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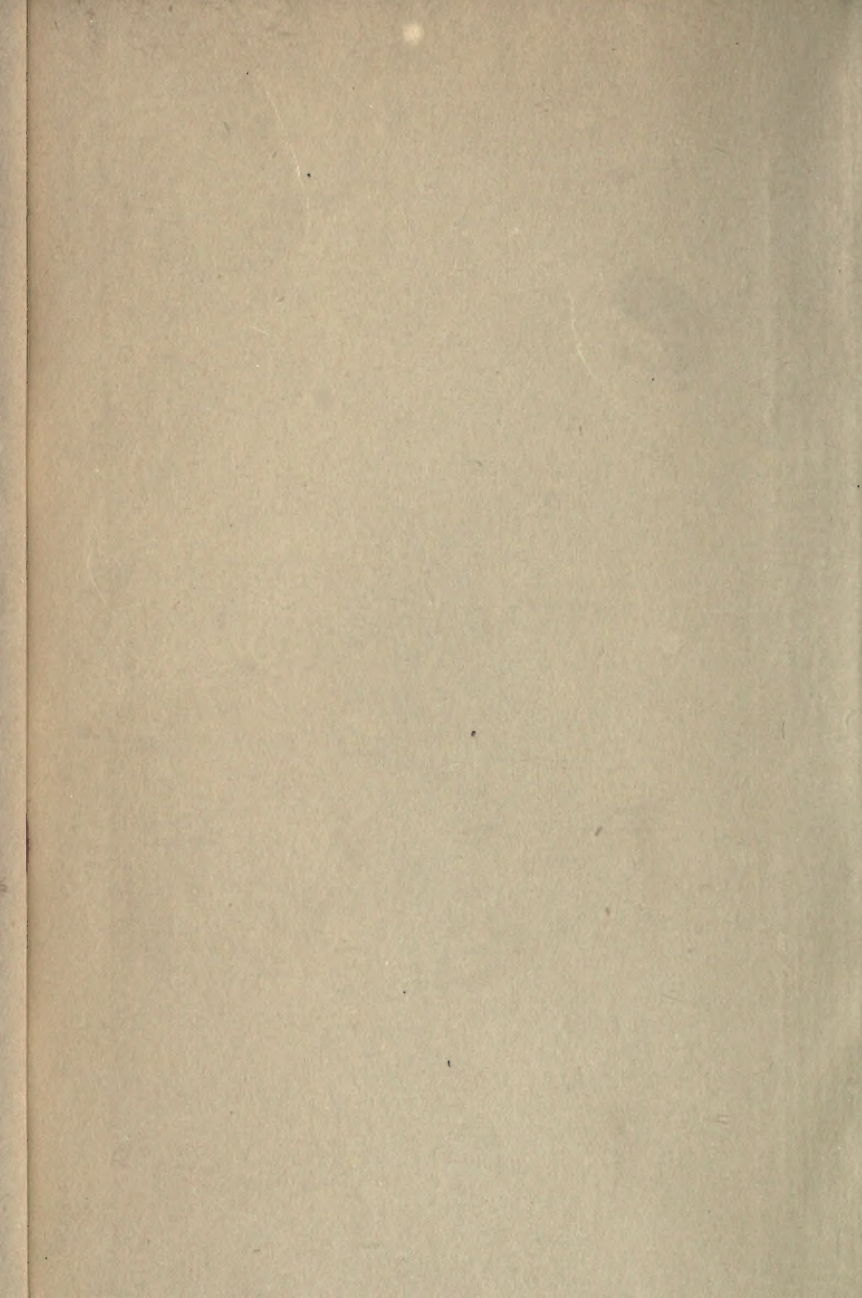
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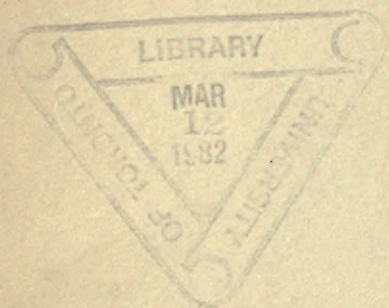


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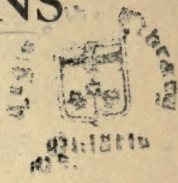
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## PREFACE

FOUNDATIONS are broad and solid, but do not exhibit much detail. The art of Strategy, fully described, would be the work of a lifetime, and from its very bulk would be the despair of a publisher. But the foundations can be drawn on a reasonable expanse of paper.

The object of this preface is to justify the creation of the new technical phrase, "Full Strength," which is the corner-stone of this book. It is recognised everywhere that there is a master principle for success in war. Various efforts have been made to express this principle. "Surprise and the initiative are the secret of success in war" is one of these efforts. But this is not the real foundation, for you may gain all the advantage of surprise and still fail to produce as great a relative strength as was possible.

"Economy of force on secondary objects" is another effort. This is good as far as it goes, but it does not cover the ground. You may operate in so correct a manner with regard to detachments that you have everything available for the decisive collision, while omitting to take measures that would prevent the enemy having a similar totality of available strength.

"Preponderance of force at a chosen place at the right time" is another effort. This goes too far. To



have preponderance is pleasant, but it may be impossible, and there still remains a best thing to be done. The best thing is to have as much as you can for yourself, and as little as you can for the enemy, even if actual preponderance of numbers is impossible.

Strength and force are, it is recognised, far from being a mere matter of numbers. If training, discipline and organisation are equal, there still remains the paramount matter of *moral*.



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## DEFINITIONS

**STRATEGY** deals with movements and the taking up of positions of an army or armies, or parts of an army, up to the time when the next movements will bring about the collision.

**GRAND TACTICS.**—Those “next movements” of the units of the army.

**FIGHTING TACTICS** includes the methods which a unit employs when it has had its task assigned to it, and has come to grips with the enemy. Skirmishing, individual taking of cover, control of fire, advancing by rushes, crawling, covering fire, the bayonet charge, entrenching under fire—all such are a part of fighting tactics.

**MINOR TACTICS.**—The activities of a unit through all its movements and stationings in a campaign. Security against surprise, patrolling, scouting, marching in its details—all such belong to minor tactics.

**INITIATIVE** in strategy and grand tactics. The condition of having the lead with respect to the enemy, of being able to compel him to conform to one's own movements, and to confine him to parrying one's blows.

**BASE OF OPERATIONS.**—The place, or the sum of the places, from which an army in the field obtains, or can obtain, its necessary supplies of all kinds and its reinforcements. It is common to talk of ultimate base,



intermediate base, advanced base, temporary base ; these adjectives explain themselves.

**LINE OF OPERATIONS AND OF COMMUNICATIONS.**—These are often identical. The line of operations is the route, or the routes with the country between them, by which the army has advanced from its base to its present positions. The line of communications is the route or routes by which the army is at the moment linked to its base. A belligerent may assume single, double, triple, etc., lines of operations. The lines are double, triple, etc., when the total forces are divided into two, three or more armies which have their own distinct lines of communication and of retreat, to which they are at the moment compelled to adhere. That is, the mere dividing up into two or more armies does not of itself constitute multiplicity of lines ; it may only be for convenience of organisation.

**THEATRE OF WAR.**—The whole country between the bases of the belligerents.

**MOBILISATION.**—The raising of units to war strength by elimination of unfit and by completion of staffs, numbers, arms, equipments, ammunition, stores and transport.

**CONCENTRATION.**—The assembly of units at pre-arranged points for the purpose of constituting an army or armies.

**STRATEGICAL DEPLOYMENT.**—The constitution of a strategical front or fronts after the concentration.

**FORMING FRONT TO A FLANK.**—An army is so formed when its strategical or its tactical front is parallel to its line of communications, or approximately so.

