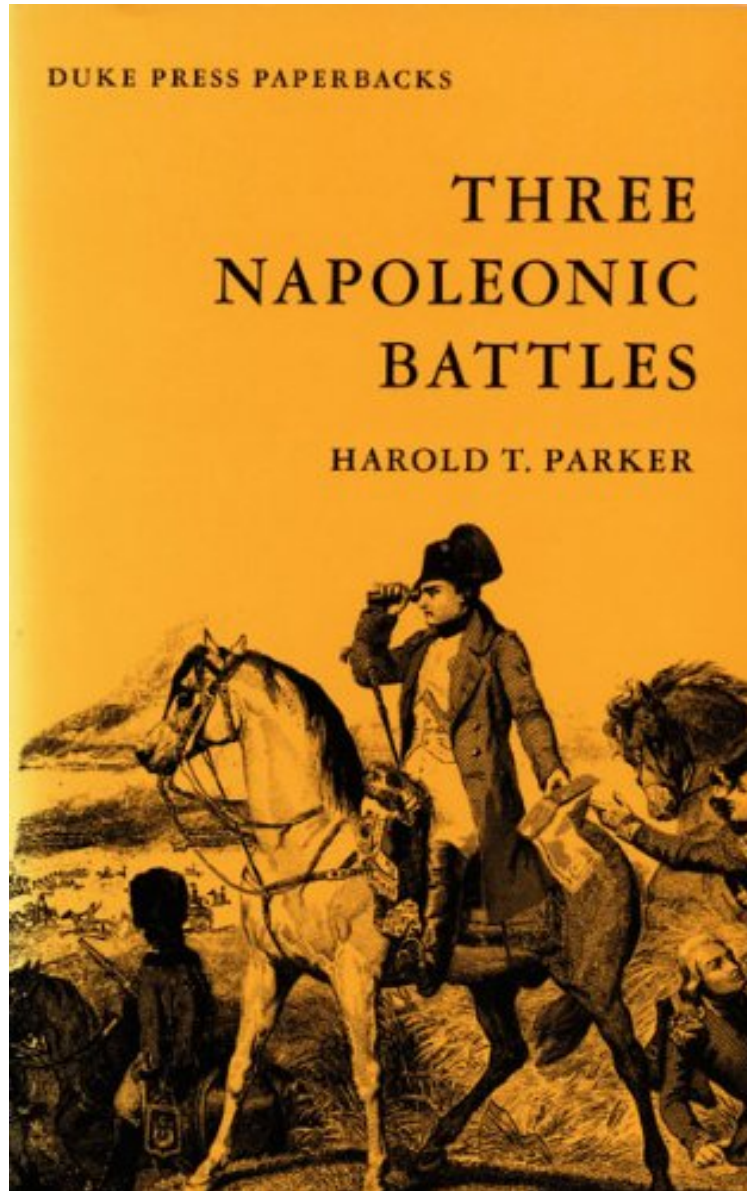


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Harold T. Parker

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Harold T. Parker : Three Napoleonic Battles (Duke Press Paperbacks) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Three Napoleonic Battles (Duke Press Paperbacks):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Decline of a Giant...By HMS Warspite Harold T. Parker, distinguished Duke University Professor of History, once published a unique study of the generalship of Napoleon Bonaparte at three key battles in his career. Unfortunately, the date of publication was 1944, and the world was

preoccupied with another and more immediate conflict. Fortunately for today's reader of military history, Duke University has made "Three Napoleonic Battles" available as a quality reprint. Parker studied the Battle of Friesland in 1807, the Battle of Aspern-Essling in 1809, and the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. In each case, his vantage point was somewhere just over Napoleon's shoulder. Parker's intent was to document the quality of Napoleon's generalship. Napoleon was at or near his peak in a superbly orchestrated victory over the Russian Army in 1807, rescued himself from a poor position of his own making in 1809, and arguably fumbled away an initially advantageous position in the Waterloo campaign in 1815. The strength of "Three Napoleonic Battles" is Parker's superb narrative, still clear, strong and highly readable all these years later. The content also holds up well despite recent advances in scholarship. "Three Napoleonic Battles" is highly recommended as an entertaining reading experience for students of the Napoleonic Wars. 6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A Fine Study of Napoleonic Warfare By Roger Kennedy While this is an older book, the perspective is quite clear and new. The author has decided to study three distinct Napoleonic battles in order to shed light on how the great Corsican waged war. The three battles in question are Friedland (1807, Aspern-Essling (1809) and of course Waterloo (1815). The author has singled these particular battles out as a means of surveying Napoleon's generalship over the years. At Friedland we see him at his best against the Russians. Here he wins a crushing victory as the Russians are pinned against a river and destroyed. His generalship is almost flawless on this occasion, and stolid Russian valor can do little to stem the Napoleonic tidal wave. Aspern-Essling finds him in a difficult position with a large Austrian army under the capable Archduke Charles now almost forcing the French back into the Danube. While the Emperor is not perhaps as sharp as he was just a few years earlier, his abilities still remain impressive. The beginnings of careless over-confidence in his character might perhaps be seen here as he accepts battle on less than advantageous terms. And finally we have Waterloo where in the opinion of the author Napoleon's skills have become greatly dulled. Here the master of deception has deceived himself. Napoleon has become less imaginative, and slower in his actions. He believes his own propaganda, so convinced is he that his past successes shall continue in the present. At Waterloo Napoleon was not only less capable as a commander than he had been eight years before at Friedland, but in the trio of Wellington, Bluecher and Gneisenau he was facing a formidable combination. These factors combined give us the debacle at Waterloo. The emphasis of this book is more on how Napoleon was able to control events on the battlefield. The book is not detailed on actual tactics employed, although it does give a vivid impression of what a Napoleonic battlefield was like. In the chapter on Aspern-Essling we get some idea of the human cost of these battles by looking at the surgery of the period. Surgeon-General Larrey was perhaps one of the most gifted doctors of the time. Excerpts from his diary provide chilling evidence on the suffering soldiers endured from their wounds. The medical techniques of the period, crude by today's standard, were nonetheless evolving with such a brilliant practitioner. The losses sustained by the Guard at Aspern-Essling from the galling Austrian bombardment illustrates that the main killer on the Napoleonic battlefield was the artillery. In sum this is a masterful book, providing as it does a mini tour-de-force of warfare in the period, and providing in-depth analysis of the great Corsican Ogre who made it all happen. These battles have certainly been covered before, but the approach here is unique. As stated above, even though this book was written some years ago, there is nothing dated about its content. This work stands right along side with Chandler and Duffy on the period.

This narrative account of three Napoleonic battles adheres rather closely to the Aristotelian configuration of evolving tragedy. The historian succeeds in presenting herein events and character not only in historical reality but also in unities employed by the artist or tragedian. For a beginning of this lively, military story, Harold T. Parker chooses a portrayal of Napoleon at the height of his power, the battle of Friedland. The middle episode is concerned with Napoleon in his first serious personal check, the battle of Aspern-Essling. To complete the unity and to conclude the tragic progression, the author resurveys the episode of Napoleon's final defeat at the battle of Waterloo.