

## 69eme – Hundred Days Campaign.

### The Beginning of the 100 Days.

Emperor returns from Elbe, 20th March he is in Paris. Decrees start flowing very rapidly, calling up all ex-soldiers from leave, and increasing the number of regiments.

The 28th March decree, fixed the regiments to two batallions to be ready immediately for war, and a third batallion to be prepared, the third and fourth batallions to immediately start putting in place the officers to command them.

As a result the 69eme regained its number, and placed under the command of Colonel Herve. It was formed up with two batallions, under the command of Chefs de Batallion, Guingret, and Turc. It had 40 officers and 1077 men.

Then Napoleon organised the army corps, called 'corps d'observation'. On the 5th May, the 69<sup>e</sup> is attached to the 4eme Corps or Army of Moselle, under lieutenant-general Gerard) whose quarters were based in Metz and whose troops were ordered to watch over the Sarre.

The regiment thus belonged to the 13eme Division (commanded by Vichery), where it was formed with the 48eme, of the 2<sup>nd</sup> brigade under the orders of General Depres.

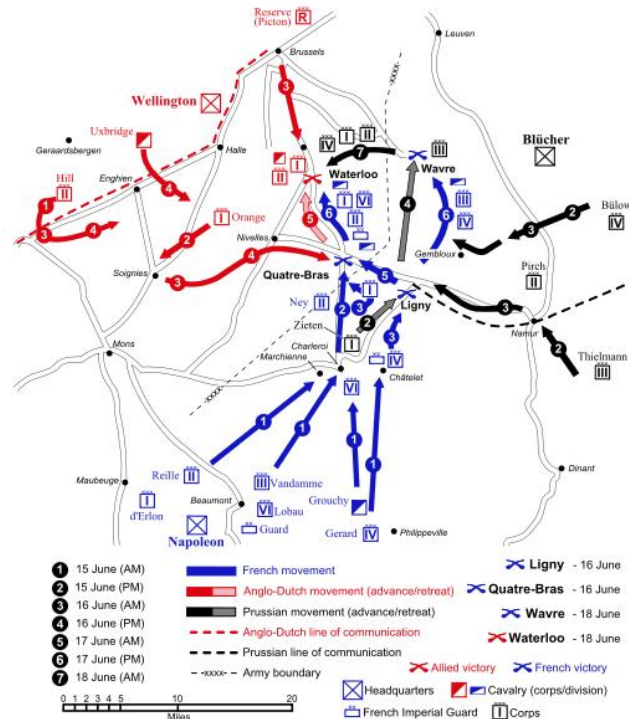
On this date, the 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> batallion left for Sarregnemines, the 3eme and 4eme depot batallions were formed up at St. Denis.

On the 10th of May this depot formed up a 'marching company' of 60 men to join up with the first two battalions at Sarregnemines. The first two batallions each had a strength of 600 men.

On the 13th May the 69eme received the order to complete its strength of the 3rd batallion and bring it to join the army of the Moselle, even though it had only 176 men.

Note the Coalition, on the 25th March, had been formed against France, the Emperor's plan was to attack immediately the Anglo-Prussians in Belgium, beat each of them individually, in concert with Rapp, move against the Austro-Russians.

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The army is concentrates its forces:

So from the beginning of June, Napoleon sends orders to concentrate the army between the Sambre and the Meuse. The 4e corps was sent to Thionville, and centers its forces on Rocroy. The 6<sup>th</sup> of June, the corps leaves camp and after a long and dangerous flanking march along the thinly guarded frontier arrived on the right bank of the river Meuse on the 13<sup>th</sup>. This first concentration is followed on the 14<sup>th</sup> by a concentration before crossing the frontier. Napoleon pulls together all his corps together, in order to better deploy the following day. Gerard had to take position on the 14<sup>th</sup> June, in front of Philippeville, and be ready the 15<sup>th</sup> at 3am.



