After blundering into the Nine Years War in 1688, it took Louis XIV almost another two years to build the most extensive coalition of opponents he would ever face. Increasingly desperate, the king implemented a variety of strategies and tactics designed to extricate himself from the morass. Following the campaigns of 1691 and 1692 featuring the dramatic royal sieges of Mons and Namur that failed to crack the alliance, the king concluded he must find some way out. In 1693 he raised his largest army ever, created seven new marshals, promoted 126 general officers, and then declared he would personally command in the Low Countries. He established the Royal Order of Saint-Louis to recognize and reward exceptional service and valor. Throughout the campaign he repeatedly reminded his commanders that 1693 had to be viewed as the year of decision.¹

Still, why call 1693 the year of battles? After all, hardly a campaign had gone by without major battles. The bloody

¹ John A. Lynn, *The Wars of Louis XIV 1667–1714* (London: Longman, 1999), 233, for the "official" total of over 400,000 men for 1693; for one example of the king's pressure on his generals, see Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, Series A1 Volume 1198 (hereafter SHAT A11198), 322-25, Louis XIV to Marshal Lorge, 15 May 1693, "I earnestly desire . . . that you not regard this campaign as an ordinary campaign, . . . but as in some sense a campaign of decision and crisis."
Steinkerque in 1692 reminds us that battles were not rare and occasionally eagerly sought by commanders. Nor was 1693 without its sieges, notably Rosas, Huy, and Charleroi. But this year Louis XIV, his advisors, and his generals sought open field battle with greater intensity than usual. We will consider French moves to engage in four "battles," two that took place and two that did not. The first, had it occurred, would have given the Sun King a chance to lead his army personally in battle. The second, Neerwinden, is the bloody clash which, in some sense, replaced that non-battle but with the king far from the scene. The third is the non-battle enthusiastically sought but then ignominiously avoided by the Dauphin and his counselors in Germany. The fourth, Marsaglia, "gloriously" preserved the French foothold in northern Italy and barely salvaged a campaign that sputtered out inconclusively despite field victories and successful sieges.

During the winter Louis and his staff, particularly his personal military advisor, the Marquis de Chamlay, and the war secretary, the Marquis de Barbezieux, in concert with theater commanders fleshed out their intentions for 1693. They developed unusually aggressive goals for every theater except Italy. For Germany, Louis increased the size of the Duke de Lorge's army so he could launch an early siege of Heidelberg followed by a swift advance toward Heilbronn on the upper Neckar and then spend the remainder of the campaign moving about in the region, spreading alarm and levying contributions. He hoped to encourage the Turks to continue their war with the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold and to convince south German princes to opt for neutrality. The king planned to strengthen Marshal Noailles' army in Catalonia so that he could besiege Barcelona, but he eventually reduced those forces and shifted Noailles' objective to a siege of the closer
fortress of Rosas.  

For his "own" campaign in the Low Countries, the French monarch developed the most audacious of all goals, the complete destruction by field battle of William III's army. He hoped this would lead to the disintegration of the grand coalition ranged against him and end the conflict. Louis would have two armies at his disposal, one under his orders and the other under the Duke de Luxembourg, totaling approximately 135,000 men, at least 60,000 larger than the Allied field force.

On 18 May 1693, Louis XIV set off for the field. But then the rain began. Six days later the king and his sodden entourage arrived at Cambrai. Then Louis began to suffer

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2 For Jules-Louis Bolé, Marquis de Chamlay, see my Ph.D. dissertation, "The Marquis de Chamlay, Friend and Confidential Advisor to Louis XIV: The Early Years, 1650-1691" (University of California, Santa Barbara, 1972). For discussions on the Italian theater, see SHAT A11227, no. 1, Mémoire sur la Campagne de l'année 1693, 12 Oct. 1692 by Nicolas Catinat; SHAT A11135, 263, Louis XIV to Catinat, 8 Nov. 1692; and SHAT A11227, no. 6, Catinat to Barbezieux, 31 Jan. 1693. For the German theater, see SHAT, A11183, no. 140, Reflexions sur les projets que se peuvent executer la Campagne prochaine en Allemagne au plus grand avantage du service du Roy, 18 Dec. 1692, in Chamlay's hand. For Catalonia, SHAT A11198, 421, Louis XIV to Catinat, 7 Feb. 1693, tells the Italian theater commander that he is scaling back the numbers for Catalonia to increase those in Flanders.