**TURNING A FLANK.**—An operation intended to carry

the whole army past the hostile flank with a view to attacking his communications and his rear. Envelopment implies smothering a wing, or both wings, of the enemy by pressure in front and flank simultaneously.

**STRATEGIC COUNTERSTROKE.**—This is not a mere counter-attack ; it implies an effort to keep or regain the initiative, usually against an enemy too strong or too well placed to be attacked directly, by so aiming a stroke in some fresh direction that the enemy will be obliged to conform, and will be obliged, at least temporarily, to abandon his projects.

**STRATEGIC PURSUIT** is a pursuit that does not aim simply at pushing an enemy, but at cutting into his line of retreat, so as to compel him to fight or capitulate.

**INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR LINES.**—Interior lines contains a wider meaning than mere central position with respect to the enemy. That army is on interior lines which, though not concentrated, can concentrate for battle more quickly than the enemy can. The words involve a conception relating to time rather than to space. An army may have interior lines without putting them to use, a thing that has often happened in war ; when their use is neglected the army has nothing more than central position, which in itself is not necessarily of any value, and may well be harmful against a superior enemy.

**STAFF WORK.**—All those activities by which the staff of an army relieves the commander of details. For example, when a commander orders an advance, the staff sees to it that units do not get in each other's way. When an operation is under way, unforeseen difficulties often occur under circumstances which do not allow of

reference to the chief ; here the officers of the staff, who should be thoroughly acquainted with the commander's will, can usually render very great assistance, assuming at need the responsibility of giving an order.

Operation orders can seldom go beyond the starting of the work ; therefore they strive to put clearly the goal at which the operation aims. The staff acts as intermediary and interpreter the moment any detail arises that affects the relation of units to each other. The chief staff officer issues the commander's orders.

**MANŒUVRE.**—This implies a movement other than a direct advance upon the enemy. The word practically contains the idea of gaining an advantage by motion in a particular direction.

**OBJECTIVE.**—The definite goal the commander has in view. It usually connotes an offensive idea, such as collision with the chief hostile army or the destruction of a part of the enemy ; but it may also be the occupation of his capital, or of some other point or region whose possession would have a notable influence on the future of the campaign, or the seizure of some position on which it is intended to stand on the defensive.

**STRATEGIC POINTS.**—Places whose possession by one belligerent would put the other at a disadvantage. If the disadvantage is vital, the place would be a prime strategic point. Such points may be so absolutely, or only conditionally. In the absolute category one usually finds the capital of the country, the positions of base magazines, railway junctions on the line of communications. These are all behind the army, and are in possession. It is the strategic points in advance that are not yet his, that are the aim of the commander.



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Masters of war like Napoleon have always been distinguished by the accuracy with which they foresaw what was going to be a strategic point of the conditional kind. These are not by any means always places that are strong in themselves, but they are often found at river-crossings, in mountain passes, etc. All such, however, become strategic points only on account of certain dispositions of the enemy, and are therefore conditional. An open village, like Plevna in 1877, may become a prime strategic point in this way, or a previously unconsidered road-crossing. Their value comes from the previous events of the campaign.



## INTRODUCTION

ALONG with all other human activities, war is an art founded upon principles. These principles, again, may often be referred to, or be subsidiary to, one great master principle, and the student of the science has made the first step in the right direction when he has come to understand the master principle. Armed with this knowledge, to whose standard he must refer all other principles of the science and all actions in pursuance of the art, whether these be historical of the past or proposals for the present or future, he can go on safely in his criticism of what has been done, and in his proposals for what should be done.

But in war every case is a particular case, and is composed of such a number of incidents and rendered complex by such a variety of conditions, situations and probabilities that decision is rendered difficult. It is therefore all the more important that some plain principle or principles shall guide, either towards a true judgment of the past or in deciding upon action in the present or future.

Since the proper aim of a commander is to destroy the enemy—not merely to have the better of him in a fight, but to *conquer* him—the master principle of strategy is to ensure full strength for a decisive battle. This does not mean that it is unimportant to fight your battle in a particular direction, for it may be impossible



without that to render it decisive ; but it does mean that the tactical victory must come first, in urgency of importance, if not necessarily in time. In order to ensure this the commander should employ what I have called "full strength."

This phrase, again, does not mean that the commander must have every one of his units on the spot, regardless of all other considerations ; but it does mean that every consideration that is allowed to deduct from strength at the scene of the battle, or from strength at the place and time of the crisis of the decisive attack of the battle, shall be a consideration that has an assignable and an adequate bearing upon the success of the battle.

Further, the phrase has a relative signification. It refers not only to the force the commander produces for the decision, but to the amount of force he allows the enemy to have there. Now this statement immediately suggests the first of the sub-principles that flow from the master principle of "full strength"—namely, the value of the initiative.

If the idea contained in these two words, "full strength," as here defined, expresses the master principle of strategy and of grand tactics, and is applicable to small operations as well as great, the next step is to enumerate and discuss principles which flow from it—that is, methods of action and organisation which help a commander towards ensuring "full strength."

These will be first briefly enumerated, with a very few words of elucidation, and will later be discussed separately, and illustrated from the warfare of the past. There is no better method of checking the truth of one's

arguments than from history; mere arguments are properly unconvincing, in connection with so practical an affair as war. The method of elucidation by pure reasoning may be interesting, and its conclusions may even on occasion seem unanswerable; but human affairs, and war among these, are so complicated that an ounce of well-examined fact is worth a pound of pure theory. Therefore even our master principle will be subjected to the touchstone of history.

INITIATIVE.—In order that a commander may apply this “full strength” with certainty, he must preserve his freedom of action; and he must do more than this, for the full meaning of “retention of initiative” with respect to the adversary implies more than mere freedom of action. Many a beaten enemy has kept in a sense his freedom of action by great mobility and evasive skill, as in the case of our opponents in South Africa. But a full retention of initiative implies the power of compelling the enemy to conform to our actions; in other words, we must be able to do what *we* want, *in spite of the enemy*. Surprise is plainly a strong means towards the seizure of the initiative, and therefore towards our application of “full strength”; but the initiative has often to be seized and retained without the help of surprise, and this has been, and can be, satisfactorily effected. Surprise is usually achieved by adequate screening and skilful deception, combined with good and timely intelligence about the enemy.

INTELLIGENCE.—Again, in order to be sure of “full strength” at the proper place and time, a commander must know enough about the enemy from day to day to save him from delivering a futile blow in the air.

A mistake, however, might be committed in waiting unduly for detailed information.

**MOBILITY.**—A third requirement is that the army at the disposal of the commander shall have the mobility requisite for the efficient use of the intelligence that has just been mentioned. If this mobility be inferior to that of the enemy, the retention of the initiative will be very difficult, if not quite impossible, unless the hostile numbers are very inferior to our own. This mobility is greatly dependent on the next three considerations.

**ORGANISATION.**—The first of these three, in the order of ideas we have been following, is a well-understood and flexible organisation, backed by adequate numbers.

**TRAINING.**—The second is a good system or doctrine of training, founded upon wide experience, carried out with zeal and thoughtfulness and for an adequate length of time.

**DISCIPLINE.**—The third is the production of a fine state of discipline, and from these two will come that condition of confidence without which no great things can be done.

