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WAR DEPARTMENT.

Downing-Street, March 17, 1814.

A DISPATCH, of which the following is a copy, has been received at this Office, addressed to Earl Bathurst by Colonel Lowe.

Head-Quarters of the Combined Army under Field-Marshal Blücher, Laon, March 11, 1814.

MY LORD,

AS some delay attends my communication at the present moment with Lieutenant-General the Honourable Sir Charles Stewart, I do myself the honour to enclose to your Lordship, a duplicate of my report to him of the events that have taken place in this vicinity within these three days. It may be necessary at the same time to give your Lordship the following outline of the movements that preceded them, in the event of my former reports not having been yet received.

The army of Silesia effected its junction with the corps of Generals Winzingerode and Bulow at Soissons on the evening of the 3d instant; and on the following day Field-Marshal Blücher, (to whom the command of the whole had been entrusted,) took up a position, on an extensive plateau, to the left and in the rear of the town of Soissons, with his right close to the village of Laffaux, and his left near Craone. Buonaparte, with the whole of his guards, with the corps of Marshals Marmont and Mortier, and with a considerable body of cavalry, had followed the army of Silesia in its march from the Marne to the Aisne. On the 5th he resolved on an attempt to regain possession of the town of Soissons; ten thousand Russian infantry of the corps of General Count Langeron, under the orders of General Rudzewich, defended it. The town, which lies on the opposite side of the Aisne to that on which the army was in position, is surrounded by a broken wall and ditch, passable in many parts.

The enemy attacked soon after day light, gained possession of the greater part of the suburbs, and twice attacked the town itself on opposite sides with heavy columns, supposed the separate divisions of Marmont and Mortier. He was both times repulsed with slaughter and loss; but still retained possession of the greater part of the suburbs, unroofed the houses, and kept up a constant fire from them upon the troops on the walls of the town, until night put an end to the contest. The Russian infantry, equally maintained themselves in another part of the suburbs, and a few houses only divided the combatants during the night. The Russians lost more than a thousand men killed and wounded. The loss of the enemy must have been greater, as his troops were more exposed.

In the morning of the 6th, the enemy had given up the contest, and retired. Whilst this was passing in the town of Soissons, Buonaparte himself was ascertained to be moving to his right, and in the forenoon of the 6th, he effected the passage of his army across the Aisne at Bery le Bac, and at about two o'clock in the afternoon commenced an attack on the left of the position occupied by the Field-Marshal's army near Craone. Strong columns were observed to be marching at the same time towards Laon, by the way of Corbeny. Field-Marshal Blücher immediately made the following dispositions: he directed a corps of ten thousand cavalry, under the orders of General Winzingerode, to march by the way of Chevrigny and Presle, and throw itself in the line of the enemy's communication, across the road from Corbeny to Laon. General Bulow, with twenty thousand men, was directed to march and occupy Laon. The corps of Generals D'Yorck, Kleist, and Sacken were ordered

to incline towards the infantry of General Winzingerode, which sustained the extremity of the position near the villages of St. Martin and Craone. The enemy approached, under cover of the wood of Corbeny, and sent forward large bodies of skirmishers, supported by artillery, but was repulsed, and the firing ceased with the night.

On the morning of the 7th, it was ascertained that the enemy had desisted from his march upon Laon; in other respects his position was not clearly discovered. To be prepared for whatever might occur, Field-Marshal Blücher directed the corps of General D'Yorck and Kleist to move across the River Delette, in the direction of Presle and Leuilly, to sustain the movement of the cavalry under General Winzingerode; and together with the corps of General Bulow, make an attack on the enemy's right, should he push forward against the point occupied by the infantry of General Winzingerode, near Craone. General Baron Sacken was ordered to the support of the latter, and to attempt to turn the enemy's left, should he make his attack on the other side. If pushed by a superior force, he was directed to fall back on the road towards Laon, and draw in the garrison of Soissons.