3 The commonly accepted goal of Louis XIV's aborted Low Countries campaign of 1693 was a royal siege of Liège with Luxembourg providing a covering army as at Mons and Namur earlier. This is the story told in the earliest narratives and repeated with few exceptions down to the present. The industrious but erratic Pierre de Ségur, Le Tapissier de Notre Dame: Les dernières années du Maréchal de Luxembourg, 1678-1695 (Paris: C. Lévy, 1903), seems to have been the first to come across "conclusive" evidence for the correct view found in the bitter correspondence between Luxembourg and the king in the weeks after Louis left the field.
from a neck inflammation. When he arrived at Le Quesnoy, he delayed movements for several days hoping for dry weather. There on the morning of 28 May a courier arrived from Marshal Lorge bearing almost unbelievable tidings. Heidelberg had fallen! The siege had hardly begun when the German defenders panicked, lost control of the town to French pillage and debauchery, and within hours surrendered the citadel. Moreover, the marshal announced he was advancing immediately toward Heilbronn to attack either the city or the Imperial commander Prince Louis of Baden's army. Never had Lorge seemed so in tune with the king's wishes!  

Instantly, Louis XIV thought of altering strategy. Whether it was the combination of muddy roads, physical agony, and the memory of the rain and pain of 1692 at Namur or the brilliant prospects opening on the Rhine, within twelve hours the king seriously considered abandoning his original plans to seek a battle with William III. Rather, he contemplated sending a portion of his army to strengthen Lorge, leaving the remainder with Luxembourg, and returning to court. The next day, Louis wrote praising Marshal Lorge's accomplishments extravagantly and hinting at grander things: "It may happen that affairs in the Low Countries will turn in such a manner that I will find myself able to send you a considerable

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reinforcement of infantry and cavalry. I cannot be more precise until I see the direction things take here.\textsuperscript{5}

But Louis still acted as if he were only interested in marching against his enemies in the Low Countries. Since his pattern was to begin a campaign with some flashy siege, speculation centered on this year's target. William of Orange, who quite logically thought such a massive deployment could be aimed only at Liège or Brussels, sent a small detachment to support Liège, while he dug in at the abbey of Parck just south of Louvain to protect Brussels with a force barely half the size of Louis's two armies. Had William known the French plan, he could not have placed himself better. Covered by the river Dyle and its tributaries on the right and sheltered in the front and on the left by woods, the Allied position was virtually unassailable. If Louis needed further reasons for changing plans, William's superb emplacement tipped the scales. Now he was sure that greater gains could be made in Germany than in the Low Countries and could send Lorge the good news.\textsuperscript{6}

When Louis arrived at Gembloux on 7 June, he dispatched a special courier to Lorge announcing the decision to send him massive reinforcements under the command of the Dauphin. He stated his intention to enable Lorge to "make so powerful an impression that the princes of the Empire and even the Emperor will be obliged to make peace." Later in the evening, Chamlay composed another royal missive emphasizing the importance of acting

\textsuperscript{5} Ib\textsuperscript{d}.
even before the Dauphin's arrival, concluding, "my son's glory, the reputation of my arms, the success of the campaign, and maybe even peace depends on this important and successful occurrence." Yet at Gembloux the royal entourage expectantly awaited a march toward some action as the king declared he would review both his armies.7

