SIR HUDSON LOWE AND THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CAMPAIGN OF 1815. I HAVE recently been allowed by Miss Lowe, the only descendant of Sir Hudson Lowe now surviving, to see the unpublished portion of the 'Memoirs and Papers' of her father. As is well known the parts relating to St. Helena were well and fully edited by Mr. Forsyth; and a selection from them has recently been made by Mr. Seaton. Even Mr. Forsyth's three-volume work gives scarcely any records relating to the period anterior to 1815, though General Lowe had had an honourable career as defender of Capri against Murat's forces in 1808, as our commissioner attached to the Russian army in 1812, and with the 'Silesian army' in the campaigns of 1813-4. He was present at most of the great battles, and the value of his services to the common cause is attested by the letters sent to him by Blücher and Gneisenau, translations of which are included in Mr. Forsyth's work.¹ Gneisenau, in his letter of 23 Nov. 1814, states that he has

learnt to appreciate your rare military talents, your profound judgment on the great operations of war, and your imperturbable *sang-froid* in the day of battle. These rare qualities and your honourable character will link me to you eternally.

He also refers to the effect which must be created in French public opinion by the formation in the Low Countries

of that formidable bastion which so effectually takes in flank any invasion which France might project upon Germany, and which at the same time serves as a *tête de pont* for your passage by sea.

I quote these extracts because the first shows how highly Gneisenau esteemed the man who was soon to be slandered by many of his own countrymen, and because the second emphasised the strategic importance of Belgium to the allies and was soon to furnish Sir H. Lowe with a telling argument in favour of the Prussians advancing into that country as the best means of defending the Rhineland.

On the evacuation of France by the allied armies Sir H. Lowe was appointed quartermaster-general to the British forces in the Low Countries, under the prince of Orange. In this capacity he visited all the frontier fortresses of Belgium, recommended the restoration of several of them which had been blown up, and made himself acquainted with the chief defensive positions of the country. And it is of interest to note that in the 'queries submitted regarding the measures to be taken for the defence of the Belgic provinces, on the supposition of the French government having any hostile designs against them,' his seventh and last query is as follows:—

Should any intermediate post be taken up between the frontiers and Brussels, supposing the latter line of operations be thought the most

¹ Vol. i. p. 431.

suitable, query in respect to the construction of a work at Mont Jean [*sic*], being the commanding point at the junction of the two principal *chaussées* leading direct from the French frontier on the side of Charleroi and Namur to Brussels, and the line of direction in which an enemy must then move?

The following letter (as yet, I believe, unpublished) will be read with interest, as showing Blücher's confidence in the British quartermaster-general. The translation of this, as of the succeeding letters, is the official one included in Sir H. Lowe's papers : ²—

To Major-General Sir Hudson Lowe (Translation).

Berlin : 5 Jan. 1815.

Your letter, my dear General, I have duly received, and I feel very much obliged to you for the sentiments you have therein expressed towards me. The recollection of a man whom, during so very memorable an epoch as the last campaign, we have learnt to esteem and respect remains dear to us, and will be ever dearly valued through life. On such grounds you may rely with confidence on the continuance of my attachment and friendship. I wish you joy from my heart on the important post which the prince regent, in his confidence, has bestowed upon you, and I rejoice that the choice has fallen upon a man so perfectly equal to fulfil the duties of it in its whole extent. After a war like the past it would be unnatural to wish for the breaking out of another; and, after victories like those which we have fought, it would be unjust to covet new triumphs; but should Providence have preserved me to the end that I must once more fight for the fatherland I wish that it may be at the side of an army which, as well as its leader, has made itself immortal in the annals of history. The conquerors of the Pyrenees and of the Katzbach would then hand in hand enter upon the near struggle in the firm confidence of gaining new laurels and the firm intention to share them as brothers. Have the goodness to assure the prince of Orange of my respects, and I pray you to believe that I shall ever take the sincerest interest in all the good that may happen to you.

I am, &c.,

BLÜCHER.