At eleven o'clock in the forenoon, the enemy began the attack with his whole force, calculated at more than sixty shousand men, against the point where General Winzingerode's infantry was posted. Field Marshal Blücher immediately rode to the spot where the cavalry was supposed to be formed, to direct the operations in that quarter; but unexpected difficulties had opposed the march of the cavalry during the night, and it was found to have advanced no further than Presle. The infantry of General Kleist, which had marched in the morning, reached Feticcia; but the advanced guard of the cavalry alone had come up, and it became impossible to undertake, with effect, the movement which the FieldMarshal had projected against the enemy's right. —In the mean time, the corps posted near Craone was exposed to a most severe and powerful attack. General Count Strogonoff commanded in General Winzingerode's absence. General Count Woronzoff had the infantry. The cannonading was most tremendous, but the enemy was resisted in every point with a spirit and determination beyond all praise. The pressure however was so great, that General Baron Sacken, to whom the support and direction of the whole had been entrusted, finally found it necessary to execute that part of the disposition which had provided for the retreat of the troops engaged towards Laon. It was executed with admirable order. Though fourteen pieces of artillery had been dismounted by the enemy's fire, not a single gun or carriage was left behind. The prisoners taken were not more than fifty or sixty. The killed and wounded are stated at about two thousand. General Count Strogonoff had his son, a Lieutenant-General, killed early in the action. Three other Russian Generals were wounded. General Count Woronzoff had five officers of his personal staff killed or wounded. The enemy had four generals wounded—Victor, Grouchy, La Salle, and Charpentras. His loss from the fire of the most admirably served artillery must have been very great. The troops effected their junction during the night, and on the following morning, with the rest of the army, and the operations that have since ensued form the subject of the annexed report.

For forty-two days past this army, which appears to have been peculiarly the object of the enemy's disquietude and attacks, has been constantly marching or fighting, for exclusive of the general actions, only two days have elapsed, in which the advance or rear of it has not been seriously engaged. Buonaparte is now in retreat before it, but whether to take up a fresh position, or to proceed in some other direction where his presence may be found wanting, is not yet ascertained. Scarcely any information has been received here of the movements of the grand allied army, since he quitted the observation of it.

I have the honour to be, &c.

(Signed) H. LOWE, Colonel.

Head-Quarters of the Combined Armies, under Field-Marshal Blücher, Laon, March 10, 1814, Eight A. M.

SIR,

BUONAPARTE, with his whole force, attacked Field-Marshal Blücher yesterday in his position at this place, and was repulsed with the loss of forty-five pieces of cannon, with tumbrills, baggage, and prisoners, the numbers of which have not as yet been ascertained, as the left wing of the Field-Marshal's army is still in pursuit.

The city of Laon is situated on an elevated plateau, with deep shelving banks, which command an extensive plain around; the town covers the greater part of the plateau; the remainder is crowned by an old castle, and by several windmills built on high terrace-walls. General Bulow's army occupied this position; the remainder of the Field-Marshal's army was posted on the plain below, to the right and left of the town, fronting towards Soissons, and the cavalry was in reserve in the rear.

Before daylight in the morning the enemy made his attack, and under cover of a thick fog, which concealed all his movements, obtained possession of the villages of Semilly and Ardon, close under the town, and which may be regarded as its suburbs. The musketry reached the walls of the town, and continued without intermission until about eleven o'clock, when the fog began to disperse.

At this time the enemy was observed to be in force behind the villages of Semilly and Leuilly, with columns of infantry and cavalry on the Chaussee towards Soissons. He occupied at the same time, in force, the village of Ardon. The enemy was instantly repelled from Semilly, and Field-Marshal Blücher, the moment he could observe any thing of the enemy's position, ordered the cavalry from the rear to advance, and turn his left flank. General Count Woronzoff, who was on the right of the Field-Marshal's position, advanced at the same time with his infantry, pushed forward two battalions of yagers, which drove in the enemy's posts, sustained a charge of cavalry, and maintained themselves in an attitude to keep the left of the enemy in check until the cavalry could advance.