Indeed, Louis XIV ostentatiously passed most of the next day inspecting the troops. But, once the review was over, he summoned his generals and the Dauphin to a council of war and disclosed the dramatic changes. He was sending about one-third of his force including the elite heavy cavalry unit, the Gendarmerie, under the Dauphin's command to reinforce Lorge, leaving the remainder of the royal army to merge with Luxembourg's. Louis himself would soon head back to court. Consternation broke out instantly, its chorus led by Luxembourg. He argued that Louis would never again have such a disparity of forces in his favor, that his armies were champing at the bit to come to grips with the Allies, and that chimerical gains in Germany could not match the potential in the Low Countries. But Louis declared the decision irrevocable, the opportunity in Germany too inviting to pass up, William entrenched in an unapproachable position, and besides, he had already told Lorge reinforcements were coming his way.8

7 Ibid., 339-40, Louis XIV to Lorge, 7 June 1693, in Pinsonneau's hand; Ibid., 341-42, Louis XIV to Lorge, 7 June 1693, in Chamlay's hand. Dangeau, Journal, 4:303-4, for the two armies' expectations.
The next day, Louis met with Luxembourg, Barbezieux, and Chamlay to develop new plans for the Low Countries. Luxembourg would advance his strengthened army close to William III's camp and, if possible, seek some means to attack him. Luxembourg again tried to persuade the king to return to the original strategy. At one point Louis raised a "compromise" possibility of having the Dauphin's troops quickly attack Huy and then both armies march against Liège before sending the Dauphin on to Germany. But Chamlay insisted that besieging Huy would take too long and argued the impracticality of marching against Liège. The king would have "the shame of appearing before Liège and not daring to attack it." That brought Louis back into line and the dispute fizzled into a discussion of tactical maneuvers.  

Louis XIV rode out of Gembloux early on Wednesday morning, 10 June 1693, foregoing the "battle" with William III and leaving the field for the last time. Two days later the Dauphin and Marshal Boufflers set out towards the Rhine.

written in mid-to-late June permit us to reconstruct the major features of the debates on 8 and 9 June 1693: SHAT A11198, 1-4, 5, 219-21, 6-8, 20-21, and 22-32, Louis XIV to Luxembourg, 11, 13, 15, 19, 23, and 24 June 1693; Ibid., 9-19, Mémoire Important concernant les Affaires de Flandres, 19 June 1693, by Chamlay; SHAT A11453, no. 9, Mémoire sur les Affaires de Flandres a l'occasion d'une Lettre de Monsieur le Duc de Luxembourg au Roy, 24 June 1693, by Chamlay; SHAT A11205, nos. 129 and 167, Luxembourg to Louis XIV, 22 and 28 June 1693; and Ibid., no. 130, Réponse au Mémoire de M de Chamlay, [22 June 1693]. Within the arguments, pleas, diatribes, etc. contained in this contentious set of correspondence are numerous statements about the original goals of the 1693 royal campaign.

5 SHAT A11198, 1-4, Louis XIV to Luxembourg, 11 June 1693, reiterates the strategy revisions. SHAT A11205, no. 167, Luxembourg to Louis XIV, 28 June 1693, recapitulates portions of the argument at Gembloux, citing "les propres mots de M de Chamlay."
with twenty-seven infantry battalions and fifty-five cavalry squadrons, just under a total of 28,000 men bringing the numbers at Marshal Lorge's disposal to 80,000, the largest French force ever yet committed to the German theater.

As the king's entourage endured the two-week deluge of thunderstorms accompanying their return, relations between Louis and Luxembourg almost degenerated into open warfare. The duke advanced his force toward William's army as planned, but once near the Allied entrenchments, Luxembourg reported that forage problems made it unlikely he could maintain his position as long as the enemies. The king accepted this assessment with unconcealed gloom but pondered what Luxembourg should do when forced to move. At Louis's request, on 20 June Chamlay composed a twenty-page memoir, forwarded to the commander, proposing a siege of Huy as a means of luring William into eastern Brabant where he might be brought to battle under conditions favorable to the French.\(^\text{10}\)

