



With Napoleon's Guns: The Military Memoirs of an Officer of the First Empire

Jean Auguste Noel

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In 1795 - the year Napoleon Bonaparte was appointed commander-in-chief in Italy - the seventeen-year-old Jean-Nicolas-Auguste Noel entered the Artillery School at Chalons. A year later, with Napoleon proclaiming himself the liberator of Italy, Noel was appointed second lieutenant in the 8th Regiment of Horse Artillery. Written in 1850, *With Napoleon's Guns* is his remarkable memoir of twenty years in the Emperor's service. A trained artilleryman himself, Napoleon dramatically transformed the role of the artillery from a cumbersome and tactically limited force into fluid, independent and highly mobile trains d'artillerie. This new organisation required fresh new officers - officers with intelligence who could act under their own initiative: officers such as Noel. From the optimism of the early years in Italy, through the privations of the retreat from Moscow and the horrors of the Battle of Leipzig, to the disillusionment of the Emperor's decline, Noel charts both his personal career and, at close hand, the trajectory of the First Empire with frankness and percipience.

Based on the journal he kept from his cadetship at Chalons, *With Napoleon's Guns* is a dignified and revealing account of an officer at the heart of Napoleon's army. In 1795 - the year Napoleon Bonaparte was appointed commander-in-chief in Italy - the seventeen-year-old Jean-Nicolas-Auguste Noel entered the Artillery School at Chalons. A year later, with Napoleon proclaiming himself the liberator of Italy, Noel was appointed second lieutenant in the 8th Regiment of Horse Artillery. Written in 1850, *With Napoleon's Guns* is his remarkable memoir of twenty years in the Emperor's service. A trained artilleryman himself, Napoleon dramatically transformed the role of the artillery from a cumbersome and tactically limited force into fluid, independent and highly mobile trains d'artillerie. This new organisation required fresh new officers - officers with intelligence who could act under their own initiative: officers such as Noel. From the optimism of the early years in Italy, through the privations of the retreat from Moscow and the horrors of the Battle of Leipzig, to the disillusionment of the Emperor's decline, Noel charts both his personal career and, at close hand, the trajectory of the First Empire with frankness and percipience.

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