CARL VON CLAUSEWITZ

THE RUSSIAN EXPEDITION OF 1812

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER I.

ARRIVAL AT WILNA. PLAN OF CAMPAIGN. CAMP OF DRISSA.

Table of Contents

In February of 1812, the alliance between France and Prussia against Russia was concluded. The party in Prussia, which still felt courage to resist, and refused to acknowledge the necessity of a junction with France, might properly be called the Scharnhorst party; for in the capital, besides himself and his near friends, there was hardly a man who did not set down this temper of mind for a semi-madness. In the rest of the monarchy nothing but a few scattered indications of such a spirit were to be found.

So soon as this alliance was an ascertained fact, Scharnhorst quitted the centre of government, and betook himself to Silesia, where, as inspector of fortresses, he reserved to himself a sort of official activity. He wished at once to withdraw himself from the observation of the French, and from an active co-operation with them, utterly uncongenial to his nature, without entirely giving up his relations to the Prussian service. This half measure was one of eminent prudence. He was able, in his present position, to prevent much mischief, particularly as regarded concessions to France in the matter of the Prussian fortresses, and he kept his foot in the stirrup, ready to swing himself into the saddle at the favourable moment. He was a foreigner, without possessions or footing in Prussia, had

always remained a little estranged from the King, and more so from the leading personages of the capital ; and the merit of his operations was generally at this time much exposed to question. If he had now entirely abandoned the service, it may be questioned whether he would have been recalled to it in 1813.

The Major Von Boyen, his intimate friend, who had held the function of personal communication with the King on military affairs, now obtained his congé, carrying with him the rank of Colonel and a small donation. It was his intention to go to Russia. The Colonel Von Gneisenau, lately made state councillor, left the service at the same time, with a like intention.

Several others among the warmest adherents of Scharnhorst, and of his political views, but who were of small importance in the state, did the same ; among whom was the Author. The King granted their congé to all.

The Author, provided with some letters of recommendation, went to Wilna, then the headquarters of the Emperor Alexander, as also of the General Barclay, who commanded the 1st army of the West.

On the Author’s arrival at Wilna, he found several Prussian officers already there assembled. Among those of consequence were Gneisenau and Count Chasot, who had made the journey from Vienna in company. The former had already however resolved on a journey to England. He had indeed been well received by the Emperor, but had come to the conclusion, from the whole appearance of things, that he could find in Russia no fitting theatre for the active exercise of his profession. He understood no Russian, and

could therefore fill no independent command : he was too far advanced in years and rank to allow of his being introduced into some subordinate station on the staff of any general or any corps, like the Author or other officers ; he could therefore only have made the campaign in the suite of the Emperor. He knew well what this involved, or rather did not involve, and he felt that it opened no prospect worthy of his talents. The head-quarters of the Emperor were already overrun with distinguished idlers. To attain either distinction or usefulness in such a crowd would have required the dexterity of an accomplished intriguer, and an entire familiarity with the French language : in both he was deficient. He was therefore justly averse to the seeking a position in Russia ; and he hoped in England[1], where he had already travelled, and had been well received by the Prince Regent, to do much more for the good cause.

As he had soon convinced himself in Wilna that the measures of Russia were anything but adequate to the emergency, he justly entertained the greatest apprehensions for the consequences, and believed that his only hope lay in the difficulty of the entire enterprise on the part of France, but that every thing should be done to effect on the side of England, Sweden, and Germany, a diversion on the rear of the French. This view derived force from his visit to England.

The whole force of Russia, on the western frontier, consisted of the 1st and 2d armies of the West, and an army of reserve. The first might be 90,000 strong, the second 50,000, and the third 30,000. The whole therefore

amounted to some 170.000 men, to whom may be added 10,000 Cossacks.

The 1st army, under General Barclay, who at the same time was war minister, was placed along the Niemen; the second, commanded by Bagration, in south Lithuania, the reserve under Tormasow, in Volhynia. On the second line there were about 30,000 men of depôts and recruits, on the Dnieper and Dwina.

The Emperor wished to take the command of the whole : he had never served in the field, still less commanded. For several years past he had taken lessons in the art of war from Lieutenant-General Von Phull in Petersburgh.

Phull had held the rank of Colonel on the general staff of the Prussian army, and in 1806, after the battle of Auerstadt, had left the Prussian service and entered that of Russia, in which he had since obtained the rank of Lieutenant-General without having passed through any active service.