As soon as the news of Napoleon's landing on the coast of Provence became known the responsibility of Sir H. Lowe's position became doubly onerous. He was almost the only officer of experience in Belgium, as the duke of Wellington was acting as our plenipotentiary at the congress of Vienna. The prince of Orange was too young to have much weight with the Prussian commanders, Kleist and Müffling, then at Aix-la-Chapelle; and Sir H. Lowe at

² I may add here that the following footnotes, when they are accompanied by the name of Sir Harris Nicolas, who compiled the earlier and unpublished part of the *Lowe Memoirs*, are the notes appended by him or by others whom he cites; while those that bear my initials [J. H. R.] are those which I here add for the elucidation of these documents. I have compared many of the letters with the originals in Miss Lowe's possession, and find them accurate, with a few trifling variants in names.

once repaired to that city to concert defensive measures with them. They were greatly surprised by the news of Napoleon's adventure, and professed their readiness to help the small British and Dutch-Belgic force, which was now in a somewhat exposed position; but they pointed out their difficulty, owing to the presence of 20,000 Saxon troops, who exhibited growing signs of discontent, and the want of trust which they felt in Austrian aid. Finally, however, Kleist

agreed to co-operate with us on a defensive system and to consider himself in a state of hostility [to France] the moment the tricolour cockade may be displayed, and has manifested every disposition to move forward in support of the king of France and indicated what appeared to him the best plan for aiding him, should the instructions of his government allow it.³

In order to come to a closer understanding, Sir H. Lowe, with the sanction of the prince of Orange, sent Captain Scharnhorst (son of General Scharnhorst, who died of a wound received at Gross-Görschen) with letters to urge the expediency of assembling a Prussian army on the Meuse in a situation where it could assist the British troops in the defence of Belgium. General Müffling's reply is as follows:—

To Major-General Sir Hudson Lowe (Translation).

Aix-la Chapelle: 18 March 1815.

My dear General,—I am perfectly of your opinion as to the assembling of the army of Belgium, but we must take care not to excite the suspicions of the French, and avoid repeating the scenes of 1792. These people are of a vanity so ridiculous that Bonaparte would have the title of 'Désiré' if they suspected in us the design of occupying Lille and Valenciennes. Scharnhorst has taken all possible pains to persuade us to assemble without delay our army on the Meuse.⁴ This would be a very serious fault, and might have fatal consequences. It will not do to commence by making movements which cannot be followed up, and which might bear a character of vacillation. It is very possible that Napoleon, should he succeed in mounting the throne, would aim his first blows on the side of Switzerland and Mayence, for, first, his fortresses place in security the north of his kingdom (empire); second, his neighbourhood to Italy would favour revolt in that country and in Germany; third, he would be assured of Switzerland; fourth, his first movements would procure him a success which would augment the enthusiasm in his favour; if he directed his force against Belgium he would have to give a battle, the issue of which would always be uncertain; he would be distant from Italy; he would lay open that part of France which is not covered by fortresses to German and Austrian invasion; he would lose Switzerland.

³ Letter of Sir H. Lowe of 16 March 1815 to Sir C. Stuart, British ambassador at the court of Louis XVIII.

⁴ That is to say, towards Liège and Namur, to be near the army of the Netherlands, and to co-operate with it, and not near the Moselle and Metz, in which direction Bonaparte will not direct himself. [Note by Captain Scharnhorst.]

These reasons are strong enough to induce the retention of a position which enables General Count Kleist to direct his force as well on Mayence as on Brussels. So much the more since Mayence is not yet in a state of defence, and is neither sufficiently garrisoned nor victualled. As the courier who left Paris 11 March has carried the news to Vienna that the affair is very serious, we may from day to day expect new dispositions. Adieu, dear General; you will always hear from us.

MÜFFLING.

Further correspondence ensued, of which I here cite all the important letters in full. They need little comment. One and all they correct the rather exaggerated statements of Müffling ('Aus meinem Leben') that it was 'at the urgent entreaty of the king of the Netherlands that the Prussians marched to the Meuse.'

To Major-General Müffling (Translation).

Brussels: 23 March 1815.