**KNOWLEDGE OF PHYSICAL FEATURES OF THEATRE.**—The next point for discussion is the importance of knowledge of the country that forms the theatre of war, of its facilities and its difficulties. The physical features have an absolute value of their own ; they impose important limitations, but at the same time they afford facilities. It is only on adequate and timely knowledge of these that confident strategical combinations can be founded, and confidence is one of the great moral weapons of war ; and it is only on this knowledge that mobility can be assured, intelligence be turned to good



use, the initiative be retained, and finally therefore the production of "full strength" be assured.

**SELECTION OF OBJECTIVE.**—Following naturally upon the above comes the subject of the selection by the commander of the objective.

**MORAL FACTORS.**—The question of moral factors in war, and of the personality and character of an opponent are worthy of serious study, both in the case of his commander and of his army. The question also includes the maintenance of *moral* in one's own troops, and the importance of a commander understanding the character and quality of his lieutenants, especially of any who may have an independent mission allotted to them.

When the influence of politics on strategy has been added as a subject to the above, and a note on the influence of fortresses, the basis of military strategy will have been laid.

There remains the great active part of the subject, the superstructure. This consists in manœuvring, but it must always be remembered that the end is battle. The active side of strategy may be briefly stated as follows :—how to manœuvre under the facilities afforded and the limitations imposed by the physical features of the country, in accordance, be it understood, with the available intelligence of the enemy and with the numbers and quality of both sides.

The best way to gain this knowledge of "how to manœuvre" is to study thoroughly the campaigns of the past; and its great importance is due to the fact that the skilful application of that knowledge is the thing that enables a commander to retain the initiative (say)

by threatening the enemy's communications while comparatively safeguarding his own, or by pronouncing attack in a direction specially dangerous to the enemy. In most cases the enemy must attend to the threat and thus abandon to some extent his own projects.

In connection with his manœuvre, and in protection of it while it is under way, the commander takes care to screen his dispositions from the knowledge of his opponent and from all hostile interference. The commander wishes and requires to carry out a certain series of movements which shall lead up to the "full strength" blow. The chance of complete success is greatly improved, is in some cases only possible, when the enemy is kept in ignorance as to what is going on, and is at the same time not even allowed to blunder into the combination to its detriment. If the enemy fixed himself in a position and could be depended upon not to move, as often happened in the vicious warfare of certain epochs of the past, some of the above considerations, and this one eminently among them, would be of little consequence; but such futile strategy, or rather such negation of strategy, can hardly be counted on for the future. Moreover, the maxim is very sound, that you should give the enemy credit for intending to do the best thing.

In a word, the commander endeavours to prevent the hostile forces from knowing what he is doing, and to cause them to think that he is doing something else. He is going to make use of these two means, screening and deception, in order to surprise the enemy, and thereby to ensure the seizure or the retention of the initiative.

**SEA POWER.**—The influence of sea power on land operations is a great asset to an insular state like our

own, whose serious wars are likely to be preceded and accompanied by naval war, or at least to be complicated by the necessity for elaborate activities in the way of sea transport, and the landing of our armies on friendly or hostile shores.

Thus we have arrived at a certain order of ideas, of which the last three—manœuvre, screening, sea power—belong to the category of active operations. It will be convenient to deal first, in Part I. of this book, with what may be called the statical portion of the whole subject, and conclude in Part II. with the dynamical portion.

It is not pretended that the above includes the whole subject of war. Little mention, for instance, has been made of peace strategy, which deals with the whole field of international politics—alliances, neutralities, enmities; with the great moral factor of national prestige; with the method of the utilisation of all the resources of a nation or empire; with the fostering of a true national spirit, without which attempts at mere mechanical perfections are of little avail.

The subjects of concentration after mobilisation, and of the first strategical deployment, are rightly, on the continent of Europe, held to be of great importance by countries with common frontiers, and much discussion goes on in those countries on these matters.

A short note will be given on them, but it is recognised that they are not of so much importance to us. A British army engaged in a Continental war has a very particular series of problems before it. It will in the main be assisting some allied army of great size, and will have to subordinate its actions to those of that army,



the number of possible hypotheses being very great. If one attempted to state a master principle in this connection the statement would read—our army must undertake no detached operation, but must work in close touch with the ally, becoming usually one wing of the great allied force.

# The Foundations of Strategy

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

#### OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE

Examples of Strategical Defensive with Tactical Offensive—  
Difficulty of this—Advantages of the Offensive—And of  
the Defensive

It is usual to find the strategical and the tactical offensive or defensive go hand in hand, but it is not universal. Circumstances may advise a strategical defensive followed by attack on the field of battle, or they may advise a strategical offensive followed by the taking up of a position, and the awaiting of attack on that chosen field.

In the Austerlitz Campaign Napoleon, based on Vienna, which was to the south of him, lured on the Austro-Russian army to attempting offensive strategy (Map VII., inset). Enticed by a show of timidity on the part of a commander who was never timid, the Allies, who advanced from Olmütz, which was to the north-east, conceived the plan of placing themselves on the French right flank—*i.e.* between Napoleon and Vienna—and attacking from there. They attempted this in precisely

the manner the great master of war anticipated—namely, by filing across his front along the heights of Pratzen, within three thousand yards of the French line. When the sun rose behind the allied columns, nearly half of them had passed the culminating point of the high ground, the mists that still hung about the low ground hid the concentration of Soult's great corps under Pratzen, a partial gap occurred in the allied march, and Napoleon threw in Soult at the exact moment. The temporary strategical defensive had turned into a tactical offensive.

Another famous case of thus pouncing suddenly upon an enemy who is enjoying the strategical offensive is afforded by Salamanca; these two episodes, Austerlitz and Salamanca, have a very close resemblance in principle. Wellington had retreated from the Douro about Toro before the advance of Marshal Marmont, and had posted his army on the Tormes, east of Salamanca, prepared to fight should the French commander make any mistake (Map I. and inset). Marmont, coming down towards Wellington's left wing, just as the Allies at Austerlitz were at first moving on Napoleon's left wing, attempted to file round the British right in order to cut their line of retreat to Portugal. Wellington watched the procession from a height, saw a widening gap between the leading corps of the enemy and the remainder, and attacked with his right reinforced, while beating off assaults with his centre and left.

Here again a strategical offensive found itself suddenly attacked on the field of battle. These are feats by great masters of war. Many a general, starting on the



strategical defensive, had promised himself that at the right moment he will attack ; their despatches, coming to light later, have shown that they had the intention, but very seldom has the intention come to fruition. The initiative, once handed over to the enemy, is hard to regain ; ward off blows for a week and your hands are full of defensive details, you begin to be apprehensive of the unseen work of the enemy, and you abandon your plan on small provocation.

Thus Kuropatkin at Liao-Yang (Map X., inset). There was a salient at the left centre of the Russian position, well adapted for a counterstroke in force, and the Russian commander had two army corps in reserve near at hand. On the third or fourth day of the prolonged battle these corps would be thrown forward from the salient to break the Japanese front ; but Kuropatkin had not the tenacity of purpose of the victors of Austerlitz and Salamanca. Reports began to come in that the enemy was extending his right across the Tai-tzu River, to outflank the Russian left. A master of war would have seen that, if his attempt from the salient was ever to come off, now was the chance ; the extending of the Japanese must be weakening their front—as a fact, it was being weakened precisely opposite the salient. Any success there would at once arrest the outflanking movement—*i.e.* the Russians would at last have the initiative, and would be compelling the enemy to conform to their movements. But Kuropatkin failed at the critical moment, and sent his reserve corps to reinforce his left flank. He in fact continued on the defensive and was beaten.