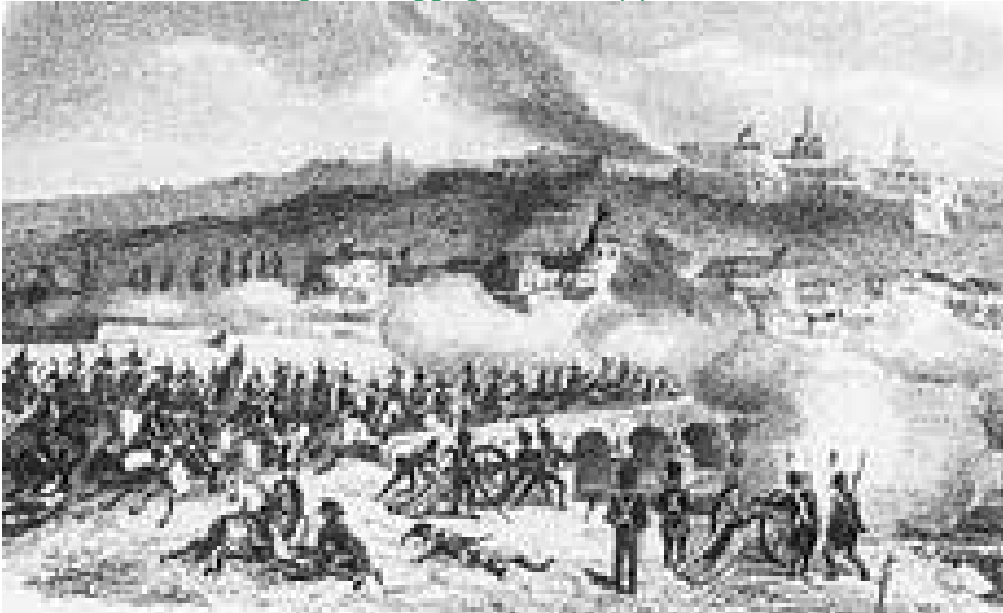
*Napoleon's proclamation.*

On the anniversary of Marengo, and Friedland, after having listened to a proclamation from the Emperor, the 4e corps started its march, spread

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out between Florenne and Philippeville, having only one division at this place, that of General Vichery. On the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup>, the concentration is complete, and the following day, the army crossed the frontier in three columns and marched on Charleroi.

The 4<sup>eme</sup> corps formed the right hand column. On the night of the 14<sup>th</sup>, they received the orders "the general Vichery will start to march at 3.30am towards Charleroi and keep up with the head of the 3<sup>eme</sup> corps (center column) and stay in communication. The general Gerard is to perform reconnaissance of all the routes to Naumur and walk in close battle order, leaving its baggage at Philippeville".



*Charleroi*

But on the 15<sup>eme</sup> the movement was carried out very late, because the 4<sup>eme</sup> corps, which should have on the 14<sup>th</sup> be completely assembled, was only one division, the others were still at Florenne, and the road that they had to take was particularly bad. For these reasons Gerard's corps did not arrive at Charleroi at the same time as the other columns.



*Crossing of Bridge at Charleroi.*

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On the evening of the 15<sup>th</sup>, it camped at seven kilometers short of Charleroi, spread across the Sambre, one division at Chatelineau, the others, including Vichery, at Chatelet, yet Gerard had received orders to cross all his corps across the corps.

