

To Napoleon, Emperor of France

Mon Emperor,

Today the Army of Italy faced the might of the invading Austrian Army under Archduke John to the north east of the town of Sacile. Last night, the Austrians seized the town of Pordenone and the villages of Talponedo, Porcia and Palse from our outposts. The commanders of these outposts must be disciplined for the lack of preparedness when they return to France, for not only did we lose 3 battalions of infantry but also a third of a regiment of cavalry which we could ill afford to lose.

I was South of Palse with the 1st French Division under General Seras and the 1st Italian Division under General Severoli. The ground here was unsuitable for rapid movement of the artillery and we lacked cavalry support so I ordered the guns to move on our left flank over more hospitable terrain.

General Barbour was encamped in a wood north east of Sacile and I sent him orders to march to the sound of the guns to surprise any Austrians who managed to reach the eastern bank of La Piasa before I reached my initial objective which was the village of Pieve.

I left General Grenier in charge of the left flank with Generals Broussier, Saluc and Sorbier to guard the natural defence of the river La Piasa from Fontanafredda towards Sacile. He was also to guard our northern flank from Fontanafredda to Vogonovo in the west to prevent the Austrians outflanking the Army and seizing Sacile.

All the army's cavalry was here, ready to exploit any weakness in the Austrian position.

I decided not to attack Palse since it appeared to be heavily defended by light troops and enemy cavalry and would have left my army divided. Instead I decided to drive for Pieve which was as yet unoccupied and to use this as an anchor point for the army linking up with Broussier in Fontanafredda so we could drive the Austrians from the field and recapture the lost villages as we advanced.. General Grenier was ordered to defend Vogonovo and Fontanafredda, prevent the Austrians from cutting our route to Sacile and, should the opportunity arise, to seize Roncho.

The 1st French Division reached Pieve at the same time as the first Austrian battalions and was able to drive them back and seize the village. The Austrians brought up more battalions, and with the advantage of the roads, artillery pieces to bombard the village. Cavalry also advanced from the north east and the village was a scene of fierce fighting.

Meanwhile Archduke John committed a large portion of his army to attacking from north of Fontanafredda to break our lines and drive through to Sacile. Aggressive defence by our cavalry and infantry, with the support of strategically placed artillery, broke this attack and routed many enemy battalions from the field, leaving the Austrian left flank exposed.

Around Pieve, the effect of the Austrian artillery began to tell and as more Austrian troops arrived the 1st Division was forced to pull back. Their withdraw to the western bank of the La Guzza was covered by the 1st Italian Division who are to be recommended for the steadfastness in the face of the Austrian cavalry and light infantry that advanced from both north and south of Pieve.

The remnants of the 1st Division with the 1st Italian Division formed a defensive line along the western bank of La Guzza, securing our right flank.

The artillery of these Divisions had secured the left flank of this part of the army during this time, reducing the moral of the Austrians who faced them with deadly fire. With the cavalry freed from defending Fontanafredda, it exploited this success by charging the centre of the Austrian line and breaking through. With their left flank broken and their centre pierced the Austrians were in a precarious position but nightfall aided their withdraw.

Despite not retaking the lost villages and towns on this day, we have inflicted a severe blow on Archduke John's Army we will pursue him to ensure that he is unable to threaten Italy again.

I remain your obedient servant,

Prince Eugene de Beauharnais