Cases of strategical offensive, followed by tactical

defensive, are not common in great wars, but the system is very often correctly resorted to in small wars against irregulars and savages. But here a clear distinction must be made. If the enemy is of the nature of an Afridi—an excellent skirmisher who has a good rifle and can use it as well as the best-trained regular—he must be hunted down and attacked. But the Zulu and the Dervish of past wars, who trust to shock and fight in close order, may well be treated to a different method—advance threateningly into his country and take up a position where your presence will be intolerable to him, the actual position having of course a good field of fire. This is what Lord Kitchener did in the Khartoum Campaign. To have attacked the large city of Omdurman would have meant interminable street fighting of a most dangerous kind, where our troops would have been quickly disseminated in sections and squads in the innumerable tortuous lanes; anything might happen in a fight like that, and great loss of life for certain. By drawing up on the plain in sight of the Dervish capital and awaiting the enemy, a clear field was obtained, enabling us to have the full advantage of our weapons.

In South Africa our enemy invaded our ground and took thus the strategical offensive, and for a moment the tactical offensive as well; but very soon he sat down in trenches to defend himself. His strategy became absolutely defensive, his tactics almost entirely so. He never made any attempt to follow up the repulses he inflicted, but during a combat he often showed a skilful lateral mobility which had in it on occasion something of the nature of a counter-attack. The Boer in the mass

was unenterprising, having no military minds trained beforehand to a doctrine of war as distinct from a doctrine of fighting tactics, and he lapsed comfortably into the security of trenches, with which he covered the investments of Ladysmith and Kimberley.

### ADVANTAGES OF THE OFFENSIVE

In the field of strategy the offensive has the following advantages :—

1. Good moral effect on one's own troops, except when the strain on them becomes too great. A good example of the exception is the case of Napoleon in the winter of 1806-1807. In October he had beaten the Prussians decisively at Jena and entered Berlin, fought two fierce and successful, but indecisive, battles (Eylau and Friedland) later in north-east Prussia against Russians and the remains of the Prussians. Though indecisive, even Napoleon was compelled to call a halt, as his army was exhausting itself and his troops were losing heart.

2. Good moral effect on one's own nation. The army that shows itself capable of offence is the army that receives the whole-hearted support of the nation at home.

3. Moral effect of your offensive on the hostile troops and nation.

In our small wars this advantage gained by a rapid offensive is often very marked. The immediate enemy to be punished is sometimes the population of a single valley, the neighbouring valleys being inhabited by tribes of the same blood. Any hesitation in offence, any



standing on the defensive, seems to the others like weakness, and the number of our enemies at once increases. The straight lesson is that, for "small wars" or great, the force should be sufficient, and the organisation sufficient, to complete the work without pause.

4. Political effect on other nations, who might intervene on your side if you begin well, or might at least refrain from joining your enemy.

5. The offensive army can have a clear plan of its own, requiring of course possible modifications in execution, but assuring the retention of the initiative as long as the offensive is vigorously and judiciously maintained.

6. Success at one chosen part usually produces complete strategical victory for that phase, at least, of the campaign; the passive defender, on the contrary, has to be successful practically everywhere.

In all cases where a defensive strategical attitude is carried out on the "cordon" system—*i.e.* when the defender extends his forces in an attempt to cover everything directly—the attacker has no difficulty in being the stronger at the point where he proposes to break the hostile strategic front. The rupture in force at one point is usually the signal for a hasty falling back of all the other parts of the cordon. The essentially vicious cordon affords the attacker precisely what he desires—the chance of bringing a decided superiority of numbers against a chosen point. A good defensive disposition is one that does not allow the enemy to effect a serious blow until the defender has his army concentrated—is, in fact, a disposition in depth.

Napoleon's offensive problem in 1805 was of a different kind, but his solution of it bears out the advantage

we are discussing. There was no cordon to be dealt with, but a hostile Austrian army within a week's march of the Rhine, and an allied Russian army marching to its help, but still two hundred and fifty miles distant.<sup>1</sup> The Austrians, in numbers much inferior to Napoleon's, were about Ulm, trying as usual to cover Bavaria ; the Russians were on the move from the direction of Vienna. They had not yet learned to dread sufficiently the " tempestuous warfare " of Napoleon, the rapidity of his work, his single eye on the vital point, and they offered him a strategical problem very much to his liking. Russians and Austrians together would be a serious enemy on the field of battle, therefore neither must the Austrians be permitted to fall back on their advancing ally, nor must time be allowed for the Russians to reach the neighbourhood of Ulm. The Austrian general is therefore lured into holding his ground by the advance of the French right wing from the direction of Carlsruhe, while the centre and left are refused for the present and are forcing their marches for a concentration near Donauwörth. Very soon the Austrians are facing their own base, and a capitulation ensues. The whole allied plan collapses like a house of cards ; success against the smaller part gives strategical success right up to Vienna—that is, the success of the strategical offensive against one part gives strategical victory for the whole of that phase of the campaign.

7. The offensive will usually transfer the war to the enemy's territory, thereby assuring full use of one's own total resources, and the continuance of the full economic life of one's own people.

<sup>1</sup> Map III.

8. A continued offensive keeps the enemy in a state of uncertainty.

There are few more notable instances of this than the unhappy plight of Marshal Soult from the moment when Wellington began his invasion of France in October 1813, by forcing the passage of the Bidassoa (Map I.). That operation took Soult by surprise, and Wellington's next venture, which resulted in the battle of the Nivelle, found the Marshal in a painful state of doubt, though he had the advantage of an extensive spy system. He had fortified a long front with diligence, and the chief result was to tie down his troops. His right wing and reserve with their flank on the sea, 25,000 men strongly entrenched and with many guns, were contained by 19,000 of Wellington's; his right centre of about 18,000 was outnumbered by more than two to one; his extreme left was kept in play by Wellington's worst troops, Spanish namely, while the left centre was outnumbered by Hill's attack.

Military history shows that it is possible to assume the strategical defensive, and still to remain master of the situation; but the requisite is that it be done of set purpose and in pursuance of a deliberate plan of ultimate offence, and there must be the tenacity of character that will carry out the plan in spite of the enemy. This condition of mind differs essentially from that of Soult in 1813, or of Kuropatkin in 1904. Their attitude was fatal; even if outnumbered, a general should not be content simply to parry a blow. By activity and surprise he should make his 50,000 equal to 80,000 or 100,000, or he is simply affording his stronger foe an easy way of using his full weight for a concentrated blow.

## THE DEFENSIVE

The defensive is seen to be, in ordinary cases, a *pis aller*; sometimes it is imposed on a force, as when a detachment has the mission, quite definite, of guarding a particular spot or avenue. But in particular cases there may be some advantage in assuming a strategical defensive at the outset; it usually amounts to a confession of at least temporary weakness, which includes the idea of unpreparedness. Such advantages as there are may be stated as follows:—

1. Sometimes gains time for the production of one's whole strength.

2. May afford time for an ally to reach the theatre before the decision, or to create a serious diversion in another theatre.

Wellington in the Peninsula often had reason to hope that success in Central Europe, by our allies there, would withdraw from Spain part of the huge preponderance against which he had to fight.

3. A retreating defence may produce great changes in the relative condition of the belligerents.

(a) It may draw the enemy into very difficult country, more adapted for defence than for attack. *Ex.*—Wellington in Portugal.

(b) It may lengthen vulnerable communications to the extent of greatly reducing the invader's field army. Germans after Sedan.

(c) It may render the supply all but impossible. Napoleon marching to Moscow.

(d) It may draw him into a position where an ally



can strike at his communications with impunity. Russian retreat from Vienna before Napoleon into Moravia in 1805, Prussia being a likely ally (Map VII.).

- (e) It may reduce him to having a single point, reached by a single road or railway, as his immediate base. French in the Peninsula in 1812, with the road Valladolid-Burgos-Bayonne, the last being their base (Map I.).