Chamlay's memoir struck a raw nerve in Luxembourg who had suggested different moves. He responded with a letter to the king and a memorandum of his own attacking Chamlay's ideas point by point. He justifiably alleged that Chamlay (and, by implication, the king) wanted him to do what Louis XIV had originally planned but with one-third fewer troops. Luxembourg's attack aroused a bitterly defensive reaction in Chamlay who wrote notes in the margin of the marshal's letter and drafted another memoir of his own for the king, reaffirming his contention that only a siege of Huy would lure William into eastern Brabant. At

\(^\text{10}\) SHAT A11205, no. 94, Luxembourg to Louis XIV, 17 June 1693; SHAT A11198, 6-8, Louis XIV to Luxembourg, 19 June 1693; Ibid., 9-19, Mémoire Important concernant les Affaires de Flandres, 20 June 1693, in Chamlay's hand.
this point Louis XIV stepped into the debate and instructed Chamlay to draft a "royal" letter commanding Luxembourg to besiege Huy. The marshal deferred, concluding his obsequious reply with "the reasons you took the pain to tell me for this are all excellent." As it turned out, he would not regret following the royal will; by adopting Chamlay's strategy Luxembourg would bring William III to battle at Neerwinden a month later.11

During July relations between Louis XIV and Luxembourg improved. The marshal diligently prepared to attack Huy, and the king graciously praised his actions and continued to encourage him to seek battle with William. Even when they discovered that William might detach the Duke of Württemberg with a significant force toward Maritime Flanders, Louis expressed confidence in the marshal and only mandated that he be prepared to send Marshal Joyeuse with proportionate strength to shadow Württemberg's moves.12

When William learned that Luxembourg had invested Huy on 19 July, he marched immediately to its relief having already dispatched the Duke of Württemberg's force of some 15,000 men away to the west. But when he heard

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11 SHAT A11205, no. 129, Luxembourg to Louis XIV, 22 June 1693, and Ibid., no. 130, Réponse au Mémoire de M de Chamlay, by Luxembourg, with Chamlay's mostly caustic marginal commentary. SHAT A11453, no. 9, Mémoire sur les Affaires de Flandres a l'occasion d'une Lettre de Monsieur le Duc de Luxembourg au Roy, 24 June 1693, in Chamlay's hand. SHAT A11198, 22-32, Louis XIV to Luxembourg, 24 June 1693, 22-29 in Chamlay's hand and 30-32 in Pinsonneau's hand; SHAT A11205, no. 167, Luxembourg to Louis XIV, 28 June 1693.

12 SHAT A11198, 42-43, Louis XIV to Luxembourg, 3 July 1693; Ibid., 44-45, Louis XIV to Luxembourg, 6 July 1693; Ibid., 51-52, Louis XIV to Luxembourg, 10 July 1693; Ibid., 55-58, Louis XIV to Luxembourg, 20 July 1693.
of Huy's fall on 23 July, William halted and debated whether to follow Württemberg or remain in Brabant in case the French now attacked Liège. Indeed, Luxembourg advanced some units in a feint against Liège. When his scouts reported that William had fallen for the bait and was moving east, Luxembourg reversed his direction and engaged in a forced march on 28 July to intercept the Allies. By sunset units of the French army of some 80,000 men were in contact with William's force of around 50,000 effectives who, caught with their backs to a tributary of the river Gete, spent the night fortifying the two villages of Neerwinden and Landen. The next day, after a bitterly fought struggle in which the key villages were captured, lost, and recaptured several times, Luxembourg's army eventually achieved complete victory at a heavy cost in dead and wounded (some 7,000-8,000) but inflicting twice its total casualties on the Allies while seizing the field of combat, scores of battle standards, and the entire Allied artillery train. Thus, the Duke de Luxembourg seemed to accomplish in the battle of Neerwinden what Louis XIV originally hoped to do personally in 1693: defeat William III decisively on the field of combat.  

