at Troyes occupied both banks of the Seine. Blücher, coming from Chalons by Arcis, was at Mery, and in immediate connection with Schwartzberg. Napoleon expected that the allies would profit by the union of such large forces to offer him a decisive battle. He was resolved to accept it; but to his astonishment they continued their retreat. This result had been attained on the 22d February by the employment of 170,000 allied troops against 70,000 French troops. These successes made Napoleon hope that a national movement would expel the invader from French territory. But his expectation was disappointed. Meantime the Emperor Alexander desired that the war might be conducted in a more military manner. It was therefore decided that the grand army should remain on the defensive, while Blücher should operate with 100,000 men in the valley of the Marne. Accordingly the Prussian Marshal pushed back the corps of Mortier and Marmont as far as Meaux, but here his progress was arrested by the appearance of Napoleon in his rear. The grand army having retired beyond Troyes, Napoleon marched thence by Arcis and Sezaine to Epernay, and thence to La Ferté-sous-Jouarre on the Marne. Blücher now saw the necessity of retreat, but this was no easy matter. Napoleon was in a position to intercept the road to Chalons and Rheims. The only road which remained open was that to Soissons. Napoleon had now strong hopes of destroying Blücher's army, which, having no permanent bridge over the Aisne, would be thrown on that river and exposed to ruin. Unfortunately the garrison of Soissons was commanded by a weak officer, who was intimidated into capitulating to the allies at the moment when Napoleon's guns were heard. Blücher, fortunate in escaping this imminent peril, passed the Aisne in the night of the 3d of March, and established himself on the right bank of this river, between Soissons and Rheims. The loss of Soissons deranged Napoleon's plan, but he determined to continue to manœuvre against the enemy's left, with the hope of cutting him off from Laon, and of throwing him into the angle formed by the Aisne and Oise. The battle of Craonne followed. It was a barren victory for the French, as they lost as many men as the allies, and could not nearly so well spare them. Blücher now assembled all his army at Laon, and it numbered 100,000 men. Napoleon, says Jomini, had only 35,000. "But we were in a situation not to count our enemies." If Napoleon did not attack, the allies would take the initiative. The battle of Laon lasted a whole day without any decisive result. In the night Blücher surprised Marmont's corps of Napoleon's army, and took from it 2500 prisoners and forty guns. Nevertheless, Napoleon vainly persevered next day in trying to make an impression on the allies. He then fell back on Soissons, and repassed the Aisne. Success was now absolutely necessary

to remove the bad impression of the retreat from Laon, and fortune, or rather the fault of a Russian General, furnished an occasion. Count St. Priest, commanding a new corps of twelve thousand men, placed himself at Rheims between the grand army of the allies and that of Blücher. Napoleon saw that it would be easy to defeat this corps alone, and he put himself in march on Rheims, leaving Mortier with 12,000 men at Soissons. St. Priest's corps was routed, and himself killed. Napoleon remained three days at Rheims to give some repose to his troops before carrying them on the Aube and Seine, where the grand army of the allies had taken the offensive. Schwartzberg had returned to Troyes, and remained there ten days waiting for intelligence from Blücher. The news of Napoleon's repulse from Laon excited his ardor, and he determined to advance. But he did this with the greatest caution. He pushed back Macdonald as far as Maison Rouge, between Provins and Nangis; but here he heard of Napoleon's approach, and gave himself up to his habitual perplexities and alarms about his flanks and rear. His renewed retreat tempted Napoleon to pursue without even waiting for the whole of his small available force. The battle of Arcis-sur-Aube, which followed on the 20th of March, may be regarded as the turning-point of this wonderful campaign. The Emperor Alexander began to be wearied of these indecisive movements, and he declared in council that they must unite with Blücher and act in a single mass on Paris. In accordance with the resolution of this council the allied army concentrated itself on Arcis, and attacked the French army which was then on both sides of the Aube. The bridges on this river were only held by the personal exertions of Napoleon, whose left wing would have been lost if the allies could have severed his communications. During the night Napoleon was considerably reinforced, and, thinking that Schwartzberg had fought only to cover his retreat, he proposed to pursue the allies in the morning. But the allies, instead of retiring, had united all their forces and prepared for battle. To accept this battle with a great disparity