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Napoleon Meets His Waterloo: An Examination of Mistakes Related to the Battle

Kayla Scott

The Battle of Waterloo occurred on June 18, 1815, near Belgium.¹ The battle was fought between the French army under Napoleon Bonaparte and the British army and assorted allies under Lord Wellington. The forces of Lord Wellington were assisted later in the day by members of Field Marshal Blucher's Prussian command. The battle was a crushing defeat for Napoleon. Both Napoleon and Wellington made mistakes on this field of battle, but Napoleon's errors were far more numerous. Napoleon's overconfidence concerning the battle was immense, a fact that arguably blinded him more than once from seeing what actions needed to be taken at Waterloo.

Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte had been exiled to the island of Elba in April of 1814.² Napoleon had caused multiple battles in Europe, and it was decided that the only way to keep the ambitious warmonger from causing further bloodshed was to find a cubbyhole in

¹ David Howarth, *Waterloo: Day of Battle* (New York City: Galahad Books, 1968), 3-8.

² *Ibid.*, 5.

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which to confine him. Elba was chosen to be Napoleon's little empire for the rest of his time on earth. Napoleon was not happy with this arrangement, and managed to escape from his island before two years had passed.

Some historians believe that Napoleon was in ill health at Waterloo, and blame his illnesses for his mistakes and subsequent loss of the battle.³ According to his brother Jerome, the former King of Westphalia, Napoleon was suffering from at least two painful health problems. One was cystitis, a problem that caused inflammation of the bladder. Cystitis alone could cause excruciating pain and even fever. Historian David Howarth considered these health problems as "enough to account for everything he did or failed to do."⁴ Based on that belief, Napoleon's first mistake was committed when he left Elba.

Prior to Waterloo, Napoleon's faith in his destiny to win at battle was just as high as ever despite tales of ailments and ill health. He was sure of a positive outcome to the conflict. On the morning of the battle he bragged, "We have ninety chances in our favor, and not

³ Ibid., 54-57.

⁴ Ibid.

ten against us.”⁵ In a separate statement, he was said to have remarked before the battle, “Ah, I have them at last, these English.”⁶ Instead of fearing the possibility of defeat, Napoleon was afraid that Wellington’s forces would retreat before an engagement could take place. The greatest illustration of Napoleon’s overconfidence can be found by listing the contents of his carriage after the battle.⁷ As the battle was ending, Napoleon’s carriage was captured by the allied forces, with Napoleon narrowly escaping capture himself. Inside the carriage were several items, including a gold dinner service and a uniform with 2,000,000 francs worth of diamonds sewn into the lining. Also enclosed were a collection of flyers printed before the battle that declared Napoleon’s victory. The first line read “The short-lived success of my enemies detached you for a moment from my Empire: in my exile on a rock in the sea I heard your complaints.”⁸ All of Europe had been relieved when Napoleon was exiled; perhaps the complaints he heard were his own. The second line followed with “The God of battles has decided the fate of your beautiful provinces:

⁵ David G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon: The Mind and Method of History's Greatest Soldier* (New York: Scribner, 1966), 1066-1067.

⁶ Harold T. Parker, *Three Napoleonic Battles* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1983), 128.

⁷ Howarth, *Waterloo*, 199-200.

⁸ *Ibid.*

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Napoleon is among you.” Napoleon’s whereabouts were never in doubt during the Hundred Days War, a series of battles that had led up to Waterloo. The supposed “God of battles” was definitely not listening to Napoleon on June 18, as he would find out before the day was over. The proclamation continued “You are worthy to be Frenchmen. Rise in mass, join my invincible phalanxes to exterminate the remainder of those barbarians who are your enemies and mine: they fly with rage and despair in their hearts.”⁹

It was, in fact, the French army that flew (or, more accurately, staggered) from the battlefield of Waterloo. Napoleon did not have an announcement prepared for losing the battle, but he had an arrogant statement ready to deliver upon winning. These leaflets proclaiming Napoleon’s victory ended up blowing across the battlefield in the mud. The emperor was fond of saying, “By its very nature, the outcome of a battle is never predictable.”¹⁰ However, it is clear that Napoleon was doing just that: predicting his own victory.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Alan Schom, *One Hundred Days: Napoleon's Road To Waterloo* (New York: Atheneum MacMillan Publishing Company, 1992), 289.