Monsieur le Général,—You will have received the letter which I addressed to you yesterday evening with that of General Dörnberg, and you will naturally have remarked its conclusion. At last the crisis approaches much quicker than could have been imagined, and if Bonaparte finds the means of arranging well his affairs at Paris, and if he employs the same celerity in marching his troops to the frontier as in going to Paris, there will be nothing to prevent the 50,000 men of whom Dörnberg speaks being in the neighbourhood of Lille and Valenciennes in three days. I speak of possibilities, not of probabilities; but looking to what he has already done, it is on the first of these hypotheses that we must reason. I have already explained to you, my dear General, the situation of our fortresses. Mons, Tournay, and Yprès may be well able to resist a *coup de main*, and daily labours are made to strengthen them. They want guns, however; the two first have only field artillery. What can be done with them if the French army comes in force, when we cannot leave garrisons in them without so weakening our army as to render it useless for all resistance in the field? Were the Prussian army sufficiently at hand to act in concert with ours, great advantage might be derived from these towns, and entrenched camps formed in their neighbourhoods almost impregnable, and thus all the frontier of Belgium, as well as that of the Rhine, might be efficiently covered; but I cannot dissemble from you the apprehension of our losing both the places and the troops in them, and our being obliged to retire with an army diminished by more than half, in case we are obliged to act alone. It appears to me, however, always important to keep our present position as long as we can, both for the sake of the effect in France as well as in this country, and relatively also to the advantage of daily increasing their strength. We will not leave unless a very decided movement is made by the French; but our decision to preserve the towns and leave garrisons in them must depend much on the movements of the Prussian army, and on the assurance we shall have of its serving as a support to our defence. Such, my dear General, appears to me the true state of things. You will make your calculations, and I am persuaded that the result will always be that of the

best judgment in the affair. If an entire union cannot be effected, the occupation of Namur, or any situation which would enable us to unite in one or two marches, appears to me one of the best methods to follow for the general good. The king is at Lille.⁵ There is an additional motive for co-operating on that point rather than on any other.

I have the honour, &c.,
H. LOWE.

To Major-General Sir Hudson Lowe (Translation).

Aix-la-Chapelle: 28 March 1815.

My dear General,—We have received news from Vienna that the whole Prussian army will be forthwith placed on the war footing, and that Marshal Blücher will have the command. General Gneisenau will arrive here without delay. I hope, dear General, that the like will be done in England, to assemble as much as possible considerable masses. It appears that Bonaparte had made no movement by 24 March. We must be very attentive; for if he speaks of the conquest of Belgium, and if he causes it to be publicly believed, I am persuaded that he will make the movement on the Upper Rhine a movement which I have always thought more favourable and more decisive for him. If the Austrians send their army into Italy, and if Bavaria declare in his favour, what is to prevent his marching on Munich to menace Vienna? The news of Vienna of the 19th speak of an arrangement between the great powers, by which from Basle as far as ——,⁶ 700,000 men would speedily be ready to act. We continue the movement of which you are aware, and by the activity with which we have conducted our marches we may arrive 1 April at our rendezvous with 50,000 men instead of 40,000. I send you an order which I have given relatively to communications. Scharnhorst will translate to you all that it contains. It is absolutely necessary to watch all that Napoleon may send by his partisans to stir up the country, and, on the other hand, to prevent intelligence reaching him. Adieu, dear General; I beg you to forward the accompanying letter to his majesty, the king of the Netherlands. Tout à vous,

MÜFFLING.

To Major-General Müffling (Translation).

Brussels: 28 March 1815.

My dear General,—I have communicated to his royal highness your two letters, with the project of giving battle to the French, should they dare to meet us at T⁷. He was yesterday at Mons, and could not reply to your first communication. I spoke to him again this morning as much regarding the first as your second letter of the 25th of this month. He informed me that the king, his father, would arrive here

⁵ In our Foreign Office Records (France, no. 115) Sir C. Stuart, our envoy with Louis XVIII, makes it clear in his despatch of 2 April (no. 5) why the king had come to the north. He had intended to repair to Brittany. But the news received by General Dupont, minister of war, showed that the troops at Rambouillet and thereabouts had declared for Napoleon and were marching on Paris. The reports from Lille were favourable, and this decided the king's course thither. [J. H. R.]