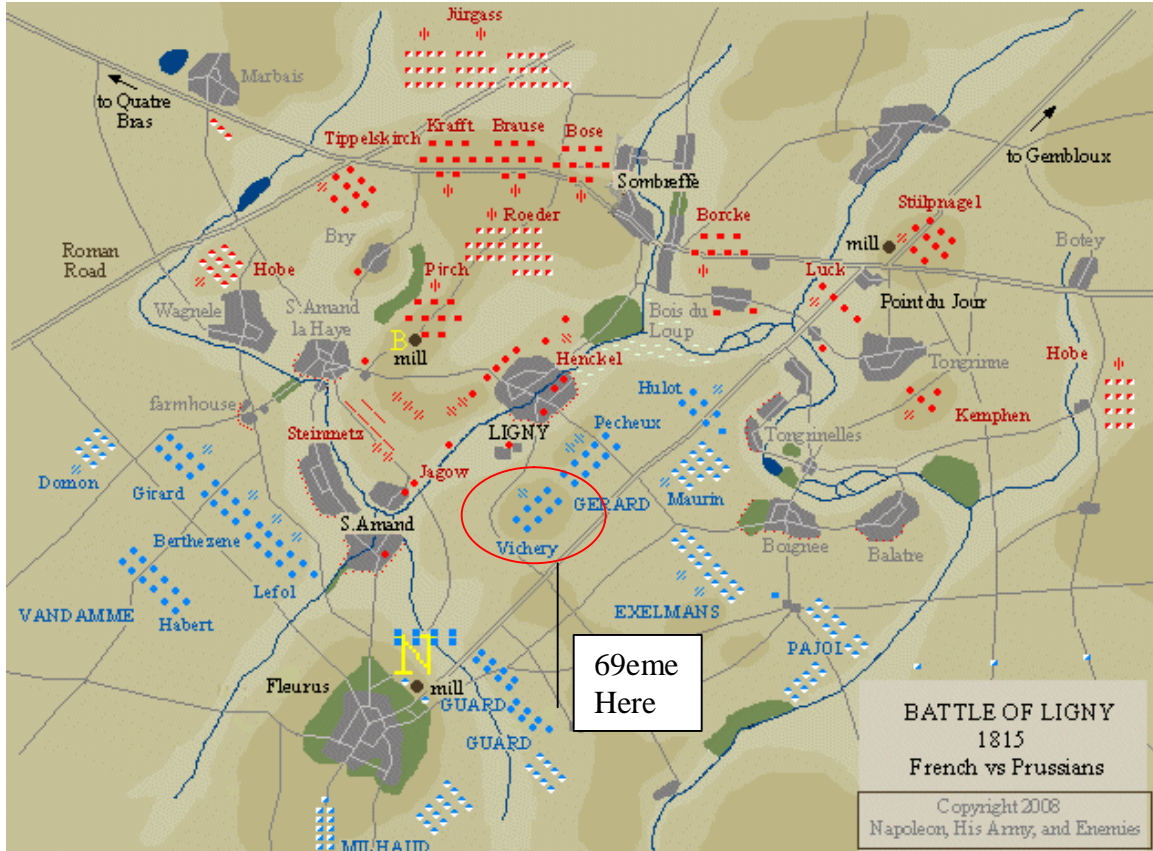


*Gerard's Corps.*

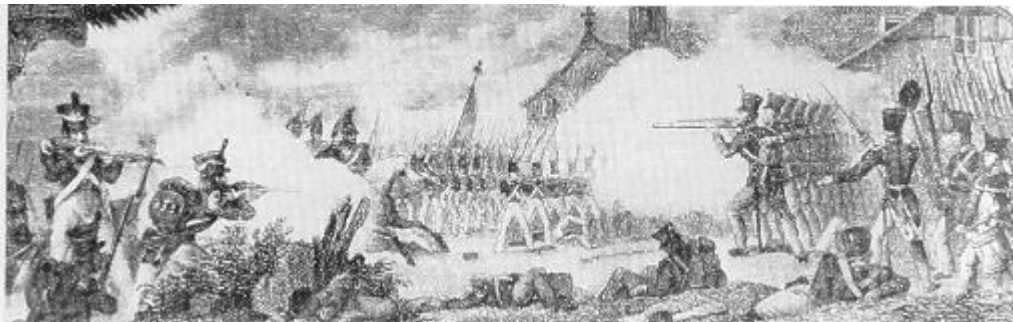
Battle of Ligny:

The 16<sup>th</sup> of June, the French army attacks, at Ligny the most forwardly deployed corps of Blucher, whilst Ney held at Quatre Bras the troops of Wellington.

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Gerard on the orders of Marshall Grouchy, who commands the French right wing, had to assault Ligny with two of his divisions (Pecheux, and Vichery).



The first was launched in three columns on the village, and did not carry the day. However Gerard reinforces it successively by two of Vichery's brigades. They occupied the south part of the supporting action, crossing the Ligue stream and finally got a foothold in the north part of the place.

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*The Ligue Stream at Ligny that runs into the center of the village.*

Despite an admirable action, they could not completely dislodge the Prussians, and it the assistance of the old guard was necessary to finish the job.



*Upper Farmhouse*

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On the 16<sup>th</sup> of June in the evening, the Prussians are beaten, but not destroyed. Also the two armies camped on the battlefield, Gerard's corps behind Ligny. On the evening of the murderous combat, the 69eme counted 6 officers killed, 6 others wounded and 18 men killed.



*Aftermath of Ligny, village devastated.*

### Wavre

The following day of Ligny, Grouchy received orders to follow the Prussian army with the right wing of the French army. At the same time Napoleon with the left wing hope to beat the English.

During these two days, 17 and 18, the Prussian army leaves in front of Grouchy a weak mask and walks entirely straight to Waterloo, to join up with Wellington and take part in a decisive battle the following day. The right wing of the French army was focused on Sart a Walhain.

The 4eme corps received the following order: "I desire, my dear general that you start marching at 8am. You should follow the 3eme corps and you should go first to Sart A Walhain".

General Gerard could not leave on the 18<sup>th</sup> at the appointed time, because the distributions were not complete, arrived however in front of Wavre, where Grouchy found the Prussian Corps of Pirch, who wanted to prevent them from crossing the Dyle River.