The Field-Marshal, at the same time, directed the advance of a part of General Bulow's corps against the village of Ardon, from which the enemy,

after sustaining a fire for about half an hour, was compelled to retreat.

Whilst the cavalry was taking a circuit round from the rear, and at about two o'clock in the afternoon, the enemy was observed to be advancing a column of sixteen battalions of infantry, with cavalry and artillery, along the chaussée from Rheims. General D'Yorck was directed to oppose him, and General Baron Sacken ordered to General D'Yorck's support.

It was here the battle became most general and decisive. The enemy opened a formidable battery of at least forty or fifty pieces of artillery, and advanced with a confidence from which he must have arrogated to himself every success. He formed a column of attack, and was moving forward with a pas de charge to the village of Althies, when Prince William of Prussia, who was advancing to the village at the same time, met him half way and overthrew him.

He then began his retreat which soon became a flight. Eight pieces of artillery, with horses and every thing belonging to them, were immediately taken, and successively twenty two pieces more.

He was pursued as far as Corbeny, losing baggage, prisoners, &c. by the way, the details of all which have not yet arrived, as the pursuit has continued during the whole of the night, and as it is still going on.

On the right, no particular advantages were gained beyond the expulsion of the enemy from the villages he had gained possession of in the morning. General Count Woronzoff, towards the close of the day, again attacked with the greatest vigour, but he had large masses opposed to him, and the ground presented difficulties against the active co-operation of his cavalry.

The promptitude with which General Count Woronzoff conducted his advance in the morning, and the bravery and determination with which his troops attacked, were the admiration of every one.

The losses on either side it is as yet impossible to ascertain, but I have myself seen some hundred prisoners brought in here already.

P. S. Ten A. M.—The prisoners say that Buonaparte is still in front of Laon, and resolved on pursuing his attack this day.

The cannonading and musketry is already violent in the direction of Semilly and Leuilly.

I have the honour to be, &c.

(Signed) H. LOWE, Colonel.

P. S. Laon, Ten A. M. March 11, 1814.—The attack continued during the whole of yesterday. The plain, below the city of Laon, is interspersed with villages and small woods, which became the scene of very warm and obstinate contests. A wood near the village of Clacy, on the right of the position, was taken and retaken four or five different times, and remained finally in possession of the allied troops. The infantry of General Winzingerode's corps, under the command of General Count Woronzoff, were the troops engaged there: in the centre and left of the position the enemy maintained himself; and at about half an hour before sunset, he threw forward a body of skirmishers, supported by two battalions of infantry (the rest of his army remaining in reserve), and attacked the village of Semilly close under the walls of the town; but a battalion of Prussians, of General Bulow's corps, threw itself in the road, and, supported by the fire of the troops on each flank, compelled him to retire in disorder and with loss.

This was the last operation attempted during the day.

The fires of his bivouack were apparent along a very extended line at the beginning of the night; but in the morning it was observed he had retired, and the cavalry of the advanced guard are at this moment in pursuit of him towards Chavignon, on the road to Soissons.

Thus, during two days of successive attacks, the enemy has experienced nothing but defeat and discomfiture. The efforts of all his force have been broken against, and recoiled from the bulwark which this fine position has afforded.

The absence of the corps of D'Yorck, Kleist and Sacken, which were in the morning pursuing the remainder of the troops that had advanced from Rheims, and which could not be recalled in time, prevented any active offensive operation being undertaken yesterday. But success had crowned the efforts of these corps in other respects, by the capture of between three and four thousand prisoners, besides a great quantity of ammunition and baggage, and forty-five pieces of cannon have already been brought in.

The intended future operations of this army have not yet been promulgated, but I apprehend they will be altogether of an offensive nature.

I have the honour to be, &c.

(Signed) H. LOWE, Colonel.

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