4. An initial defensive is sometimes expected to have a good political effect on other nations, by the artifice of making the enemy look a wanton aggressor. The Confederates had an idea of this sort in 1861 when, after victory at Bull Run, they might have invaded the north. It is an illusory idea, based on sentiment, which no nation should trust to in dealing with foreigners.

It will be observed that all four of the above, if they are to be real advantages, imply an eventual offensive, either by the original defender alone or with the aid of an ally; for a permanent defensive can never bring decisive victory, if the enemy is of the tenacious spirit. Unexpected climatic difficulties, hardships, due to lack of supplies, gradually increasing to the breaking point, may cause the invader to be practically beaten before any serious counterstroke is made upon him. This was Napoleon's plight in 1812. But the invader will not usually be destroyed in the military sense, until counterstrokes on the battlefield be delivered. Napoleon, being thus attacked in 1812, was not able to stand on the Russian frontier, and this was due to the attacks as well as to the privations of his army.

Unattacked, he would have been able to stand on the Vistula and prepare a fresh invasion.

5. Another advantage is that the defender knows the ground better, and often can aid himself by a judicious use of his own strong places. A friendly fortress can prolong a fighting front, can secure a flank on a battlefield, can afford a temporarily impregnable advanced post, can constitute a ready-made rearguard to cover a retreat.

6. The defender, among friendly inhabitants, gets active help and information.

Frederick the Great used to say that but for the sufferings it inflicted on his own people he would always prefer to fight in his own country, "for then every peasant is a spy for us." But there are against this the grave drawbacks of loss of resources, and of the blow struck at the nation's *moral*.

Some nations—all nations on occasion—have shown their finest side when invaded. The national character will determine whether an enforced defensive takes the spirit out of the nation, or only serves to stiffen it. This national character varies to some extent from century to century, and depends at any moment on the kind of government to which the people have been subjected during the three or four previous generations. The development of a reasoned liberty, free from any silly leanings towards cosmopolitanism, together with patriotic teaching in youth, is the surest guarantee that the nation will fight it out when the great trial comes.

## CHAPTER II

### BASE OF OPERATIONS AND LINE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Position of Base Magazines—Advantage of a Wide Base—Wellington's Use of such—Central Europe in Napoleon's Wars—Special Precautions when Enemy has a Wide Base—Guarding of a Line of Communications—Base and Communications in Savage Warfare—Napoleon on Communications in Guerrilla Warfare—Examples of Deliberate Broadening of Base

**THE** security of these two is a matter of high importance, second only to the necessity of being victor in the decisive battle.

In the warfare of the great Continental nations, each has at the outset substantially its total territory as its base ; but, in fact, certain well-defined points in the country, the natural centres of collection of resources and the sites of the great factories of munitions, are the important points whose security must be assured.

These points should not be too near the frontier. Influenced by the danger of their capture or investment, the commander is at once hampered in his strategy by his fear of being cut off from these places. The ideal is to have the great magazines well back from the frontier, but all joined by plenty of railways to every part of the frontier region.<sup>1</sup>

As to communications, main railway junctions are so

<sup>1</sup> This matter is discussed later, in Chapter XIV.

important that, in the case of some of them, their permanent fortification may even come up for consideration, while others deserve attention on the outbreak of war, plans for dealing with them having been worked out previously by the general staff.

The advantage of a wide base is manifest. Direct communication with parts of it can be abandoned under the stress of necessity, or in accordance with a strategic plan the commander is putting in hand, without undue detriment to the supply of the army.

The worst condition is found when the base is a single point a long distance in rear, reached by only a single road or railway; and the badness of the condition is accentuated if the intervening country is inhabited by an actively unfriendly people. Of such a kind was the situation of the French in 1813 in Spain, when, having been forced to abandon the south and the centre of the country, they had become entirely dependent on Bayonne and the long highroad that led thither from mid-Portugal (Map I.). The British, on the other hand, had most of the Spanish and all of the Portuguese harbours as points on their base, and could quickly fit up, by means of their fleet, any of these as a new working base. The following sketch shows what good use can be made of such a breadth of base:—

When Wellington pronounced, in the spring of 1813, a strong invasion from mid-Portugal towards France, King Joseph, afraid to stay in the centre of Spain lest he should be cut off from Bayonne, hastily called in his disseminated troops to the vicinity of Valladolid, and was pushed by Wellington back to the Ebro. During the retreat the French had been completely covering



their line of communications, and Wellington saw that even if he brought them to bay and made them fight and defeated them, they would still be able to retire, beaten but not destroyed, to Bayonne. So he extended and threw forward his left on the march to the Ebro, ordered the fleet and transports round from Lisbon, his old base, to Santander, dropped his communications with Portugal (which in any case were becoming unduly long), based himself anew on the northern port, and attacked at Vittoria from west and south-west. He was completely covering his new communications, while the west part of his attack prevented the enemy using the road to Bayonne. Badly beaten, the French lost that line of retreat and only regained French soil by the narrow Pampluna road through the Pyrenees, abandoning perforce all their artillery and baggage.

Two points stand out clearly from a consideration of this case—the advantage that accrues to the holder of a broad base as against an adversary possessing only a narrow one, and the necessity for speedy action if the full advantage is to be gained. No doubt the holder of the narrow base, being concentrated in guard of his communications, will have full strength at the battle; but he cannot manœuvre freely, while his opponent, having more of that freedom, can ensure more certainly “full strength”<sup>1</sup> at the place and time of the *crisis* of the battle.

The second point, that of the need for speedy action if the full advantage is to be gained, requires little more than to be stated. A day or two of delay would have

<sup>1</sup> The proposed signification of this term is stated in the Introduction.

enabled the enemy to escape from the trap by a further retreat, whereby the flank action against them would have become impossible.

In the case just cited, Wellington's base or frontier was rectangular, comprising the west and north coasts of the Peninsula ; the enemy was within the angle, but had his base outside the angle. It is in such circumstances that the possessor of the broad base, if on the offensive, has so great an advantage.

Turn to that great theatre of past wars, Central Europe (Map III.). While France and Austria faced each other, two hundred miles apart, with parallel bases of equal length, they were on a par as to the facilities afforded them by their respective frontiers in the matter of alternative or multiple lines of communications, and as to choice of lines of operations. But later, when Napoleon had the Main and Switzerland, his base constituted three sides of a rectangle with respect to South Germany. If the enemy now came forward close to the Rhine the French could manœuvre behind their frontier secretly so as to concentrate opposite or beyond either flank of the Austrians. If secrecy and speed were then conjoined, the French could reach with impunity the Austrian rear.

Moreau in 1800, marching by the side of Switzerland, partly cut them off, but, not operating with the bold completeness of Napoleon, only occupied their line of retreat on the south side of the Danube, and the enemy escaped by the north bank. Napoleon in 1805 made use of his broad base to destroy his enemy at Ulm, as we saw in the last chapter.

The lesson of these cases is that the Austrians came

too far forward, seeing they were not in condition to attack. Their initial strategic front, in the Black Forest in 1800, about Ulm in 1805, laid their communications open to insult, as against such a base as the French now had.

The danger, then, is manifest of advancing into the angle of a rectangular frontier, the base being far outside the angle, against an enemy who follows Napoleon's maxim of invading on a single line of operations, who is capable of using speed and secrecy, and who aims for a decisive blow. But if Ulm had been an adequate base for the Austrian campaign the French rectangular base would have been comparatively less nocuous; the defender's base, being now within the angle more or less, could be quickly covered on any side.