As it turned out, the "decisiveness" of Neerwinden fell far short of the French king's expectations. By summoning the Duke of Württemberg back from Maritime Flanders, William quickly replaced his immediate manpower losses. For his part, Louis congratulated Luxembourg and expressed sorrow over the heavy casualties. Soon, however, the king wondered why his commander had done nothing

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13 Saint-Simon, 1:240-64; Lynn, 234-35, gives the best estimate of numbers of combatants and casualties; SHAT A11207, no. 15, Luxembourg to Louis XIV, 3 Aug. 1693, tells the number of cannon captured; and SHAT A11198, 70-72, Louis XIV to Luxembourg, 2 Aug. 1693, in Louis XIV's hand, gives the king's formal reaction.
to take immediate advantage of such an overwhelming victory. Luxembourg claimed it boiled down to the inability to provide sufficient food for his soldiers, who had made a forced march to trap the enemy army, and a lack of horses to move cannon, both his own and the great number captured from the Allies. He did say rather sheepishly that he would soon dispatch cavalry into enemy territory to levy contributions. The disappointed monarch came up with his own answer to the question of how to take advantage of Neerwinden. On 5 August he proposed besieging Charleroi to eliminate a strategic salient into his lands and provide more security against winter raids. As it happened, his letter crossed one from Luxembourg recommending the same thing. Thus, the king and his commander agreed on how to profit from the spectacular victory: a small acquisition in territory and a slight rationalizing of the frontier. The earlier hope of dissolving the league ranged against Louis XIV had itself quickly dissolved.14

Meanwhile, the Dauphin marched toward Germany to join Marshal Lorge who was supposed to be moving on Heilbronn and removing Louis of Baden from interference with French plans for the area. Unfortunately, the king learned during the soggy trek home that things were not quite so simple. On 11 June Lorge reported the Germans on the opposite side of the Neckar from his own force and in position to block any assault on Heilbronn. The marshal

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14 SHAT A11207, no. 1, Luxembourg to Louis XIV, 1 Aug. 1693; SHAT A11198, 73-77, Louis XIV to Luxembourg, 5 Aug. 1693; SHAT A11207, no. 33, Luxembourg to Louis XIV, 6 Aug. 1693. See Jamel Ostwald, "The 'Decisive' Battle of Ramillies, 1706: Prerequisites for Decisiveness in Early Modern Warfare," *The Journal of Military History* 64 (July 2000): 649-78, for another example of a less than "decisive," though smashing, victory—and suggestions for what was necessary for "decisiveness."
merely cannonaded the German camp and pulled back southwestward into the mountainous Bergstrasse region. Lorge explained his withdrawal as dictated by the need not to consume all the forage before the Dauphin arrived. Louis was not pleased with these excuses, and Lorge's letter has a note on the top of the first page in Barbezieux's hand reading, "the king wants Monsieur de Chamlay to draft a very short projected response to this letter for seven-thirty this evening." Along with the draft reply Chamlay wrote a fifteen-page memoir laced with sarcasm and arguments that other maneuvers would have been preferable. Still, the king and his advisor moved on to what Lorge should do before the Dauphin's force arrived.15

Armed with a letter of personal accreditation from Louis XIV instructing Lorge that Chamlay would be speaking for him, the king's advisor left Versailles on 7 July and reached the army in Germany a week later. He initially reported that Marshals Lorge, Boufflers, and Choiseul and the Dauphin were all cooperative and enthusiastic about the campaign's goals, seeking to attack Louis of Baden and take Heilbronn quickly. But as the French advanced, things began to look different. Reinforcements had reached the Imperial general who was still camped just south of Heilbronn. On 30 July Lorge wrote the king that, "one should not delude oneself that their army is not extremely strong. Still, Monseigneur [the

15 SHAT A11214, no. 19, Lorge to Louis XIV, 11 June 1693, with the Barbezieux note at the top of the first page; SHAT A11198, 363-65, Louis XIV to Lorge, 18 June 1693, all but the first paragraph in Chamlay's hand; Ibid., 366-73, Mémoire sur une lettre de M. le Mal. de Lorge au Roy, écrite de Britten le 11e Juin 1693, in Chamlay's hand; SHAT A11214, no. 57, Lorge to Louis XIV, 23 June 1693; and SHAT A11198, 384-86, 27 June 1693, Louis XIV to Lorge, in Chamlay's hand.
Dauphin] tells us that Your Majesty wants us to fight them, strong or weak, even if they are advantageously placed. For me, I will not oppose this at all, desiring only to obey completely Your Majesty's orders."