Napoleon held a planning meeting on the morning of June 18.¹¹ At this meeting, several points were made that Napoleon failed to take seriously. Napoleon's orders had previously sent Marshal Emmanuel de Grouchy with his detachment of 32,000 men on a march to find the Prussian army.¹² When Napoleon's Chief-of-Staff, Marshal General Jean-de- Dieu Soult, suggested that at least part of Grouchy's detachment should be brought back to join the main body of French forces, Napoleon dismissed the idea with contempt. He rebuked his subordinate, saying "Because you have been beaten by Wellington, you think him a great General. I tell you Wellington is a bad general, the English are bad troops, and this affair will be nothing more than a picnic."¹³ Despite Napoleon's insults to Wellington and his army, the Emperor is said to have observed the allied troops of Wellington's force and exclaimed, "How steadily those troops take the ground! How beautifully those cavalry form! Look at those gray horses! Who are these fine horsemen? These are fine troops, but in half an hour I shall cut them to pieces."¹⁴

¹¹ Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1066-1067.

¹² Parker, *Three Napoleonic Battles*, 122.

¹³ Howarth, *Waterloo*, 57.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

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The next topic of concern at the planning meeting was brought up by Napoleon's brother Jerome, who reported hearing of a conversation between two British soldiers.¹⁵ The soldiers' discussion revealed a plan by Blucher and Wellington to join together during the battle. Napoleon, who should have at least considered the possibility, scoffed at this piece of intelligence.

Napoleon listened to a single suggestion made by one of his men at the meeting, but it was the suggestion that would have been best ignored: since the ground was wet, the battle should be postponed until later in the day.¹⁶ The ground was said to be too soft to allow for easy maneuvering of field guns or to use ricochet fire, so the battle time was set for 1:00 p.m. According to historian David Chandler, this was the worst mistake Napoleon and his army made on that day. Chandler notes that, "Had even an inadequately supported infantry attack been launched against Wellington during the morning, the French must surely have won ..." Blucher could not have arrived in time for an earlier battle. Historian Jac Weller also notes that

¹⁵ Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1065-1066.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1066-1067.

Napoleon's delay of the battle was not a particularly prudent move.¹⁷ "As things worked out," wrote Weller, "every hour that the French could have gained would have been in their favor." At the same time, Weller points out something that several historians fail to take into consideration: the French army could not have offered effective battle immediately on the morning of June 18. The troops needed time to clean their arms after the rains of the previous night. They also needed a chance to find their commissary supplies and eat, as a significant amount of time had passed since their last meal. Battle at daylight was clearly not a good idea. As for using the excuse of waiting for the battlefield to dry out, Weller is skeptical. "Strong sun and wind would only slowly dry soaked Belgian soil; a few hours under ideal conditions would have helped slightly," wrote Weller.¹⁸ "There appears to have been no sun, negligible wind, and many showers." Napoleon's "chances would have been better if he had attacked just as soon as he could."¹⁹ In short, waiting a few hours would have made little to no difference in field conditions, but probably made a notable difference in the outcome of the battle.

¹⁷ Jac Weller, *Wellington at Waterloo* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1967), 193.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 193-194.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

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Marshal Grouchy's detachment would have been better used on the field at Waterloo, instead of miles away searching for Prussians. Napoleon made several errors where Grouchy was concerned. Weller contended that Grouchy should have been ordered to follow the Prussian army hours before he did so.²⁰ Grouchy should have pursued the Prussians on the morning of June 17, not the afternoon. Napoleon failed to keep Grouchy informed of his plans and positions during the day before and the day of the battle.²¹ Grouchy was without new orders or information from Napoleon from noon on June 17 until sometime after 1:00 a.m. on June 18. Napoleon did not receive the dispatch that Grouchy had sent around 10:00 p.m. on June 17 until sometime after 1:00 a.m., and then he did not read it immediately. This lack of communication was a contributing element to Grouchy's absence from the field of battle.

On the night before the battle, cavalry patrols informed Grouchy of the Prussian army's movement to Wavre.²² Grouchy erroneously concluded that at least a portion of the Prussian army was headed for Brussels. The Marshal decided to send General Dominique

²⁰ Weller, *Wellington at Waterloo*, 192.

