

**THE POLITICAL AND
MILITARY HISTORY OF THE
CAMPAIGN OF
WATERLOO**

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The Political and Military History of the Campaign of Waterloo by Antoine Henri Jomini & S. V. Benet

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ANTOINE HENRI JOMINI & S. V. BENET

**THE POLITICAL AND
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WATERLOO**

THIS

POLITICAL AND MILITARY HISTORY

OF THE

CAMPAIGN OF WATERLOO;

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

GENERAL BARON DE JOMINI,

BY CAPT. S. V. BENET,

ORDNANCE DEPARTMENT, U. S. ARMY.

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TO THE GRADUATES

OF

THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY

OF 1849

THIS TRANSLATION IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY THEIR CLASSMATE.

PREFACE.

This volume* was the last of a work, published some twelve years since; but as the manuscript of this campaign had unfortunately been mislaid, the editor was compelled to supply its place hastily and somewhat incompletely. Having, by an unforeseen event, recovered the original manuscript, I hasten to restore it in its integrity, with this difference, that I present it in my name, instead of causing the recital to be made by Napoleon. A powerful motive has induced me to act thus, and change the form employed in the rest of the work: it is, that the rapidity of the emperor's fall, and his exile, preventing him from procuring accurate information of what had occurred, not only in his army, but also in that of his adversaries, he had at St. Helena composed narratives, with which a disinterested historian could not entirely concur, so that it would have been necessary to make him utter things, of which he had judged altogether differently.

The censures that Napoleon has cast on Ney and Grouchy, and which these have returned with interest, have all, more or less, something specious in them. I have sought to be impartial in presenting them. Napoleon did not always give his orders in an irreproachable manner; these orders were not always well executed or properly interpreted, and his lieutenants knew not how to supply the deficiency in what they had received incompletely and vaguely. If I reproach Napoleon for any faults on the mornings of the 16th and 17th June, no one would

* General Jomini calls this, the 22d chapter of his great work entitled "Vie Politique et Militaire de Napoleon," though it is an unit in itself, and forms a complete summary of the campaign of 1815.—THE TRANSLATOR.

suspect me, of wishing to cast the slightest cloud over his immense genius and glory, which, more loudly than any other, I have proclaimed in all my works. But the more laurels he has gathered, the less should his brow be adorned at the expense of his lieutenants.

As regards his political course, it is not so easy to judge between his system and that of his detractors; in the first rank of these, figured all the ultra-liberal utopianists, professing the strange doctrine that power in a government and despotism are the same thing, and that, under pretence of producing liberalism, it was necessary, at any price, to curb the authority charged with directing the destinies of a nation. It is evident that Napoleon thought otherwise, and the belief is admissible, that in principle he was right; perhaps he erred in exaggerating his doctrine of power; but it is very difficult to establish the just medium between nullity of power and the slightly arbitrary. The future will undoubtedly prove, that between two dangers, the emperor desired to choose the lesser, because the abasement of executive power, will always be the least equivocal signal of the decay of a nation; this decay, indeed, may not always be sudden, and sensible to the eyes of the vulgar, but will be the work of time, unless a powerful hand applies a prompt remedy in seizing the helm. As for the rest, my task is not to condemn or absolve: posterity will decide.

I will close by observing, that the ideas which prevail in this little work, being those recognized in all the acts of Napoleon, the Author found himself under the double necessity of adopting them and writing on the side of his interests, that is to say, by placing himself at the head-quarters of the hero of this history, and not at that of his antagonists.

J.

1838.

THE CAMPAIGN OF WATERLOO.

Condition of France after the departure of Napoleon for the Island of Elba; he decides on returning; descends to Cannes with a thousand men, marches in triumph to Paris, and remounts the throne. General coalition of Europe against him. Campaign of 1815. Battles of Ligny and Waterloo. Second abdication. End of Napoleon's career.

FILLED for twenty years with the victories and gigantic enterprises of Napoleon, all Europe still gazed with astonishment at the sudden fall of an empire, whose power, till recently, menaced universal independence. It could not be conceived that six months had sufficed, for leading the allies from the Elbe to the Seine, and dictating to France the terrible treaties of Paris. The congress of all the powers, assembled at Vienna, was endeavoring to conciliate the numerous claims arriving from all parts, for shares of the spoils of this audacious conqueror who, two years previously, had dared to place one foot on Cadiz, the other on Moscow. The task was a difficult one, because this grand diplomatic act should accomplish the double purpose, of establishing the political equilibrium so severely shaken, and regulating for the

future the European public right, utterly overthrown, by the storms of the revolution.

Fallen from the throne of the most powerful empire to the ridiculous sovereignty of the Isle of Elba, by reason of his abdication at Fontainebleau ; separated from his wife and son in an almost humiliating manner, and for which history will one day justly reproach his enemies ; Napoleon retired to Porto-Ferrajo, like Scipio in his retreat at Liternum, to some degree exiled, and more discontented at the desertion of his compatriots than the persecution of his adversaries.

Condemned by destiny to be but a passive spectator of the grand affairs of the world, which for fifteen years, he had directed by the ascendancy of his genius, he yet bore within himself the secret presentiment of being called, soon or late, to reappear on the scene. He was too familiar with men and affairs, to feign ignorance of the full extent of the difficulties that would harass the Bourbons, in the governing of a country that had become changed since their departure, and felt profoundly humiliated by the disastrous circumstances that had brought them back. Napoleon was then well aware that, after the first infatuation occasioned by the general peace, immense interests and violent passions would come in conflict, so that the most energetic portion of the French nation would soon regret the termination of his reign and desire his return.

However, the uncertainty as to the time when this would take place, and his inability to give birth to the occasion, preventing him from forming his plans, the ex-emperor found comfort in the occupation of tracing the history of his life, and feeding the sacred flame in