Phull passed in Prussia for a man of much genius. He, Massenbach, and Scharnhorst, were the three chiefs of the Prussian staff in 1806. Each of these had his own peculiarities of character. Those of Scharnhorst alone had proved themselves practically available ; those of Phull were perhaps the most unusual, but very difficult to characterise. He was a man of much understanding and cultivation, but without a knowledge of actual things: he had, from the earliest period, led a life so secluded and contemplative, that he knew nothing of the occurrences of the daily world ; Julius Cæsar and Frederick the Great were the heroes and the writers of his predilection. The more recent phenomena

of war passed over him without impression. In this way he had framed for himself a one-sided and meagre system of war, which could stand the test neither of philosophical investigation, nor historical comparison. If in the mode of his intellectual cultivation historical criticism was deficient, and in his way of life all contact with the external world, it on the other hand was natural that he should become an enemy to all ordinary superficiality, falsehood, and weakness; and the bitter irony with which he broke out against these common failings of the many gave him especially the appearance of greater geniality, depth, and power. Seclusion had rendered him an isolated being ; but being free from eccentricity of manner, he did not pass for such.

With all this, the straight-forward direction of the man, his inward truth, his abhorrence for falsehood and meanness, and his lively sentiment for the great, would have made of him a distinguished character, and one even available for the path of military eminence, if his mind, unfamiliarised with the phenomena of the external world, had not become confused so soon as they pressed upon his attention. The author never saw a man who lost his head so easily, who, intent as he ever was on great things, was so soon overwhelmed by the least of little realities. This was the natural result of his secluded self-education. Yielding and pliable by nature, he had reasoned himself into a certain grandeur of views and strength of resolution, which were not natural to him, and, separated from the external world, he had foregone all opportunity of training himself by conflict with it to this assumed character. Up to the period of 1812, the incidents of service had not impelled him to this

exercise. In the war of the Revolution he had played generally a subordinate part; and it had been only towards the end of hostilities that he had assumed a more important post as quarter-master-general to Field Marshal Mollendorf. During the years of peace attached to the general staff, he found himself, like most officers of that department, in a sort of illusory activity, which exercises itself in mere ideas.

In the year 1806 he was officer of the general staff of the King; but as the King did not command, Phull was not in personal activity as such. After the entire catastrophe, his irony broke loose on every thing which had happened. He laughed like a madman at the defeat of the army; and instead of coming forward at a moment when a vacancy of consequence had occurred in the ranks, as Scharnhorst did, to show his practical efficiency, and to piece up new threads to those which yet remained sound in the lacerated texture, he gave up every thing for lost, and took service with Russia.

He gave in this manner the first proof that he had no practical vocation for difficulties. He managed his transfer also with great want of address, by accepting a foreign service in Petersburgh at a moment when he was employed there on a mission.

Had the Emperor Alexander possessed more knowledge of mankind, he would naturally have conceived little confidence in the abilities of a man who gave up a failing cause so early and conducted himself at the same time with so little dexterity.

In Mollendorf's head-quarters at Hochheim in 1797, Phull said, “ I trouble myself now about nothing, for everything is

going to the devil. " In the year 1806 he said on his flight, taking off his hat, “ Adieu the Prussian monarchy." In November, 1812, at Petersburgh, after the French army had begun its retreat, he said to the Author, “ Believe me, no good can come of all this.” He remained always like himself.

The Author has dwelt thus long on the character of this man, because, as will presently appear, much that occurred was connected with his appearance on the stage, and, subsequently, a still greater share in events has been attributed to him than his peculiarities admitted of his assuming.

If we have passed a sentence little to his advantage on his mind and understanding, to the honour of his integrity we must say that no better heart, no more disinterested character could be imagined than he on every occasion displayed.

Unpractical as he was, in six years of residence in Russia he had not thought of learning Russian, nor, which is more striking, had he thought of making himself acquainted with the principal persons in the administration of affairs, or with the institutions of the civil and military departments.

The Emperor [2] felt that under these circumstances Phull was to be considered as an abstract genius, to whom no particular function could be assigned. He was therefore nothing more than friend and adviser to the Emperor *pro formá*, also his adjutant-general He had already in St. Petersburgh drawn out a plan of campaign for the Emperor, which was now brought to Wilna, and some measures were adopted towards its execution.