²¹ Parker, *Three Napoleonic Battles*, 132-134.

²² Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1069.

Vandamme and General Étienne Maurice Gerard to Brussels. In reality, these commanders could have been put to better use if they had been sent toward Gery and Moustier, where they would have had the opportunity for a flank attack on the Prussian forces. Even so, Vandamme did not move until two hours after he and his men were supposed to, making Gerard two hours late as well. A short time after 10:00 a.m., Grouchy sent a message to Napoleon confirming the movement of Prussian troops to the area of Wavre and stated his intention to insert his forces between Blucher and Lord Wellington. While this was not a bad idea, he was too late to be of assistance on the field. A substantial percentage of the Prussian forces were already on their way to Wellington before Grouchy acted.

At 11:30 a.m. the Battle of Waterloo began.²³ Grouchy and his men could hear the firing as it commenced to the west of their position. General Gerard encouraged Grouchy to follow the sounds of battle rather than continue with plans to intercept the Prussian troops. Gerard's idea was sound, but he failed to present it carefully and with tact. Gerard's manner is said to have annoyed Grouchy to the extent that he refused to consider Gerard's proposal for even a moment. Had

²³ Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1069-1072.

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Grouchy moved to the west as Gerard advised, it would have been possible to have caught up with Prussian forces at the River Dyle. Grouchy was determined to observe Napoleon's last order and that meant he was to go wherever he thought Blucher was. David Chandler cites Grouchy's refusal to move west as serving to eliminate the chance of a French victory at Waterloo. "Grouchy cannot fairly be blamed until the time that he heard the boom of guns at Waterloo slightly before noon," Weller wrote.²⁴ Weller defends Grouchy, pointing out that despite his knowledge of the raging battle he would have been disobeying orders if he had gone to the field.

Originally, the onset of the battle at 11:30 a.m. was supposed to begin with an attempt to divide Wellington's forces.²⁵ However, it turned into a full-scale attack. Jerome had been expected to make a simple attack on allied forces at Hougoumont, but became fixated on visions of grandeur and personal glory. Jerome decided to capture Hougoumont at all costs and commenced an all-out assault. His obstinate and repeated attacks led to severe casualties among his ranks. Instead of admitting defeat, Jerome called for reinforcements. Jerome's stubborn insistence on capturing the pointless position served

²⁴ Weller, *Wellington at Waterloo*, 195.

²⁵ Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1072-1073.

to accomplish little else but to tie down French troops. Eventually, two divisions plus a portion of a third division were occupied there without serving a constructive purpose. Chandler notes that Jerome's actions were the first "grave tactical blunder of the day."²⁶

While Jerome was off fighting at Hougomont, French forces were putting a battery of 84 guns into position to prepare for General Jean-Baptiste Drouet d'Erlon's attack.²⁷ A short time after 1:00 p.m., Napoleon's men commenced firing. However, there were two problems that prevented the battery's assault from being effective. The first problem was that targets were scarce, with only a few men and artillery pieces exposed. Second, the ground was still too wet to allow for effective ricochet fire. Cannonballs were more likely to go straight down and become embedded in the earth instead of rolling around and causing the destruction for which they were meant. For these reasons, the initial attack by French artillery forces mostly wasted time and ammunition. The French lined up for battle in such a way that nearly all of the army could be seen by the opposing force. This was a psychological move, but it left the French army more exposed to danger than a more condensed arrangement would have. In

²⁶ Weller, *Wellington at Waterloo*, 196.

²⁷ Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1073.

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contrast, Wellington had placed his troops so that the vast majority were not available to use as long-range targets.

Napoleon positioned himself roughly a mile and a half from the main fighting, a vantage point that made it impossible for him to stay on top of the action.²⁸ He could neither observe nor be kept up to date with the minute-by-minute movements at this distance. Napoleon did not seem to make any serious attempt to stay involved, giving only six known orders during the first six hours of battle. Marshal Ney was really the one directing the battle. This was a serious error, as Ney had proven in the days prior to the battle that he was unreliable for such an important command.²⁹ The problem with his position on the field was the opposite of Napoleon's: he was too close.³⁰ Often in the thick of battle, Ney was unable to know what was needed in other areas of the fighting where he was not involved. Ironically, Ney had not originally been a Napoleon supporter. When Napoleon left Elba to begin the Hundred Days War, Ney had been among those who vowed to arrest him and had even publicly bragged about doing so. Upon meeting Napoleon, Ney had switched sides. At Waterloo, Ney had been in

²⁸ Howarth, *Waterloo*, 116-118.

