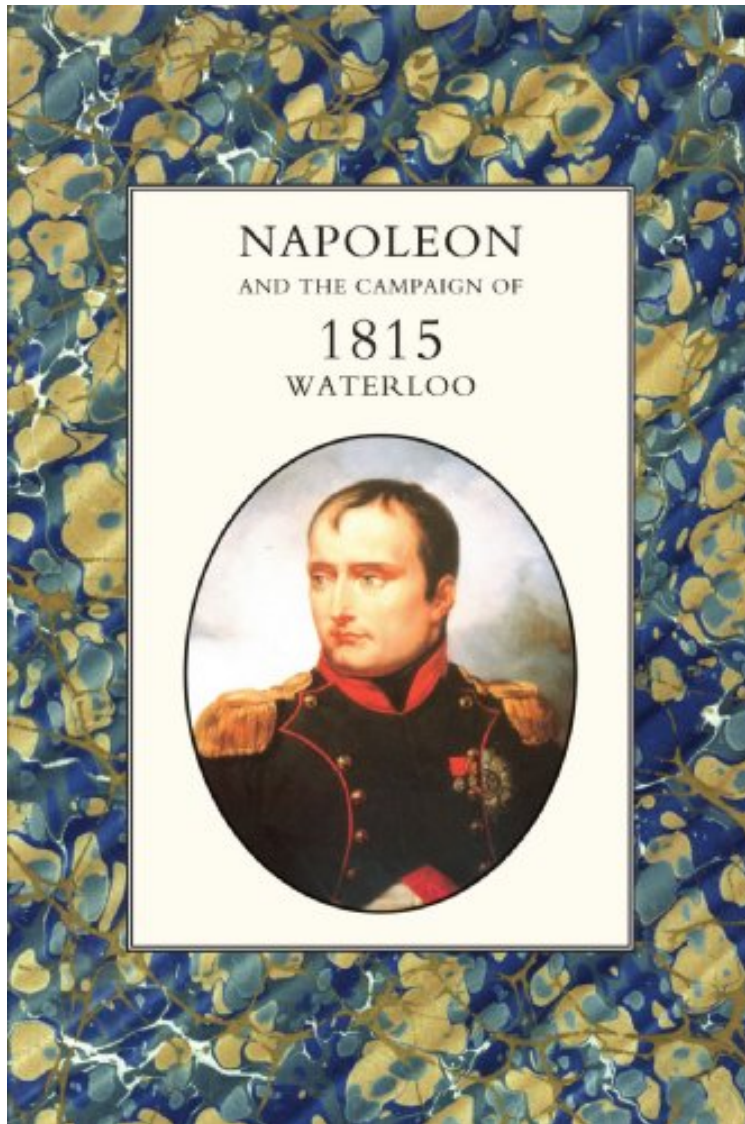


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Napoleon And The Campaign Of 1815 : Waterloo: Napoleon And The Campaign Of 1815 : Waterloo

Henry Houssaye

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the campaign of 1815 this is needed in every Napoleonic library. Absolutely pro French and "Napoleonic" view of the battle. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An Excellent History By John B. Sivertsen This is an incredible work of history. Over the last 47 years (beginning with Chandler's "The Campaigns of Napoleon") I have read many, many histories of the Napoleonic era and I am shocked that it took me this long to discover this treasure. This book is nearly 125 years old but if you let that discourage you then you are making a huge mistake. It is a fascinating work of history - 294 pages of text and, get this, 157 pages of Notes. If you skip the Notes then you will miss some very entertaining and enlightening details and comments. For those of you who read military history, I would liken Houssaye's work to that of Douglas Southall Freeman's "Lee's Lieutenants." Houssaye wrote 83 years after Waterloo (Freeman wrote 77 years after the American Civil War). There is an immediacy to their works that you don't see in today's histories because they each personally knew members of the generation that immediately followed their respective subjects and they each clearly walked the grounds when the grounds were still largely intact. They are not entirely "objective" (who is?) but their works each have a very entertaining "flavor" and "immediacy". Houssaye clearly admires Napoleon (and, writing in 1898, he dislikes the British and detests the Prussians) but he is no idle cheerleader. The study is filled with observations about what did work, what could have worked, what should have happened and what went wrong. He carefully describes the failures of Napoleon as well as his subordinates. This is a serious and objective work of history and the national pride that he periodically shows does not diminish the skill of his analysis. He debunks false theories - his rebuke at pages 279 and 293 of the theory that Napoleon was "ill" or "collapsing under strain" stands alone as worth the price of the book - he lays out in complete detail the physical activities of Napoleon over a number of days and essentially asks "Is this reflective of a sick man?" You will get a wonderfully vivid picture of the Waterloo campaign if you read side by side both Houssaye's book and the recent books by Andrew W. Field (a current serving officer in the British Army). Field brings a soldier's eye to the issues while Houssaye brings greater "immediacy" and "color" to the project. If you do this, you will need a good set of maps - these books are fairly poor in this respect. The maps in the books by David Hamilton-Williams and Peter Hofschroer are excellent for this purpose. All in all, an excellent, excellent work of history.

The Waterloo campaign, short as it was, was epic in its scope, encompassing as it did the downfall of the great Napoleon; the one and only clash between Bonaparte and Wellington, and the inauguration of a century (give or take short localized wars) of general European peace. And Waterloo has left plenty of material for historians to argue over: why did Wellington not aid his Prussian ally Blücher at Ligny? Why did Marshal Ney do nothing on the morning of Quatre-Bras? Why was Napoleon so uncharacteristically lethargic on the eve of Waterloo? What happened to Marshal Grouchy (deputed to keep off the Prussians) on the day of Waterloo? These and many other strategic matters are fully considered by Henry Houssaye in this second volume of his two-volume classic history of Napoleon's penultimate (1814, France) and ultimate campaigns. Illustrated by finely drawn battle maps, this is one that will keep Napoleonic addicts arguing for a long time yet.