The prince Wolkonski.—He was first adjutant-general to the Emperor, and administrative chief of the general staff. In this capacity, so soon as the Emperor should have taken the command, he might have considered himself as *de facto* chief of the staff for the whole war: this, however, did not so turn out, and he took as good as no share at all in these affairs. He was a well-humoured man, and true friend and servant of the Emperor.

The Lieut.-General Aractschejef.[3]—A Russian, in every sense of the word, of great energy and cunning. He was chief of the artillery, and the Emperor had great confidence in him; the conduct however of a war being a thing quite strange to him, he mixed himself up in it just as little as did Wolkonski.

The General Arenfeld.—The well-known Swede, who has always passed for a great intriguer. The conduct of war on a large scale seemed strange to him also; and he therefore sought no kind of active position, but contented himself, like Phull, with the title of an adjutant-general, but was inclined to mix himself in intrigues.

The General Benningsen.—He was one of the oldest generals of the Russian army, at the moment however called to no command, probably because his ill success in 1807 was remembered. He was at Wilna under pretext of mere courtesy, because his estates lay in that vicinity, and, as adjutant-general to the Emperor, he could not remain absent: he was striving however for a command.

The remaining military personages, among whom figured indeed many a lieutenant-general, were still more

insignificant, and entirely without influence on the operations of the war.

We discern from this how little the Emperor had prepared himself for the actual command. He himself, it would seem, never entertained this idea distinctly, nor formally expressed it. The two armies were for the moment separated, while, as war minister, Barclay held some control over the second; the idea then of a command-in-chief resided in him alone and his staff. He had a chief of the general staff in Lieut.-General Labanow, a quartermaster-general in General Mouchin, an intendant-general, &c. All these personages had entered on the functions of their respective posts. The General Barclay issued daily his orders, received the reports and announcements, &c. None of this took place regularly with the Emperor. Most of the orders given passed through Barclay, some through Wolkonski, and perhaps Phull might once or twice put in his oar.

When the Emperor reached Wilna, with Phull in his suite, the latter found himself isolated—a stranger among Russians, who looked upon him with envy, disfavour, and distrust. He knew neither the language, the persons, nor the institutions of the country and army: he had no place, no kind of authority, no aide-de-camps, no bureau; he received no reports, no communications. He was not in the most distant connection with Barclay or any body else; he never interchanged words with any. What he knew of the strength and condition of the army he had heard from the Emperor. He was in possession of no one complete statement of numbers, or other documents, the study of which is

essential to the consideration of the preliminaries of a campaign. In his memoranda he was often at a loss for the names of the commanders of whom he wished to speak, and was obliged to help himself out by describing the positions they occupied.

An inconceivable degree of folly was required for a man in such circumstances to undertake the conduct of a great transaction of war, involving such difficulties as might be foreseen in the case of the approaching campaign. The Russian army was 180,000 strong, if taken at a high estimate; the enemy, at the lowest, 350,000, and Buonaparte their leader.

Phull should have dissuaded the Emperor from the idea of the chief command, or endeavoured to forward other arrangements. He did neither the one nor the other, but acted like the sleep-walker, who walks the roof of the house securely, and wakes to fall and be destroyed.

At the very moment when the Russian army on the frontier did not count above 180,000 men, it was asserted that the Emperor had 600,000 men in pay; and this assertion, which the Author at first considered as a sarcastic exaggeration, although received from the mouth of an *employé* of rank, was the simple truth.

The distribution of the Russian force really on foot was as follows:—

On the frontier towards Poland and Prussia	-180,000 men.
On the Dwina and Dnieper, depôts and new formations	- 30,000

In Finland	- 20,000
In Moldavia	- 60,000
Eastern frontiers	- 30, 000
Interior, new levies and depôts	- 50, 000
Garrisons	- 50, 000
	420, 000

The Cossacks are not here reckoned. If we add this great swarm, which, however, at the opening of the war did not exceed 10,000 men, with the western army, and at no period exceeded 20,000—if we add other militants of smaller account, and consider how many misusages have obtained a half prescription in the Russian army, and how great, then, must be the difference between the numbers on the pay lists and in the field, we may conceive how for 420,000 of the latter, the numbers of the former should reach 600,000.

The Russians, in the bygone year, and while preparing for war with France, had not materially increased their army—a proof that they were unable to furnish greater levies. We may assume that, at the moment of the war, the reinforcements may have reached 80,000, which joined the depôts and formed the force which joined on the Dnieper and Dwina, and, later, at Smolensko and Kaluga, and which, exclusive of militia, could not have exceeded 100,000 men.