The substantial lesson from what has gone before is that a salient block of territory, such as Piedmont and South-West Germany, were for the Austrians, while it may be a useful starting-point for offence, affords a very uncomfortable position for defence. A commander, having to occupy the salient ground, but not being fit to invade, should have three things constantly before his mind—(1) to have accurate and early intelligence of what his adversary is doing behind his frontier; (2) to keep his troops well concentrated; (3) to post the mass so that the detachments watching the issues (whose duty also is to *delay* invasion) shall have no difficulty in falling back on the main body, and so also that the mass can retire quickly at need along its line of communications. By these means the commander will be doing his best to insure "full strength" for the inevitable battle if the enemy should wisely invade on a

single line of operations ; will be able to fall upon a part of the invader, if the latter should unwisely operate on two or more lines ; will be able to prevent the enemy reaching the line of communications without a battle.

The safeguarding of a line of communications is a problem that runs into endless details, which consist of tactical arrangements adapted to each particular case. Strategy simply demands that the mass should forbid the line to the hostile mass, and that local guarding be so arranged for as to deduct from the mass the minimum that will give reasonable safety. To guard it against formidable bodies of the enemy, the first and important weapon is good intelligence. Without that, very large detachments may be needed, and these may after all be wasted.

Against raids, and the operations of insurgent inhabitants, good intelligence is again the first weapon. Here a deal of help may be had by the use of spies, and by threats of retaliation on the inhabitants in general.

The general plan of the organisation of a line of communications has been made a matter of "Regulations."

In order to relieve officers and troops from unnecessary duties, the railway officials will be utilised to the utmost, with supreme military control of the whole line. Usually, at different stages of the campaign, there will be a distinct point on each railway line where civilian management ends and military control begins.

In savage and irregular warfare the base is very seldom in danger, but the line of communications is often difficult to assure. It is sometimes so difficult that it is found preferable to convert the army into a flying



column—that is, a force which carries with it all it requires for the operation in hand, usually a quite definite operation of short and calculable duration. In wars of this kind the chief enemy is apt to be the climate and the physical difficulties of the route, and it is natural to wish to keep down the numbers to the minimum possible ; this militates against the establishment of a line of communication posts and the provision of convoy escorts, and leads to the adoption of a flying column.

A line of communications that is continuously obnoxious to interference from insurgent inhabitants, assisted by roving bands of irregulars, calls for special dispositions to guard it. It is usually futile to act entirely on the defensive, with garrisons for posts and escorts for convoys, if the condition must subsist for some time. We had a problem of this kind in South Africa, and the French had a similar one during a great part of the Peninsular War, especially during the last years of it. Napoleon, greatly displeased with the methods employed in this connection by some of his generals, wrote as follows to the chief of staff :—

“ Write to Generals Dorsenne, Caffarelli, etc., that they are following in their country a detestable system ; that immense forces are fixed in villages against brigands who are active, in such a manner that one is continually exposed to regrettable incidents, . . . that some principal points should be held, and that from these mobile columns should proceed to pursue the brigands ; that, if things were thus conducted, many misfortunes would be avoided ; that it is necessary to hasten to follow this system and to make active war on the brigands.”

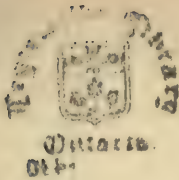
The advantage of a broad base has been insisted upon. It will sometimes happen that a commander, at the opening, is confined by circumstances to a single point as base, with a single route to it. He will often, in such a case, deliberately direct his strategy towards broadening the base and multiplying the routes of communication. This may sometimes be effected by manœuvre, but will often require a successful battle. With his single route and point to be guarded, he can hardly effect a *decisive* battle in his own favour, being debarred from free manœuvring; his first combat will aim at forcing the enemy to give ground, which may open out a new line of communications and a new base point. There are many instances of this; one occurs in Wellington's first operation in the Peninsula.

In July 1808 we had no footing in Portugal (Map I.), while Marshal Junot had an army corps in the country with headquarters in Lisbon. Wellington made a descent with fleet and transports at Mondego Bay (Figueiras), one hundred miles north of Lisbon. Junot began calling in his detachments, while Wellington marched south, his base being now the fleet in the roadstead of Figueiras. A portion of the French corps was met at Roleia (Roriça), blocking the Lisbon road; it had to be attacked frontally, as the British must cover their single road. Observe that Wellington was keeping near the coast. The Portuguese had begged him to move inland, and in conjunction with their northern militia to march on Lisbon from north-east. Had he done this, he would have been forced to content himself with his one point, Figueiras, as base, and he would have

found some difficulty in guarding his communications with it.

From Roleia he made a dash on Vimeiro, which had a kind of roadstead, ordered the ships there, received reinforcements and stores, took up a strong position covering the landing-place ; he had shifted his base to within cannon-shot of his army. Waiting now to be attacked, he gained a victory, and the French occupation of Portugal was at an end.

A similar broadening of base, and on a larger scale, is found in Napoleon's campaign of April 1796 (Map II.), which will be referred to again in Chapter IV. The French base was on the Var, and their line of communications the Corniche road along the Riviera. The Directory wished Napoleon to deal first with the Austrians, who formed the left half of the hostile line behind the Ligurian Apennines and were based on Milan. But Napoleon would then have had to continue in dependence on the single road, besides leaving behind him, and close to that road, the 25,000 Sardinians in Piedmont. So he turned against the latter. Having beaten them to their knees in a fortnight, and compelled them to make peace on terms very favourable to the French, he at one stroke broadened his base to the whole frontier of France and Piedmont, besides having now at his command all the resources of the latter.



## CHAPTER III

### “ FULL STRENGTH ”

Principles of Detaching—Example of Lee and Jackson in 1862 in Virginia—Detachments that cannot be brought in for the Battle—de Jomini on Detaching—Distinction of Main and Secondary Operations—Surprise as a Factor in “ Full Strength ”

THIS term, “ Full Strength,” will always be used in the signification that has been allotted to it in the Introduction, and it is important therefore that that signification be kept clearly in mind.

An army in the field can seldom have its total numbers on the spot for the decisive battle ; detachments are often imperative. A crude attempt to have every man on the battlefield may result in a stoppage of supplies on which the army is depending, through a strong raid by the enemy on the line of communications, or through an uprising of unfriendly inhabitants ; or a part of the hostile army may be in such a position that, unless held in check by a detachment, it may be able to spoil entirely the plan for the decisive battle.

While, therefore, deductions from total strength are apt to be necessary, the theory of detaching is subject to perfectly clear rules. These are :

1. That a detachment should be of the least dimensions compatible with its mission.
2. That its object should be quite definite, and



should have an adequate bearing upon the success of the primary operation.

3. That, as far as may be, it should not be made to such a distance or in such a direction as to be irrecoverable, or only recoverable with great difficulty and loss of time.

4. That it should be neutralising hostile numbers greater than its own.

Loss of time is a relative matter ; a week in one case may be of less consequence than a day in another. Assuming that a certain detachment is necessary, and that it is no stronger than it need be, still a mistake may be made by sending it farther away than necessary ; if it is required for the primary operation, or if it could take part in that operation without its timely withdrawal from the detached position jeopardising the success of the operation, then the principle of "full strength" has been contravened.

It may be objected that, if the detachment is *necessary*, there can be no question of drawing it in to assist in the main operation ; but, as a fact, this is often feasible, and it has often been done. The great "holding" power of modern weapons, assisted by field works and favourable ground, may allow of a mere fraction of the detachment imposing on the whole of its immediate enemy for quite a long time, while the rest are marching fast towards the main operation.