of force, in a vast plain, with a miry river in the rear, would have exposed Napoleon's last resources to destruction. Imperious necessity imposed a retreat, which was facilitated by the cautious advance of the allies, who had expected to be themselves attacked. The historian now explains the reasons which induced Napoleon to throw himself on the communications of the allies. Only extreme measures could afford him a chance of safety. The fate of France depended on him alone, and no place was of importance except made so by his presence. To make peace and save the Empire, it was necessary to replant the French eagles on the Rhine. He resolved, therefore, to throw himself by St. Dizier towards the Upper Meuse. He there expected strong reinforcements from the garrisons of Lorraine and Alsace, and by raising the departments which had been overrun by the enemy he would threaten the line of operations of the grand army. By thus compelling the enemy to retrace his steps, he would draw him on ground favorable for his own strategic operations. He would leave Paris exposed, but this was of little importance to Napoleon, whose capital was at his own headquarters. Accordingly, Napoleon marched from Arcis-sur-Aube by Vitry to St. Dizier, which he reached on the 23d of March. Schwartzberg, instead of retreating towards Troyes, as was expected, retreated towards Arcis and advanced towards Vitry to follow Napoleon and connect himself with Blücher. The Prussian Marshal, unable to believe that he had gained a victory at Laon, and intimidated by the defeat of St. Priest's corps, had remained inactive for ten days behind the Aisne. He then detached a strong force of cavalry to Rheims and himself advanced towards Soissons. Hereupon Mortier and Mortier united their small forces at Fismes, which is on the Aisne, about midway between Rheims and Soissons. "Thus," says Jomini, "the two grand armies of the enemy, instead of pursuing diverging lines, concentrated their forces towards a single line at the very moment that Napoleon's two little armies separated from each other. The two French Marshals marched from Fismes southwest to Fère-en-Tardenois, and it is said that Napoleon's order to join him at Vitry did not reach them until they arrived at this latter place. It was then impossible for them to march between the two converging armies of the allies to join Napoleon, and after unsuccessfully attempting such a march they were necessarily thrown back on Paris. We may roughly describe the position by saying that Blücher and Schwartzberg were approaching one another from north and south while Napoleon and his two marshals were separating from one another by marching, the former to the east and the latter to the west. Napoleon's plan had become known to the allies by an intercepted courier, and the Emperor Alexander proposed to a conference of generals to advance on Paris without troubling themselves about Napoleon's move on Lorraine, or whether the allies should fall back on the Rhine. All agreed that the first was the preferable course. The resolution was communicated to Blücher, and the two armies, now in full communication, prepared to march on Paris by the roads from Vitry to Sezaine, and from Chalons to Montmirail. A strong force of cavalry belonging to Blücher's army marched from Vitry on St. Dizier to cover these movements, and make Napoleon believe he was followed by the whole army of Schwartzberg. Napoleon had been at Dolevent for twenty-four hours, in painful uncertainty, when an enemy's force was seen approaching from St. Dizier. The French cavalry immediately attacked this enemy and drove him on Bar-le-Duc and St. Mihiel. "What was Napoleon's astonishment when he learned from the prisoners that it was the army of Blücher that he had before him!" He stopped at St. Dizier, and on the 27th made a forced reconnaissance on Vitry. The two marshals had marched in his support from Fère-en-Tardenois to Chateau-Thierry on the Marne, and thence to Fère-Champenoise, on the road to Vitry. Here they were overpowered by superior numbers, defeated, and forced back on Paris. Napoleon hereupon concentrated his own troops on Troyes, and hurried in person along the Seine towards the capital. The very last offensive movement which he performed before he determined to march on Paris was an advance of cavalry, which put his father-in-law, the Emperor of Austria, to flight. Near Fontainebleau Napoleon met the cavalry of Mortier's corps. The army of the marshals was following close at hand. Paris then had fallen." The Marshals, after defending the heights of Belleville and Montmartre until 4 P. M. on the 29th of March, surrendered Paris, and withdrew their troops in the night towards Fontainebleau, where they met Napoleon. His abdication took place on the 6th of April. He had quitted Paris on the 25th of January to begin a campaign which Jomini regarded, with those of 1805 and 1809, as "the most memorable and scientific of modern times."

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