*Pirch*

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Whilst Vandamme had as an objective Wavre, Gerard attacked with Hulot's division Bierges Bridge. Grouchy directs in person the divisions of Pecheux and Vichery on the attack on the Limale Bridge.

During the night the two divisions cross the bridge that the cavalry of Pajol had just taken, they crossed Limale and engaged up until midnight a fierce fight against the Von Stengal division of the Ziethen's corps and the division of Stulpnagel of Thielmann's corps. The French retained possession of the plateau and the two armies camped on the terrain, the enemy at the edge of the forest of Rixeuxart.

The combat started again in the morning; Pecheux and Vichery were in reserve. Grouchy forced Thielmann to retreat. At ten thirty in the morning, he is the master of the battlefield.

At this moment, he learns from an officer from the Etat Major General, the news of the defeat of Waterloo. He immediately orders a retreat to avoid being cut off on his left flank. The withdrawal started at eleven thirty, the 4eme corps on the orders of Vichery, who replaced a wounded Gerard (wounded at Bierges) re-crosses Dyle at Limale and rejoins the direct road to Gembloux. It camps in the evening between Mazy and Tempoux. The following day (20<sup>th</sup>), the retreat to Naumur continues, the 4eme corps leaves its camp at nine am following Pajol's corps and Teste's division. At the beginning of the march, the 4eme found its left flank temporarily open by the absence of the 3eme corps. A small panic broke out but is quickly stopped and Vichery himself walking in the rear guard prevents the pursuit of the leading elements of Pirch.

The 4eme corps crosses Namur, resupplies itself and takes the Meuse corridor towards Dinant, which it reaches on the evening of the 20<sup>th</sup>. Grouchy leaves Dinant on the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup> and crosses the frontier under the cannon of Givet, and then withdraws by Mezieres sur Rethel and Reims.

The 4eme corps camps behind Rocroi, in the villages of Eraumont, Galichet, and Petit-Hougraux; on the 23<sup>rd</sup> it is at Blombay, Cermon, Aubigny and Logny-Boughny, near the road to Rethel; the 24<sup>th</sup> it concentrates its forces around Rethel, and the 25eme takes up positions near Reims. There it comes under the orders of Vandamme, who now commands two army corps, the 3eme and 4eme.

But Vichery's division is detached and serves as rear guard on the left flank: the debris of Waterloo.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> June, Vichery is at Soissons. The 27 and 28, it takes positions successively at Villers-Cotterets and Crepy en Valois.

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On the 29<sup>th</sup> of June the army arrives at the gates of Paris, Grouch abandons his command and the troops come under the command of Davout.

Napoleon had to abdicate for a second time on the 30<sup>th</sup> June, and the war continued to defend France against the invader already at the walls of the capital.

The Emperor had hastened the fortification of the capital, the works on the right bank were almost finished and usable, and the works on the left bank where the 3eme and 4eme corps were sent were on the contrary, were just started and did not exist.

### Combat at Saint Denis.

The Prussians were the first to arrive at Paris and tried to take the capital by a frontal attack on the right bank which did not succeed. At Saint Denis, two battalions formed by the depots of the 69eme and 76eme (comrades in arms under Ney in Tyrol, Spain...), commanded by the general Allix, made a brilliant resistance, attempting several counter offensives, at nightfall, under pressure of numbers they were pushed back into Saint Denis.

### Battle of Issy.

Stopped on the right bank, the Prussians crossed the Seine and reinforced their attack from the south. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July, Vichery who was holding Moulineaux, was attacked by Steinnitz and Pirch from Ziethen's corps. Thrown back into Issy, they try a counter attack but this fails. At nightfall the enemy columns force them out of Issy falling back on Vaugirard.



*Ziethen*

At three in the morning, Vandamme, whose left flank is now threatened by the withdrawal, gives the order to Vichery to retake Issy. Despite a violent cannon barrage, three times Vichery, supported by Hulot, tried to take back the position but could not succeed in taking the village and

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park. The regiment lost six men. (Some veterans of Spain in that number).



*Vandamme*

At eight o'clock the combat is stopped by a demand for an armistice at the same time Paris capitulates. As a consequence, on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> July the town is evacuated and the 11<sup>th</sup> the army takes up positions behind the Loire, the 3<sup>eme</sup> and 4<sup>eme</sup> corps under Vandamme, were camped between Orleans and Jargeau.

After long negotiations between Davout and the Bourbons, it finally surrendered the 14<sup>th</sup> July.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> August, the line put away its eagles in the artillery workshops of Bourges.

And so ended the hundred days campaign for the 69eme.