The result of these reckonings appears, first, that the Russian army’s proper effective strength was 600,000 men, and that it probably could not be raised to a higher amount

without an undue strain on the resources of the country. Secondly, that in the year 1812 not above 400,000 regular troops were actually forthcoming. Thirdly, that of these 400,000 not more than 180,000 could be opposed, in the first instance, to the French.

This over-valuation of forces is always occurring: one example is afforded by Prussia in 1806, when she payed 250,000 men, and could not oppose to the French, in Thuringia, more than 100,000. Even if we may succeed in devising better arrangements than those of Prussia in 1806, or Russia in 1812, it is yet well sometimes to bring to our recollection these leading instances, in order to avoid similar errors.

In any case Russia was rather behindhand in its measures, and the peace with Turkey had remained too long unconcluded. Two months later Russia would have been able to appear in the field with 150,000 men more, nearly the double of her present force.

The Emperor and Phull had hit upon the sound idea that the real resistance must begin later and from the interior, on account of their weakness on the frontier. Phull, therefore, proposed to draw back the struggle to a considerable distance, thus approaching their reinforcements, gaining time, weakening the enemy by means of the detachments which he would be compelled to make, and gaining space for strategical operations upon his flank and rear. This project was the better entertained by the Emperor, because it reminded him of Wellington’s Portuguese campaign of 1811.

Taken abstractedly, these ideas would seem to involve the whole campaign of 1812 as it occurred. Such, however, is not the fact. Proportion is every thing in war: schemes admirably adapted for effect on a scale of 100 miles, on one of 30 may be utterly deceptive. We cannot so much as say that Phull's idea had supplied the model after which the actual campaign, in its colossal grandeur, was conducted. The campaign, as we shall see, worked out its own form, and Phull's idea has the less pretension to be considered the leading one, as in itself it was a false one. His idea, however, was the accidental cause of the turn which the campaign took, as we shall see.

Phull's plan was, that the first army of the West should withdraw into an entrenched camp, for which he had selected the neighbourhood of the middle Dwina, that the earliest reinforcements should be sent hither, and a great provision of articles of subsistence be accumulated there, and that Bagration with the 2d army of the west should press forward on the right flank and rear of the enemy, should he engage himself in the pursuit of the 1st. Tormasow remained destined to the defence of Volhynia against the Austrians. What were the active principles of this scheme ?

1st. Approximation to reinforcements. —The spot selected lay 20 miles from the frontier[4] ; it was hoped at first to raise the 1st army of the West to 130,000 men, but the reinforcement it obtained was far less than was expected. As the Author was informed, it did not exceed 10,000 men, and the army was therefore about 100,000. The retreat was therefore not sufficiently extended to

produce any considerable accession of numbers. This error however of the plan is not to be considered as an error of the original idea. The Emperor may have deceived himself, and, if so, Phull was the more excusable.

2d. The weakening of the enemy on his advance is never considerable on such a distance as the one in question, and when he is not checked by fortresses, and it may here be considered as nothing. [5]

3d. The attack of Bagration on the flank and rear of the enemy is not to be considered as a valid feature. If this army was to fight the enemy from behind, it could not do so from before, and the French had only to oppose to it a proportionate mass of troops, in order to restore the balance, by which the advantage would remain to them of finding themselves between our armies, and able to fall on either of them with an overwhelming force.

Strategical operations on a hostile flank are to be considered as available modes of action, when the enemy’s line of operations is greatly extended through hostile provinces, and requires detachments for its security, which weaken the main body. Such was the case in 1812, when the French had pressed forward to Moscow, but were not properly masters of the country right and left, further than the Dnieper and the Dwina.

Flanking operations are also available when the hostile army is so far at the extreme circumference of its circle of action, that it can no longer turn a victory to account over the force in its front, and this latter may therefore be weakened without danger. Finally, when the result is decided, and all that remains is to embarrass the retreat, as

in the case of Tschitshagow’s attack on the rear of Buonaparte in 1812.

In no other case is anything accomplished by the mere turning of a flank. On the contrary, this measure, as one leading to greater and more decided results, is also, of necessity, one of greater risk, i.e. one which requires more strength than the parallel form of resistance, and is therefore unsuited to the weaker party. Of all this Phull had never formed a clear conception, as, indeed, few at this time were accustomed to form such in these matters, and every one judged according to his own allowance of tact and discernment.