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to-morrow, and that he would be naturally desirous of learning also his sentiments; and you must be aware that, as the preservation of the kingdom is at stake, there will be no harm in that. The duke of Wellington is also expected, and, as he will arrive, it is said, about the 30th or 31st,⁸ it is hoped that Bonaparte will not advance so quickly as to oblige us to take definite measures before that time. Such are the two reasons of my delay in informing you of the prince's sentiments on the propositions which you have made. If, however, I must make known my private sentiment on the project which you have indicated, I would say that, if regarded in a purely military point of view, it would be excellent, and nothing better could be done; but when I consider the abandonment not only of the town of Brussels but of all Belgium to the revolutionary influence of France—that one of the first acts of Napoleon would be to declare the annexation of this country to the French empire; that the disposition of a very great part of the population, although favourable enough at present, would soon go in accordance with his views if we abandoned the country; that we should soon have certain *points d'appui* in Tournay and Mons; that by keeping this position we should always keep at a distance all the emissaries at work to effect the union of two States having already the same language and the same religion, under the same government—it seems to me extremely important to take all possible measures to keep what we have, and I should be of opinion that battle ought to be given in a more forward position, or that the Prussian army should by strategetical movements so alarm the French for their flanks that they would not dare to compromise themselves by too hazardous a march into the interior. In the meantime, if he came suddenly and in great force, it seems more than probable that we should be obliged to retire in the direction you have indicated, or behind the Nethe.⁹ I have the honour, &c.,

H. LOWE.

To Major-General Sir Hudson Lowe (Translation).

Aix-la-Chapelle: 30 March 1815.

My dear General,—You are very much in the right as to its being of the greatest importance to preserve Brussels if possible, although Bonaparte would not have time to profit by his conquest, should we attack him immediately. General Röder will present to you the point of view which we must preserve. Weigh well the for and against: you know that you have to deal with men whose object is the same with your own—the general good. We must weigh without passion. It appears to me that your situation is rendered very delicate by the arrival of the king [of the Netherlands], who naturally sees the welfare of Brussels before that of Europe. You are in the midst between the father and son, and require all your firmness not to yield to half-measures, such as the king appears to love. Persist, in God's name, dear General, to urge the immediate assemblage of the Dutch army in *bivouacs*, that so its burghers and peasants may become soldiers. Tell the king of Holland that his crown is lost if he do not seek to gain the confidence and love of the military.

⁸ He did not arrive till the night of April 4–5. [J. H. R.]

⁹ *I.e.* the Neethe, which flows from east to west and falls into the Scheldt somewhat above Antwerp. [J. H. R.]

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He must go to the bivouacs, speak to the soldiers, scold in their presence all those who do not take good care of them, &c. &c. It seems to me that the king does not foresee all that may happen. Adieu, dear General. Tout à vous,

MÜFFLING.

To Major-General Sir Hudson Lowe (Translation).

Aix-la-Chapelle: 31 March.

I have received a letter from General Röder, in which he informs me that the prince¹⁰ has sent for him, in order to acquaint him that Napoleon was at Valenciennes,¹¹ and that an operation on Belgium appeared to be known; that he wished to give battle at Nivelles and Braine le Comte, and engaged me to unite in that case my troops with his. Notwithstanding all the good-will which animates me I cannot submit to such a plan, which might give rise to the most unfortunate chances. It is the welfare of Europe, and not that of a single town, which is at stake, my dear General. The point of Nivelles does not in any wise facilitate our union; I should become entangled in defiles,¹² and the field of battle is too far removed from those points which in case of misfortune I must regain to replace myself in position. I beg you, my dear General, to reflect well on this subject. We will fight well, I assure you, but we must act in such a manner as to assure the gain of a battle, and avoid the disasters which might follow, or at least diminish them. The prince is a young victor, full of vivacity, and does not think of the consequences which such a choice might have. I beg you to make him act rationally. Major du Moulin,¹³ bearer of this letter, an officer of distinction, in whom you may confide, will tell you the rest, my dear General. With Müffling, who gives you a friendly remembrance, I am animated by the desire of co-operating with all our forces in the common cause, but we must act reasonably. Accept the assurances of my high consideration, &c.,

KLEIST DE NOLLENDORFF.

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¹² The original is, “‘Je m'embouche dans les défilés.’ This reason is scarcely serious. There is a good cross road from Namur through Les Quatre Bras to Nivelles. Of course the distance of Nivelles from the line of the Meuse was Kleist's real reason. [J. H. R.]