Again, a sudden evasion at nightfall may give the detachment, or most of it, a long start ; and this time may be sufficient to enable the detachment to do useful work in the main operation without unduly endangering the safeguard which it

was supplying. A suitable line of railway may materially assist such an operation. Or again, a screen of mounted troops may be suddenly applied to hide the detachment from its enemy, and enable it to gain a good start.

Incidentally it emerges that a detachment, which it may be desired thus to call in, should be specially mobile.

A notable instance of judicious detaching, and of skilful drawing in of the detachment, is afforded by the operations of Lee on the Chickahominy and “ Stonewall ” Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley during the Virginia Campaign of 1862 (Map V.).

Lee was in position, north and east of Richmond, the Southern capital, which he was guarding with 70,000 against McLellan’s 100,000. Lee was entrenched and was holding his own without much difficulty ; McLellan was entrenching on both banks of the Chickahominy, and awaiting promised reinforcements. He had been promised that McDowell, in command in North Virginia, would march to the Chickahominy with 40,000 men at least. Lee, anxious to keep McDowell away till he himself had finally dealt with McLellan, and working on the fears of the Northern people for the safety of their capital, Washington, detached Jackson with 16,000 men west of the Blue Ridge. Jackson made such play there, both in the matter of sudden and rapid marching and hard fighting, that the Federals credited him with two or three times his actual force, and made the mistake of detaching divisions in all directions to guard all the avenues. The map shows the nature of this lavish detaching.

Thus over 60,000 were kept watching for Jackson's 16,000. No doubt Jackson required attention, but he should have been sought and attacked by a large concentration of McDowell's troops ; by such an attack in force he would have been quickly sent back to Richmond. Or, better still, a concentration by McDowell towards Catlett's, followed by a march to the Chickahominy, would have compelled Lee to recall Jackson. Lee would then have been reinforced by 16,000, but McLellan by 40 to 50,000. The lack of some part of these kept 100,000 men useless among the unhealthy swamps of the Chickahominy ; and eventually Jackson, leaving his small cavalry force as a screen, shook himself free of the detachments, arrived on McLellan's right flank, was fighting there in conjunction with Lee before McDowell knew he had left the Shenandoah Valley, and took part in the rest of the Seven Days' Battle that ended in McLellan having to re-embark for Washington and reopen the campaign from the north.

Lee had "full strength," the Federals only two-thirds of their forces.

Sometimes, of course, the detachment cannot by any means be withdrawn in time for the battle—in the case, for instance, of a post on a vulnerable line of communications. It is particularly in these cases that the force should be kept down to a minimum. Careful selection of its position or successive positions, with skilful and diligent entrenching, will lessen the requisite size of the detachment in those cases where there are defiles which the enemy must use. In open country the force will be easily outflanked by the enemy if serious combat be offered, for it is supposed that the detachment is to hold

or neutralise a force substantially greater than itself. It would then usually begin operations far forward, as Jackson did, so as to have plenty of room for manœuvre; and its operations would be essentially those of a rearguard wielded by a vigorous, resourceful and vigilant chief. We know that the delaying of an enemy is the chief work of a rearguard, and that one of the weapons of a rearguard commander is an appearance of boldness, and another the deception of the enemy as to one's strength by a speciously formidable deployment.

De Jomini on detaching is worth quoting: “ Frederick the Great held it one of the essential qualities of a general to know how to make his adversary send out many detachments, either with the view of destroying them in detail or of attacking the main body during their absence. The division of armies into numerous detachments ” (*i.e.* the “ cordon ” system) “ has sometimes been carried to so great an extent, and with such poor results, that many persons now believe it better to have none of them. It is undoubtedly much safer and more agreeable for an army to be kept in a single mass ; but it is a thing at times impossible. The essential point in this matter is to send out as few detachments as possible.”

He then gives a list of various reasons that may make a detachment advisable—to seize unexpectedly an important point ; to deceive an enemy and draw him in a desired direction ; to besiege a place, to guard a communication ; to give encouragement to an insurrection, etc.

As to undertaking a siege, we should say—trouble yourself with no sieges of places that are not hindering



you in seeking your chief objective, the hostile field army.

As to all these reasons, de Jomini insists that, after all, such operations are of merely secondary importance ; and this is so unless the neglect of them would jeopardise the main operation.

The requirements, in the matter of detaching, that the force shall have a quite definite object and that that object shall have an *adequate* bearing on the question of the success of the main operation, is equivalent to stating that "full strength" demands that the commander should not have secondary operations on hand at the same time as the main operation. A detached operation, simultaneous with the main one, does not come into the category of secondary, if it is necessary to the success of the main one ; if not thus necessary, it is vicious, unless the commander greatly outnumbers his enemy.

Surprise is not always necessary for the production, at a chosen place, of the total available force, but if our action surprises the enemy, he will be the less likely to be able to prevent us from having our full force where we wish to have it. And, as we wish to be able to carry out our plan *in spite of the enemy*, it is plain that to take him by surprise will greatly help us.

Further, "full strength" as defined is relative, and concerned with the force we allow the enemy to have at our chosen place and time ; here, more than ever, is surprise found to be a powerful weapon.

Surprise may be of various kinds—operating in a direction totally unexpected by the enemy ; an apparent defensive suddenly converted into a violent and

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decisive attack ; or it may be a case where the direction of our attack cannot but be foreseen by the enemy, but where we are able to pronounce it earlier than he expected, or in much greater force than he thought he had any reason to fear at that part of the theatre.

## CHAPTER IV

### SEIZURE AND RETENTION OF THE INITIATIVE

Temptation to seize "Premature" Initiative—Example of French in 1870—Sometimes justifiable—Requisites for Retention of Initiative—Intelligence must not be unduly awaited—Napoleon in 1815—Our Failure to retain Initiative in South Africa—Other Examples of Failure, due to lack of Concert and to Bad Plans—Austrians in April 1796—Vigour has often compensated for Bad Plan—Relation of Initiative to "Full Strength" is reciprocal

**THE** Initiative being substantially the means by which a commander forces his own plan of operations upon the enemy, it is plainly important to be the first ready.

In order to be so, the organisation prepared in peace, the mobilisation system and all the arrangements for concentration in any required direction—all of these must be of the best and be kept up to date from day to day. The next stage is the first strategical deployment.

A belligerent is sometimes tempted to seize a precarious initiative by opening active operations before his arrangements are complete. What may be called the German system is to avoid collision until everything is ready, even to the extent of concentrating farther back than as originally planned, and thus of allowing the initiative to the enemy for the moment, in the full hope that the lead will be at once regained, as soon as

the German machine is ready to move. This is what happened at the opening of the war of 1870.

The French hoped that a rapid and early invasion across the Rhine about Strasburg or Karlsruhe (Map IV.) would at least induce the southern states to remain neutral, and success in this would confer prestige. Consequently the plan was to rush forward to the frontier a formidable mass, even at the expense of imperfect mobilisation, and push these across the Rhine before North Germany was ready. But only the very first part of the plan was carried out, and great numbers of half-mobilised units reached the frontier in a few days. Napoleon III. then found the state of things so hopelessly bad that, though the Germans were still far off and not ready, it was useless to dream of the early invasion; and so difficult was it now to complete the army, far as most of it was from its depots, that all idea of offence had to be abandoned.

The Germans, on their side, knowing of the hostile approach to the frontier, detrained their 2nd Army, the largest, far back near Mainz, instead of at Homburg and Neunkirchen, as originally intended. For the moment they may be said to have lost the initiative; but their enemy's seizure of it was a mere flash in the pan, and they regained it as soon as their troops were ready to move.