The Dauphin's general staff, consisting of Lorge, Boufflers, and Choiseul along with Chamlay reconnoitered the Imperial camp on 1 August and found it virtually impenetrable. Dense woods covered most of the front behind a stream, and the center behind the woods rose up to a high promontory capable of holding a large number of troops and cannon. Deep ravines protected both right and left wings, and behind the ravines the Germans had constructed numerous entrenchments. The following day the French cautiously probed the enemy position and discovered the topography even more difficult than previously thought. Lorge, the other two marshals, Chamlay, and the Dauphin were in total agreement: Louis of Baden could be neither attacked nor dislodged from his position. The next day, 3 August, the Dauphin's advisors discussed alternatives and could come up with nothing better than simply moving south to Stuttgart and levying contributions in the region until they withdrew to winter quarters.

These timid counsels seemed appropriate until around 8:30 p.m. when a courier from Marshal Luxembourg arrived bearing news of Neerwinden. Now matters assumed

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16 Ibid., 388, Louis XIV to Lorge, 8 [7] July 1693; SHAT A11214, no. 107, Chamlay to Louis XIV, 14 July 1693; and Ibid., no. 153, Lorge to Louis XIV, 30 July 1693.
17 SHAT A11215, no. 2, Saint-Pouenges to Barbezieux, 3 Aug. 1693; and Ibid., no. 1, Chamlay to Louis XIV, 3 Aug. 1693, in which Chamlay reports attaching a map drawn by his aide, François de Laprée, so the king could see the impossibility of attacking the German position.
an entirely different complexion for the Dauphin's 
entourage; dared they withdraw meekly and court the 
obvious comparison with their compatriots in Flanders? 
What shame for the elite Gendarmerie who had left the 
Low Countries to march with the Dauphin towards glory in 
Germany! What scorn from their brothers and cousins and 
rivals! In desperation Marshal Lorge contrived a makeshift 
scheme to force Louis of Baden out of his superb position. 
He proposed to send the cavalry across the Neckar where it 
could attack the likely route of a German retreat, advance 
the infantry beyond the stream separating the two armies, 
and spend the night entrenching. Then the French artillery 
would begin firing on the enemy camp. Lorge hoped that 
an intensive bombardment would force the Germans to 
withdraw. Hesitantly, the Dauphin agreed to put the plan 
into motion the following evening, 4 August. Chamlay, 
who reported the scheme to Louis, added a not-too-
encouraging note that no one could come up with a better 
idea.18

No sooner had the courier left the camp than second 
thoughts began to trouble the minds of the passive staff. 
Boufflers, Choiseul, Chamlay, and even the Dauphin all 
concluded that Lorge's plan was foolhardy, but no one 
wanted to broach it with him. Finally, at the Dauphin's 
insistence, just before the infantry was scheduled to 
advance, Boufflers presented Lorge with the united plea 
that the marshal revise his "advice" to Monseigneur and 
abort the maneuver. In the face of what amounted to an 
uprising among his officers supported by his nominal 
superior, Lorge had no choice but to cancel the operation. 
This habitually cautious commander had just been rescued

18 Ibid., no. 8, Saint-Pouenges to Barbezieux, 4 Aug. 1693; Ibid., 
no. 9, Chamlay to Louis XIV, 4 Aug. 1693, noon; and Ibid., no. 12, 
Boufflers to Barbezieux, 4 Aug. 1693.
from audacity bordering on idiocy. Still, the non-battle of Helibronn had major consequences: it left the French little option but to withdraw into the Bergstrasse and launch a few raids against towns and villages in Swabia until saboteurs burned their grain depot and ovens at Weihingen a few weeks later and forced a further withdrawal into the Rhine valley, effectively and humiliatingly terminating any hopes for success in Germany in 1693.¹⁹