4th. The entrenched camp.—That, in a strong position, a few may resist many, is well known. But then it is essential that such position should have its rear perfectly free, as in the case of Torres Vedras, or at least should make a complete system of defence by connection with a neighbouring fortress, such as the camp of Bunzelwitz in the Seven Years’ War, and thus avoid the risk of being starved.

The position chosen for the Russian camp was near Drissa, on the Dwina. Phull, in Petersburgh, had induced the Emperor to dispatch the Colonel Wolzogen, an officer of talent and instruction, who before 1806 had left the Prussian for the Russian service, with instructions to select the spot for such a camp. We know nothing of his particular instructions. The result was, that in this district, singularly barren of military positions, he succeeded in finding no other point than that of Drissa, where a wooded surface of limited extent, partly covered by morasses, afforded space for a camp with its rear leaning on the Dwina. Its

advantages were, that the river forms here a concave semicircle, of which the chord is about a league. In front of this chord was extended the front of the camp in a slight curve, and supported on either side by the river, which runs here between banks, only of sand indeed, but fifty feet in height. On the right bank of the Dwina, above and below the flanks of the camp, several minor streams, of which the Drissa is the most considerable, discharge themselves into the Dwina, and afford occasion for good positions, and a favourable field of battle against an enemy who shall have crossed the river to attack the camp from the rear.

The slight curve which formed the front of the camp was fortified with a triple range of works, closed and open, planned by General Phull himself, and the retreat was to be secured by seven bridges. On the other side the river were no works. As the Dwina is here but an inconsiderable stream, pretty broad, indeed, but shallow enough to be fordable, it is easy to see that the tactical strength of this position was not great. It consisted in the works alone.

In a strategical view things were still worse. Drissa lies between the roads which lead from Wilna on Moscow and Petersburg, but lies therefore not *on* either of them.

The shortest road from Wilna to Petersburg passes by Druja on the Dwina, thence by Sebesch and Pskow; the shortest to Moscow passes by Witebsk. Drissa lies four miles from the first, and twenty-four from the last.

This undecided feature in the position gave great dissatisfaction at Wilna. No one there knew what to make of such a post. The Author asked General Phull, with regard to its object, which line of retreat he contemplated, that upon

Moscow or on St. Petersburg? Phull replied, that must depend upon circumstances. It is plain that there was an absence of clearness and determination; for an alternative of such importance could not be left to the chances of the instant.

As the camp of Drissa was only covered by the river from behind, and on the other side were no entrenchments, not even a defensible spot, but only a range of boarded sheds in which the flour sacks were stored, and as the river presented no obstacle, the army would never have been free from anxiety for its provisions, which were not even protected by favourable features of the neighbouring ground.

The fortified position of Drissa had therefore remained a mere idea—an abstraction, for not one of all its essential requisites was forthcoming. A slight curve upon a plain surface, surrounded with wood at the distance of 800 paces, and leaning on either side on a fordable river, is a bad field of battle. A point, moreover, which does not lie on the direct line of retreat, but is tom out of the system of operations, and left to itself, which leans neither on the sea, nor on a fortress, nor even on a town, properly so called (Drissa is a wooden village, and lay not directly behind the camp, but sideways, and beyond the system of defence)—such a point is indeed anything but one of strategical value.

We cannot, however, lay on Lieutenant-Colonel Wolzogen the blame of these defects. General Phull had prescribed the ground to him; and in this part of Lithuania we must thank God if we find a space vacant in the forest large enough for us to draw up in it a considerable body of men.

The strength, then, of this position, could hardly be considered as a multiplicator of the Russian numbers. It was, in fact, a Phullish pastime of the imagination, and vanished quickly before the realities of the time. The only good produced by this idea was, that it was the immediate cause of the retreat of the army, at least as far as the Dwina. It involved no efficient principle for multiplying the force of the resistance, and no compensation for the disadvantage of divergence from the simplest form of resistance and retreat.