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think that Napoleon will play his great game—that is, that he will assign a rendezvous to his brother-in-law at Vienna, and will make us believe to the last moment that he designs conquering Belgium. Adieu, dear General. I beg you to transmit the accompanying letter to General Röder. Totă animă meă.

MÜFFLING.

To General Count Kleist (Translation).

Brussels: 1 April 1815.

Monsieur le Général,—I have just received the letter which your excellency addressed to me yesterday, and I have spoken to Major du Moulin. I have also since received a note of General Röder's, in which he puts forward all the reasons which may be urged against giving battle to the French in the neighbourhood of Nivelles. These reasons have, perhaps, only too much foundation, but they do not prevent our taking a position more to the *left*, without retiring as far as Tirlemont, which would abandon to them Brussels, Ghent, and the bank of the Scheldt, and that without the certainty that when these points are gained they would seek to attack our position. My first idea was to unite more to the left towards Gênappe or Fleurus, or even towards Gembloux.¹⁴ With regard to the natural desire of the Prussian army not to remove too far from the Meuse, if a position cannot be taken in front of the places which it is desired to protect, it might at least be possible to take one parallel to the front, so as to give room for consideration to an enemy before pushing too forward. My first idea also was, if it were not practicable to unite in one body, then to be in sufficient proximity to unite in one or two days. The situations indicated appear to me to offer this advantage, and, in the supposition that the Prussian army were on the Meuse, it might equally unite with us at Tirlemont, or between Gembloux and Gênappe, in the time indicated. Circumstances must command; and a position, whether at Tirlemont or in the environs named, which would enable the Prussian army to march to any point where we could form a junction with it appears to me always the best. I have not yet spoken to the prince, and do not pretend to give my calculations as positive, but it appears to me so important not to give Bonaparte any cause to boast in his first offensive movements that I should be of opinion nothing ought to be yielded to him unless forced to do so. Without the co-operation of the Prussian army, however, all our efforts must be powerless. All this is submitted to your better reflexions, persuaded of the sentiment of the general good which directs them, and of the right which your excellency will always obtain more and more to public esteem, and to the respect and gratitude of those who know how to appreciate your motives.

I am, &c.,

H. LOWE.

To Major-General Sir Hudson Lowe (Translation).

Aix-la-Chapelle: 6 April 1815.

My dear and worthy General,—I salute you, dear and worthy General, our companion in labour, in misfortune, and in glory, in whom, amidst all vicissitudes of fortune, I have recognised an imperturbable character

¹⁴ Lowe here anticipates the moves that were ultimately taken by the allies.

think that Napoleon will play his great game—that is, that he will assign a rendezvous to his brother-in-law at Vienna, and will make us believe to the last moment that he designs conquering Belgium. Adieu, dear General. I beg you to transmit the accompanying letter to General Röder. Totă animă meă.

MÜFFLING.

To General Count Kleist (Translation).

Brussels: 1 April 1815.

Monsieur le Général,—I have just received the letter which your excellency addressed to me yesterday, and I have spoken to Major du Moulin. I have also since received a note of General Röder's, in which he puts forward all the reasons which may be urged against giving battle to the French in the neighbourhood of Nivelles. These reasons have, perhaps, only too much foundation, but they do not prevent our taking a position more to the *left*, without retiring as far as Tirlemont, which would abandon to them Brussels, Ghent, and the bank of the Scheldt, and that without the certainty that when these points are gained they would seek to attack our position. My first idea was to unite more to the left towards Gênappe or Fleurus, or even towards Gembloux.¹⁴ With regard to the natural desire of the Prussian army not to remove too far from the Meuse, if a position cannot be taken in front of the places which it is desired to protect, it might at least be possible to take one parallel to the front, so as to give room for consideration to an enemy before pushing too forward. My first idea also was, if it were not practicable to unite in one body, then to be in sufficient proximity to unite in one or two days. The situations indicated appear to me to offer this advantage, and, in the supposition that the Prussian army were on the Meuse, it might equally unite with us at Tirlemont, or between Gembloux and Gênappe, in the time indicated. Circumstances must command; and a position, whether at Tirlemont or in the environs named, which would enable the Prussian army to march to any point where we could form a junction with it appears to me always the best. I have not yet spoken to the prince, and do not pretend to give my calculations as positive, but it appears to me so important not to give Bonaparte any cause to boast in his first offensive movements that I should be of opinion nothing ought to be yielded to him unless forced to do so. Without the co-operation of the Prussian army, however, all our efforts must be powerless. All this is submitted to your better reflexions, persuaded of the sentiment of the general good which directs them, and of the right which your excellency will always obtain more and more to public esteem, and to the respect and gratitude of those who know how to appreciate your motives.