In Italy, the theater that Louis XIV and his advisors expected to remain quiet, developments in late July dramatically refocused French attention. Sudden advances into Alpine valleys by Savoyard, German, and Spanish units forced the startled Marshal Catinat to withdraw his field army from the vicinity of the French-held fortified city of Pinerolo at the edge of the Piedmont plain and leave the place to its own defenses. On 26 July he sent an express courier informing the king that Victor Amadeus II, the Duke of Savoy, had invested and seemed likely to besiege Pinerolo. Should he attempt to relieve the city? If so, he required significant reinforcements, at least forty cavalry squadrons and ten-to-twelve infantry battalions. He projected arrival before Pinerolo in late September. Louis received Catinat's dispatch on 31 July as he awaited word from Luxembourg and Lorge on the battles he was expecting them to fight. He reacted forcefully to the Allied challenge in Italy and the same day sent orders to Marshal Noailles in Catalonia to suspend offensive operations and

¹⁹ Ibid., no. 10, Chamlay to Louis XIV, 4 Aug. 1693, 6 p.m.; Ibid., no. 12, Boufflers to Barbezieux, 4 Aug. 1693; and Ibid., Lorge to Louis XIV, 7 Aug. 1693. Ibid., no. 56, Lorge to Louis XIV, 28 Aug. 1693 tells of the destruction at Weihingen the previous day.
send his best units to Catinat.\textsuperscript{20}

Events in Italy provided the men in Germany an opportunity to salvage their reputations. Chamlay vigorously agreed with the decision to relieve Pinerolo and pressed Louis to send a portion of Monseigneur's army to Italy. The French retreat from Swabia could be rationalized as a move designed to ensure victory at the gates of Pinerolo. The king initially resisted, still hoping his son could accomplish something in the region, but soon reversed himself. Responding to Chamlay's lament that the Gendarmerie would have been an ideal unit to participate in Catinat's relief effort if it had received orders a week earlier, on 23 August Louis ordered his elite cavalry to ride instantly towards Piedmont.\textsuperscript{21}

By the end of August the Allies had overrun the Pinerolo outwork known as Sainte-Brigitte but, rather than beginning a formal siege, maintained a small force investing the city and marched up the Pragelas valley burning villages that had provided supplies to the French. This action gave Catinat time to gather the troops Louis was sending from Catalonia, Roussillon, and Dauphiné, and, of course, the Gendarmerie racing from Germany. Late in September Victor Amadeus returned to Pinerolo, chose not to undertake a full siege, and began to bombard the city. He soon discovered Catinat's army approaching, lifted the siege, and on 4 October headed toward Turin only

\textsuperscript{20} SHAT A11227, no. 104, Catinat to Louis XIV, 21 July 1693; Ibid., no. 118, Catinat to Louis XIV, 26 July 1693; and SHAT A11230, no. 64, Noailles to Louis XIV, 7 Aug. 1693.

\textsuperscript{21} SHAT A11215, no. 13, Chamlay to Louis XIV, 5 Aug. 1693; SHAT A12538, no. 233, Louis XIV to Chamlay, 12 Aug. 1693; SHAT A11215, no. 39, Chamlay to Louis XIV, 19 Aug. 1693; and SHAT A11198, fol. 401, Louis XIV to Lorge, 23 Aug. 1693.
to find the French blocking the route to his capital.  

Marshal Catinat and his army more than fulfilled their sovereign's expectations. At the battle of Marsaglia, fought in the plain about halfway between Turin and Pinerolo, some 40,000 French triumphed over the Allied force of 36,000 Italians, Germans, and Spanish in one of the most lopsided victories of the war. On the right, Catinat led the infantry in a bayonet charge against the Allied foot. On the left, the Gendarmerie now commanded by the Duke de Vendôme rode into legend as it blunted the charge of the Imperial cavalry, rolled up the right side of the enemy line, and sent the Allied cavalry into headlong flight. Much of the enemy infantry remained and died on the bloody battlefield. The French lost around 3,000 against Allied casualties of 9,000 to 10,000 killed and wounded and another 2,000 taken prisoner.