²⁹ Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1068.

³⁰ Howarth, *Waterloo*, 83-85.

command for fewer than three days. Napoleon's position away from the main arena of battle was a grave error that was thought to be made in part because he was ill that day. Napoleon committed two of his worst errors at Waterloo by not staying directly on the field himself and by allowing Marshal Ney to have so much authority with the battle plan.

When movement was observed about five miles away from Napoleon's position, French forces had differing opinions on what the movement actually was. It was not long before a captured cavalry officer was brought before some of the French commanders.³¹ The movement, reported the Prussian prisoner, was the advance guard of a corps from Blucher's army. The Prussians were joining Wellington, just as Napoleon had been warned early that morning before the battle began. Napoleon continued to believe that he was invincible, even though he knew that Wellington was being reinforced. "This morning we had ninety odds in our favor. We still have sixty against forty."³²

When the Prussian officer was brought in, Napoleon had just finished preparing a vague message to Marshal Grouchy.³³ The

³¹ Ibid., 83-85.

³² Ibid.

³³ Howarth, *Waterloo*, 83-86.

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message was ambiguous enough that it appeared to give Grouchy permission to continue heading toward Wavre where the Prussians were thought to be. In light of the knowledge that Blucher was joining Wellington, Napoleon added a note to the already written message: “Do not lose a moment in drawing near to us and affecting a junction with us, in order to crush Bulow whom you will catch in the very act of concentrating.”³⁴ Napoleon was wrong to believe, even for a minute, that Grouchy had a chance of reaching the field in time to be of assistance. It took two and a half hours for a courier on horseback to reach Grouchy.³⁵ For the army of 32,000 to move bag and baggage (not to mention cannons) would take too long for the battle to still be in progress.

At 1:30 p.m., Napoleon directed Ney to order d’Erlon to begin his assault on Wellington’s left center.³⁶ For some unexplained reason, d’Erlon chose to use an awkward and outdated marching order to advance. Two hundred men marched in the front rank, with approximately twenty-four to twenty-seven ranks in all. As Captain Pierre Charles Duthilt of the 45th Regiment of the line noted, this

³⁴ Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1076.

³⁵ Howarth, *Waterloo*, 83-85.

³⁶ Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1076-1077.

formation plan “cost us dear, since we were unable to form square against cavalry attacks, while the enemy’s artillery shot could plow through our formations to a depth of twenty ranks.”³⁷ Three of the four divisions formed in this manner. If the use of battalion columns had been employed instead, it would have prevented numerous casualties during the approach. Also, flexibility and maneuverability would have been greatly increased.³⁸ While attack columns were psychologically intimidating, the formation was of little use otherwise.³⁹ A formation could have a maximum of three ranks deep and be able to fire effectively. The remainder of the formation, especially those in the middle, were essentially along for the ride as the column marched blindly forward. Such a tight formation diminished firepower as well as maneuverability and made sudden movement impossible. The columns also presented large targets for Wellington’s artillery. The unwieldy force did not have enough time to accomplish deployment before the enemy fell upon them. D’Erlon was forced to retreat and did so without formation. It is worth noting that the fourth division under General Pierre François Joseph Durutte

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1076-1077.

³⁹ Howarth, *Waterloo*, 83-85.

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used a different plan of formation that was much more flexible.⁴⁰ His men, deployed on the extreme right, notably met with greater success than the other three divisions. The use of attack columns was later heavily criticized by many, including Lieutenant Colonel Basil Jackson, a staff officer in Wellington's army. Jackson noted that such columns had been considered impractical since Gustavus Adolphus implemented linear warfare. "The least reflection," wrote Jackson, "must satisfy anyone that, while massed in close columns, an enemy is really only formidable to the imagination ..."⁴¹

Yet another failure occurred when these four divisions were deployed without sufficient support from the cavalry. Only one cavalry brigade led by General Étienne Jacques Travers was used. As Chandler notes, "It was customary in French tactics for a cavalry attack to precede that of the infantry in order to induce the opposition to form square and thus reduce his output of frontal fire."⁴² No attempt was made to adhere to this custom. However, in fairness it is necessary to note the presence of a formidable hedge that spanned the majority of the ridge that was to be attacked. Wellington's gunners

⁴⁰ Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1077.