I am, &c.,

H. LOWE.

To Major-General Sir Hudson Lowe (Translation).

Aix-la-Chapelle: 6 April 1815.

My dear and worthy General,—I salute you, dear and worthy General, our companion in labour, in misfortune, and in glory, in whom, amidst all vicissitudes of fortune, I have recognised an imperturbable character

¹⁴ Lowe here anticipates the moves that were ultimately taken by the allies.

and a profound judgment, and always known of a counsel opposed to that of pusillanimity and feeble minds.¹⁵ I am happy to know that you are in our neighbourhood, and, since the perturber of the human race wills it, let us again trust ourselves to the issue of arms and the chance of war. In me you will always find, worthy General, my accustomed frankness and my attachment to you personally, and my partiality for your estimable nation. The arrival of the great duke has tranquillised me as to what will be done on your part. Respect for his glory will silence all secondary views, and he will conduct the various interests with that wisdom and calmness which we know to belong to him. The movements which we in this quarter will be disposed to make will depend on the views which the duke of Wellington will have conceived from that knowledge of circumstances which he will have acquired after arriving at Brussels. He may count on the co-operation of the Prussian army in all that he judges useful to our cause. To-morrow I shall have the honour of sending you the project of a campaign which I have framed, and sent to the king my master at Vienna; it is drawn up in a few words, and gives the utmost latitude to the generals. Pray count always, my dear General, on these sentiments of attachment and esteem which I have formed for you, and continue those of good-will with which you have honoured me.

Eternally, &c.,

COUNT DE GNEISENAU.

To Major-General Sir Hudson Lowe (Translation).

Aix-la-Chapelle: 7 April 1815.

My dear General,—Yesterday, my dear General, I engaged to communicate to you the plan of campaign which I have sent to Vienna. When I had finished my letter the courier of the duke of Wellington arrived, and we were instantly occupied in executing the movement which the duke desired. On the 11th our troops will be in those points whence they may succour yours and cover the capital, in case the enemy should be in too great numbers. This movement is dangerous to us Prussians in case of a reverse. Our army would then be forced to pass the Meuse on a single bridge, to repass it at Huy in order to be on the same bank with the enemy, and to pass the river for the third time at Liège. You feel, General, how great must be our confidence in the talents and character of the duke of Wellington.¹⁶ Liège should be the pivot of our move-

¹⁵ This doubtless refers to Lowe's conduct when with the 'army of Silesia' in 1814. He strongly upheld the proposal of marching straight on Paris at the close of the campaign. [J. H. R.]

¹⁶ Contrast this with the statement of Müffling (*Aus meinem Leben*) that when he was about to proceed to Wellington's headquarters, to keep up the connexion between the two armies, Gneisenau warned him (Müffling) 'to be on my guard against the duke of Wellington, for that by his transactions with the deceitful nabobs this distinguished general had so accustomed himself to duplicity that he had at last become such a master in the art as even to outwit the nabobs themselves.' There is, I believe, nothing in any of Gneisenau's letters (certainly not in those published by Delbrück) that countenances this slander. Müffling's *Aus meinem Leben* has been proved to be untrustworthy on many grounds, owing to his vanity or prepossessions. And the statement just quoted is refuted by the testimony of Gneisenau's two letters given above. The dislike of Wellington that Gneisenau cherished later on was due to the duke's inability to fulfil the (purely conditional) promise of help which he gave just before the battle of Ligny. [J. H. R.]