News reached the jubilant king and his court at Fontainebleau on the evening of 9 October. Now what? The next day Chamlay drafted a royal response seeking as fruits of victory a siege of Cuneo some fifty miles south of Turin and establishing winter quarters for Catinat's army in Piedmont. To emphasize the need to follow up on the battle, Louis dispatched Chamlay as his personal spokesman and observer. Like Luxembourg two months earlier, Catinat discovered it to be almost as burdensome for a French general to win a battle as to lose one. The

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22 SHAT A11198, 547-48, Louis XIV to Catinat, 26 Sept. 1693, in Chamlay's hand; and Dangeau, 4:349-68.  
marshal sent Lieutenant-General Larray to explain the massive problems involved in further enterprises on the Italian side of the Alps so late in the season. All Larray did was convince Louis that Catinat was dragging his heels. The king responded on 17 October by explicitly ordering a siege of Cuneo.\(^\text{24}\)

Chamlay reached Catinat's camp full of zeal and primed to persuade the marshal that he must besiege Cuneo and winter troops in Piedmont. Catinat agreed with each of the advisor's arguments but adroitly enumerated the difficulties. Chamlay quailed under the marshal's reasoning and quickly determined that nothing further could be done in Piedmont. Then Louis' courier arrived with the specific order to besiege Cuneo. Chamlay, who was now convinced this would be folly, was appalled at Catinat's resolution that the king's express order removed all thought of arguing with Louis. Then, as earlier in the Low Countries, it began raining. Even though Catinat would not ask Louis XIV for permission to cancel siege preparations, he had no objections to Chamlay sharing his reservations with the king. As the rain continued, Chamlay departed on 26 October, carrying his most unwelcome tidings. Two days later, from the vantage of snow-covered Briançon, he composed a desperate plea to Louis urgently beseeching him to allow Catinat to abandon siege preparations and start withdrawing his troops across the Alps while that was still possible. Naturally, Louis XIV acquiesced and dictated a dispatch freeing Catinat from the obligation of besieging Cuneo. By early December most of Catinat's troops had

\(^{24}\) SHAT A11198, 551-57, Louis XIV to Catinat, 10 Oct. 1693, in Chamlay's hand. SHAT A11228, no. 108, Catinat to Louis XIV, 12 Oct. 1693; and Ibid., no. 118, Catinat to Louis XIV, 24 Oct. 1693, which contains explicit reference to the king's specific order to besiege Cuneo.
trudged through the snow to winter quarters in France.\textsuperscript{25}

Results from triumph in battle proved as minimal and ephemeral as those from successful sieges. Neerwinden and Marsalgia, along with Rosas, Heidelberg, Huy, and Charleroi were all "triumphs" for Louis XIV's arms. But the alliance ranged against France seemed no less determined at the end of 1693 to continue the struggle than before. Natural and economic disasters deprived Louis of the resources to retain so many soldiers under arms. With few exceptions, he remained on the strategic defensive until the alliance began to crack with the defection of Savoy in 1695 and 1696. Magnificent sieges had not forced Louis XIV's enemies into acquiescence, but neither had spectacular battles. There was no magic bullet that brought victory.

\textsuperscript{25} SHAT A11228, no. 117, Chamlay to Louis XIV, 24 Oct. 1693, 5:00 p.m.; Ibid., no. 118, Catinat to Louis XIV, 24 Oct. 1693; Ibid., no. 127, Chamlay to Louis XIV, 28 Oct. 1693; Ibid., no. 125, Catinat to Louis XIV, 27 Oct. 1693; Ibid., no. 127, Chamlay to Louis XIV, 28 Oct. 1693, at night; and SHAT A11198, 566-67, Louis XIV to Catinat, 2 Nov. 1693, permitting the marshal to abandon plans for besieging Cuneo.