The principal persons at head-quarters, such as Barclay, Benningsen, and Arenfeld, could not see their way in this plan of campaign, and exerted themselves to shake the Emperor’s confidence in the plan and its author. A kind of intrigue was commenced, having for its object to persuade the Emperor to accept a battle in the neighbourhood of Wilna. It was perhaps imagined that the French would cross the frontier on as wide a front as that on which the Russians were spread for its defence, i. e. from Samogitia to Volhynia; and in that case it might be hoped, that too great a preponderance of force would not be thrown on the point of Wilna. The idea of a battle could only be accounted for by supposing it founded on this absurd calculation.

Thus there arose at Wilna a conflict of opinions, which at least shook the Emperor’s confidence in the plan of Phull.

At this juncture, Lieutenant-Colonel Wolzogen arrived at Wilna, having served during the interval as chief of the staff to the corps of General Essen. He was master of the Russian language, and better acquainted than Phull with the principal persons. He determined to seek for an

appointment about Barclay, with the view of becoming, in some measure, a link of communication between him and Phull. He induced the latter to ask of the Emperor the services of an officer for the establishment of a small bureau. His choice fell on the Author. The Author received an order to travel to Drissa, to see how far the works had made progress and at the same time to fix on the fitting halting-places for the march. He departed, attended by a Russian feldjäger, on the twenty-third of June. When he arrived at Drissa, the officer in command of the works there took the greatest pleasure in considering him as a spy, because he had nothing more to show than an order written in French by General Phull, and General Phull was not considered as an authority. The Author, however, succeeded in allaying this mistrust, and he received permission to view the camp. 'This incident showed the Author what he had always apprehended—that Phull would derive from his position nothing but the most humiliating embarrassments, and occasion much danger and confusion.

The Author found the works of the camp traced on a system devised by General Phull himself. The outer circle was formed of a line of embrasures for musquetry; some 50 or 60 paces back was a line of works alternately open and closed. The former were intended for the batteries, the latter for single battalions who were to protect the batteries. Some 500 or 600 paces behind this enceinte was a second range of works, entirely dosed, which was considered as a reserve position; in the centre, and in the third line, was a still greater entrenched work, as a kind of redoubt to cover a retreat.

Although this system of fortification was evidently too artificial, the number of works too great, and the whole deficient in a practical view, yet the defence of it with a considerable mass of men, and with the known valour of the Russians, promised a serious resistance. One may even maintain with confidence that the French, if they had chosen to attack this camp by its front, would have consumed their force without gaining their object.

The profile of the works was good, the ground however sandy; and as no external devices for strengthening had as yet been resorted to, palisades, felled trees, wolfs'-holes, &c., there was much to be desired on this side. The Author induced the staff-officer who conducted the works, to think of these appliances, and to set about their immediate preparation.

Of the seven intended bridges not one was yet ready; and as practice and knowledge in this department were wanting to the officer employed, he confessed to the Author his embarrassment, and that he did not know how to deal with the very unequal size of the casks which had been furnished him for this service. The Author pointed out some of the devices usually resorted to in such cases, and promised to suggest the sending of an engineer officer to superintend and conduct these labours.

The most striking defect of the camp of Drissa appeared to the Author, while on the spot, the total want of a fortress on the right bank of the Dwina. The little town of Drissa lay opposite the point of support of the left wing, but built, as it is, of wood without walls, afforded no means of defence. In rear of the bridges no defensible object whatever was to be

found. The provisions, which principally consisted of flour in enormous quantities, stowed in sacks, were piled up under mere sheds without side walls, and might as easily be set on fire as destroyed by weather.

Phull’s idea was this:—To leave in the entrenchment 50,000 men, out of the 120,000 he hoped to muster, as a sufficient garrison, and with the remaining 70,000 to advance against the enemy, who should have crossed the river to attack the camp from behind.

Should the enemy cross in considerable force and thus weaken himself too much on the left bank, Phull intended to break out of the camp with overpowering numbers and attack the weakened portion. The whole advantage, therefore, of the camp, would consist in its affording an easier and shorter connection between the two sides of the river, while the enemy would be compelled to communicate between the two parts of his army by a single bridge at some distance. This advantage was incontestably of no very decisive character; it was not one which could be relied on to secure the results of a battle between 120,000 men deprived of all means of retreat, and a superior force. It should also have been a condition of such an offensive movement as was contemplated, that the ground should be favourable on the one side of the river or the other: this however was not the case in the front of the position on the left bank, where the ground was so beset with wood and morass, as to allow no view of the enemy’s movement. In any case, also, a certain degree of defensive strength was essential on the right bank, if an offensive movement was intended on the left, in order that a small corps might be