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ments so long as we are not yet prepared to undertake offensive operations. Besides we must await another destination, while we are defiling along a theatre of war which is not our own. My plan of campaign is very simple. 1. An army in Belgium. 2. An army on the Middle Rhine. 3. An army on the Upper Rhine. 4. In rear of the army on the Middle Rhine an army of reserve; this is to be the strongest. The marshals of the three first armies pierce into France, and take the direction of Paris. Whatever may happen to the army nearest the enemy, be it beaten or not, each of the other marshals may continue his advance, leaving in rear detachments to observe the fortified places. The army of reserve is destined to repair the reverses which may befall any of the armies of the first line either by flank movements on the enemy's communications or by a direct assistance. This project of campaign is founded on the numerical superiority of the armies of the allied powers. Old France had ninety fortified places, of which the necessary garrisons absorb a considerable number of the enemy's forces. In the supposition that Napoleon should beat one of the armies of the first line, while he pursues it, the two others, by continually advancing, gain ground and approach his capital, while the army of reserve endeavours to repair the reverses of that which has been beaten. Does he prefer after his victory, instead of pursuing the defeated army, to fall on that which is next to it, he will have to sustain another conflict, which, with the assistance of the army of reserve, may be rudely disputed with him, while the third of our armies of the first line continues to advance, and that which has been defeated rallies and resumes the offensive. The three armies of the first line must avoid approaching each other too closely, in order that the enemy may not disappear from the front of one and fall unexpectedly on the other, but that he may be forced to make a sufficient number of marches to instruct one of his disappearance and the other of his approach.¹⁷ That army which he seeks to engage must only fight on very favourable ground, and it will be advisable that it should retrograde, if necessary, some marches in order to obtain this advantage. Any plan of campaign which seeks to bring within calculation the armies in Italy is vicious by making us lose time. The armies once assembled on the eastern frontier of France, operations ought to be vigorously pushed. I pray you, dear General, to accept the assurances of the inviolable attachment with which I am, &c.,

GNEISENAU.

To Major-General Sir Hudson Lowe (Translation).

Liège : 23 April 1815.

My dear General,—I am a little in arrear with my reply to the letter which you did me the honour to write, and I beg you to excuse it. We have had enormous work in recasting and forming anew our *corps d'armée*. Many great reinforcements have arrived. The victualling of our troops causes us also much anxiety. You see by all this that we are not in want

¹⁷ This sentence would be much clearer if, for the words 'but that he may be forced,' we substituted 'without his being forced.' The plan here set forth was first developed by Gneisenau in his letter of 3 April to his sovereign, but not in such detail as that above quoted (Delbrück's *Gneisenau*, ii. 157). [J. H. R.]

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of occupation. Our force, without comprising the corps of Saxons which will belong to the king of Saxony, amounts to 153,000 fighting men.¹⁸ We are ready to take the field as soon as we receive orders; but I fear that the cursed congress will deliberate until our enemies are in a condition to enter the lists with us. Pray receive the expression of my sentiments of attachment to you.

GNEISENAU.

There is no need for me to comment on these letters further than to add that the duke of Wellington, who reached Brussels on the night of 4-5 April, reported to Castlereagh that he found the Prussians at Aix-la-Chapelle 'very content;' and it is clear that the arguments of Sir H. Lowe and the prestige of the duke had even at that time stilled their doubts as to the wisdom of leaving the Rhine province almost unguarded. The duke, on looking into the state of affairs in Belgium, reported (5 April) to General Gneisenau—

Mon opinion est que nous devrions prendre des mesures pour rassembler toute l'armée prussienne avec cette armée alliée anglo-hollandaise en avant de Bruxelles, et que, dans cette vue, les troupes sous les ordres de votre excellence devraient sans perte de temps longer la Meuse et se cantonner entre Charleroi, Namur et Huy.

This is the first definite pronouncement of our leader on this topic; and the correspondence published above proves that the initiative in persuading the Prussian generals to adopt this rather venturesome course was taken, and taken successfully, by Sir Hudson Lowe. The important part which he played in determining the general character of the campaign has been almost entirely forgotten, partly, no doubt, because in the month of May he received the command of the British troops at Genoa that were intended to co-operate with the Austro-Sardinian army and Admiral Lord Exmouth's squadron on the south-eastern borders of France; and thus the services which he rendered to the allied cause in the preceding months were obscured.

J. HOLLAND ROSE.

¹⁸ The fidelity of the Saxons was already wavering. Their discontent took the form of open mutiny at Liège on 2 May. General von Borstell refused to punish them as the authorities ordered, and was deprived of his command, which devolved upon General von Pirch II. [J. H. R.]

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