⁴¹ Lieutenant Colonel Basil Jackson, *Notes and Reminiscences of a Staff Officer at Waterloo*, (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1903), 90-91.

⁴² Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1077.

had cut holes in the massive shrubbery through which to fit the cannon muzzles. This arrangement would have necessarily made a cavalry attack less effective. Hedge or no hedge, the lack of adequate cavalry support doomed d'Erlon's assault. Even though d'Erlon's attack failed to be executed successfully, it led to the deaths of 4,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry on the allied side.

A short time before 3:00 p.m., Napoleon received a message from Grouchy that had been sent to him at 11:30 a.m.⁴³ At this point, he finally accepted that Grouchy would not make it to the field in time to assist with the battle. Napoleon had two choices: he could retreat or make an immediate and massive onslaught using all the forces he had at hand. Being Napoleon, he chose the latter. At 3:30 p.m., Marshal Ney received a directive from Napoleon to take La Haye Sainte at all costs. This attack was a failure.

In the process of the attack on La Haye Sainte, Ney witnessed what he mistakenly thought was the beginning of a retreat by Wellington's forces.⁴⁴ In fact, the only movement Ney saw was the progress of allied wounded as well as ambulances and empty ammunition wagons to the rear. Wellington was not retreating.

⁴³ Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1079.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1080.

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Without consulting Napoleon, Ney sent in a brigade of cavalry to speed the supposedly “parting” allied forces. More and more cavalry were sent into the fray, so that by 4:00 p.m. a minimum of 5,000 cavalymen were committed. This cavalry charge was made without the aid of infantry or artillery, and it lacked coordination. The momentum of this charge was hampered by the muddy conditions, making a slow trot the highest speed attainable. In response to Ney’s charge, Wellington’s forces formed into twenty squares with field pieces positioned between them and in front. Without infantry and artillery support, and, of course, proper planning, the assault failed. In an attempt to rescue Ney, Napoleon sent Flahaut’s and Kellerman’s cavalry troops.⁴⁵ The rest of the Guard Cavalry followed, even though it had not been ordered to do so. Approximately 9,000 to 10,000 cavalry were now committed, and Napoleon was without a reserve cavalry force. These cavalymen were also inadequately supported and thus were forced back. Only after 6:00 p.m. were infantry soldiers added as an afterthought. When 1,500 men from this force were killed in ten minutes, it was obliged to retreat as well.

⁴⁵ Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1084-1085.

A short time after 6:00 p.m., Napoleon ordered Ney to charge La Haye Sainte, and this time Ney used infantry, cavalry, and artillery together successfully.⁴⁶ La Haye Sainte finally fell to the French and proved to be Wellington's only loss for the day at Waterloo.⁴⁷ Even then, Wellington's forces managed to hold their position there until approximately 6:15 p.m. and did so under heavy assault. It is arguable that even this loss might have been averted except for the lack of adequate ammunition by some of the allied units involved.

After the fall of La Haye Sainte, Ney requested reinforcements. Napoleon sent an angry reply to Ney, asking, "Troops? Where do you expect me to get them? Do you expect me to make them?"⁴⁸ Another source reported that he exclaimed, "Where the devil do you expect me to find them!"⁴⁹ Marshal Ney did not get his reinforcements, even though Napoleon could have sent all or part of the Imperial Guard and possibly have won the battle.⁵⁰ Napoleon chose to reinforce the line on another part of the field instead, making a costly mistake.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1085.

⁴⁷ Weller, *Wellington at Waterloo*, 195.

⁴⁸ Howarth, *Waterloo*, 166.

⁴⁹ Schom, *One Hundred Days*, 286.

⁵⁰ Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1085.

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At 7:00 p.m., Napoleon ordered the Imperial Guard into battle and led them within 600 yards of the allied line before giving command to Ney.⁵¹ At this point, Bulow appeared to the right of the French forces. Napoleon had his subordinates lie to the troops, spreading the news that Bulow's force was Grouchy coming to their aid.⁵² The troops believed that Grouchy was coming to save the day and raised the cry, "Vive l'Empereur! Vive Napoleon!"⁵³ This raised morale for only a brief moment before the French rear was fired upon and the truth revealed. The shouts of "Vive l'Empereur!" changed to "Sauve qui peut!" or "Everyone for himself!" as the truth became known. The rapid transition from celebration to panic made morale plummet faster than it would have if Napoleon had simply stayed silent or told the truth. Chaos and deep despair spread at the news of Bulow's arrival. The Imperial Guard went forward, but was not supported by cavalry as it attacked.⁵⁴ Unable to withstand the infantry's onslaught unprotected, the Guard retreated.

Napoleon finally realized that a full scale retreat was imminent whether he ordered it or not. The remaining Imperial Guardsmen were

⁵¹ Ibid., 1087.

⁵² Ibid., 1087-1089.

⁵³ Schom, *One Hundred Days*, 290.

⁵⁴ Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 1087-1089.

ordered to go forward. Panic-stricken French troops ran straight into their ranks in their flight to escape the Allies, ruining the maneuver and forcing another retreat. Napoleon had called the Imperial Guard the “Bravest of the Brave,” but even they could not withstand the battle.⁵⁵

Napoleon saw that his forces were being overwhelmed and did what he had done on other occasions: ran. He fled the battlefield without calling for a retreat or notifying his subordinate officers. After the battle, Ney said it was as if Napoleon had “disappeared.”⁵⁶ However, parts of his army did witness their leader’s inglorious flight. “A complete panic at once spread throughout the whole field of battle,” stated an official account of the scene.⁵⁷ The French army followed their leader, leaving the battlefield in “great disorder.”⁵⁸ Napoleon’s cowardice was a poor example, indeed. “Never had Bonaparte committed a greater error,” Carl von Clausewitz said of Napoleon’s flight. “There is a difference between leading an invincible army in an orderly withdrawal from a battlefield in the face of an overwhelmingly superior force, and returning like a veritable

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Schom, *One Hundred Days*, 289.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

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fugitive, guilty of having lost and abandoned an entire army.”⁵⁹

Napoleon helped make Waterloo his final battle by abandoning his shattered army in such a dishonorable fashion.

After the battle, Lord Wellington was not exultant as Napoleon undoubtedly would have been. Lieutenant Colonel Basil Jackson witnessed Wellington’s mood after the battle and noted that he was “evidently somber and dejected.”⁶⁰ Jackson further wrote, “The few individuals who attended him, wore, too, rather the aspect of a little funeral train than that of victors in one of the most important battles ever fought.”⁶¹ Wellington himself confirmed Jackson’s observations in writing after the battle, “The losses I have sustained have quite broken me down, and I have no feeling for the advantages we have gained.”⁶²

Napoleon’s loss of Waterloo signaled the end of the Hundred Days War. On October 15, 1815, Napoleon was deposited on yet another island, this one named Saint Helena.⁶³ As for the loss of Waterloo, he blamed everyone but himself. Napoleon failed to admit

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Jackson, *Notes and Reminiscences of a Staff Officer at Waterloo*, 60.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Schom, *One Hundred Days*, 289.

that he should have been in the thick of battle giving orders. Napoleon failed admit that he should have called Grouchy back to the field more quickly. Napoleon also failed to admit that his overconfidence had assisted in his downfall. Even after he had lost at Waterloo, he still retained his old arrogance. “Had I succeeded, I should have died with the reputation as the greatest man who ever lived,” wrote Napoleon of Waterloo.⁶⁴ “As it is, although I have failed, I shall be considered as an extraordinary man. I have fought fifty pitched battles, almost all of which I have won.”⁶⁵ Napoleon and his men made error upon error at the Battle of Waterloo. Napoleon must take the greatest part of the blame for it all, since he failed to place himself in the middle of the fighting to direct his subordinates. It is arguable that Napoleon lost Waterloo not so much by what he did, but by what he did not do.

⁶⁴ David Gates, “Napoleon as General,” *History Today* 48, no. 6 (1998): 47, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=689666&site=ehost-live> (accessed October 12, 2015).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*