It emerges from this and similar cases that usually that side which has its full force ready first will very quickly take the lead.

But on occasion a dash forward before the whole army is ready may be justifiable, if the operation itself will not be a prolonged one, and something really



important can be seized, such as defiles on the enemy's line of advance. Defiles imply a barrier, and therefore a physical screen ; and both the possession of the defiles and the existence of the screen will help the commander to retain the initiative when his whole force *is* ready. If the enemy is likely to be fully ready a few days before us, the possession of the defiles is of inestimable value.

Whether there is, or is not, a physical screen, one should be made of mobile troops. These may threaten and trouble the hostile concentration and deployment, find out what the enemy is doing, and at the same time hide our own arrangements from the enemy. As this is a double duty, our regulations now envisage an exploring echelon and a protective echelon—cavalry and horse artillery for the former, along with airships and aeroplanes ; mounted brigades and field artillery for the latter, often to be closely supported by infantry. The importance, therefore, of having the mounted forces capable of quick mobilisation is manifest.

The seizure of the initiative, then, may be effected before being completely ready, but it can hardly be retained, unless we are favoured by geography, if we do not also have our masses ready at least as early as the enemy.

As the campaign progresses, the possession of the initiative may change from side to side. In order to retain it, there is usually need of a continuous offensive, and always of a high standard of relative mobility. We saw in the Introduction that mobility is dependent on organisation, training, discipline, knowledge of the country. The retention of the initiative, then, is

dependent on these in varying degrees in particular cases, but also greatly upon a high spirit in the commander and his troops—this spirit on the part of the commander being compounded of a real passion to conquer, of that kind of caution that is careful to ensure “full strength” for a collision, and of knowledge of how to make use of the physical features of the theatre. Add to these that energy of character that will act with due speed, good intelligence about the enemy, so that blows in the air may not be made, and a good plan, and we have a pretty full statement of the equipment necessary to retain the initiative against a formidable foe.

A note is here advisable about intelligence. It is that detailed information must not be unduly waited for. We wish to force our will upon the enemy, and delay might often afford him time to get so far forward with his own plan that we should have to attend to it, and thus lose our lead. If in ignorance or in doubt about some of his dispositions, we must still push on with our plan; but now we must take special care to have our troops well in hand and quickly available, so that an unexpected development may not find us impotent to produce “full strength.” Most of Napoleon’s campaigns are splendid examples of this combination of fierce resolve to push through the plan, and carefulness against lack of “full strength.”

At the outset of the Waterloo Campaign (Map VI.), he led Wellington to believe that the French attack would be against Wellington’s centre and right; he massed opposite the point where our commander’s left touched Blücher’s right, and advanced by Charleroi.

The Allies were so disseminated on a front of one hundred miles that true strategy advised them to concentrate away to the rear and towards each other. This Napoleon at first expected them to do, in accordance with the maxim that you should credit the enemy with the desire to do the right thing. But, not being sure, he approached Quatre Bras—Sombref in great concentration, ready with “full strength” for an important collision; and the strength was needed, for Blücher had brought three-fourths of his army to Ligny and Sombref. The defeat of Blücher at Ligny, and our enforced retreat from Quatre Bras showed how thoroughly the great master of war understood the art of seizing the initiative.

The difficulty of regaining a lost initiative is great, and is often impossible without the appearance on our side of powerful reinforcements.

In South Africa our enemy invaded us, owing to our unprepared condition, but he abandoned the initiative of his own accord, as it were, the strategically untrained mind of his peculiar army being unfit to keep up the first impulsion. On the road to Kimberley (Map IX.) Lord Methuen appeared for a time to have seized the initiative, winning combats up to Modder River, and advancing towards his objective. But these fights proved to be only against strong advanced detachments, and the position of Magersfontein stopped us dead on this line, just as the Tugela position was holding Sir Redvers Buller in Natal. It was a case of stalemate, and all in favour of the enemy, for Ladysmith and Kimberley and Mafeking were coming surely to their last ration. Only the arrival of Lord Roberts and Lord

Kitchener with great reinforcements—and reinforcements of the right kind, cavalry and mounted infantry,—enabled us to capture the initiative; and from that moment the Boers were beaten.

Delay in pushing on with one's operations is a fruitful cause of loss of the initiative, as in the case of the Boers. The same thing occurred again and again in the Seven Years' War, in which Frederick was greatly outnumbered and was several times beaten in pitched battles. The Russians, for instance, beat him badly at Cunersdorf in August 1759 (Map VII.), and he fell back towards Berlin with only 28,000 men. The Russians were 60,000 strong, while one hundred miles to south stood the Austrian army of 60,000, watched by Prince Henry of Prussia with 40,000. The defeat had deprived Frederick of the initiative, and his case seemed hopeless. But the Allies could not agree on any combined action, and in two months we find Frederick pushing the Russians back across the Oder, the moral balance having, owing to the delay, swung back in favour of the Prussians. A condition of no plan will cause the loss of the initiative.

A thoroughly bad plan will also do so in many cases, but a merely second-best plan may go through successfully, if pushed with vigour. For a thoroughly bad plan, take Beaulieu's in April 1796 (Map II.).

This was Napoleon's first campaign as commander-in-chief. He had a French army distributed along the Riviera, with the two western passes of the Ligurian Apennines in his power. The enemies were the Sardinians and Austrians across the mountains, together more numerous than the French. Colli, the Sardinian,



was covering Turin, with his left towards, but not reaching, the Montenotte Pass ; Beaulieu, the Austrian, had his right opposite this pass, and his left at the Bochetta, which leads down to Genoa.

Beaulieu makes the first move, taking a third of his army down the Bochetta. When he has turned west from Genoa, the rest of the Austrians are to attack through the Montenotte Pass, Colli assisting by distracting attention. Napoleon ignores the threat from Genoa, masses at Savona, and beats the Austrians over the pass. Beaulieu has to abandon his plan, and to march back by a great detour for a fresh concentration, and Napoleon has gained the initiative in a single day.<sup>1</sup>

Why was Beaulieu's plan so bad a one ? Briefly, because he had chosen to act in such a manner that he could not ensure "full strength" for a decisive battle.

Instances of success in the retention of the initiative, when the plan was not good, but was pushed with superior vigour, are common enough in the history of war.

Frederick's invasion of Bohemia in 1757 is a case in point. He concentrated in four groups, at Chemnitz, Peterswalde, Görlitz and towards Landshut. By 23rd and 24th April the first two groups had joined at Budyn on the Eger, and the second pair on the lower Isar, the enemy being in force towards Prague. Napoleon objects to the King's operations in the following terms :—"Frederick marched to the conquest of Bohemia with two armies separated by 60 leagues, which were to unite at 40 leagues from the starting points, under the walls of a fortress, in presence of the

<sup>1</sup> This campaign is sketched more fully in Part II., Chapter III.

hostile forces. It is a principle that the junctions of corps should never be made close to the enemy."

The Austrian commander, however, did not know how to profit by the mistake, and Frederick, pushing his operations with vigour, retained the initiative.

The relation between initiative and "full strength" is reciprocal. Not only does the initiative greatly help the commander to have "full strength," but a disposition of the kind to ensure the latter is a powerful aid towards seizing or retaining the lead. The ability to apply "full strength" at all stages of the operations is the best safeguard against the danger of finding ourselves suddenly compelled to conform to the enemy's projects.

## CHAPTER V

### INTELLIGENCE

Summary of Duties of Intelligence Department—Intelligence in Peace and in the Field—Wellington's Difficulties during the Talavera Episode—Enhanced Difficulty owing to Modern Weapons—Often you must "fight, and find out"—The "False Front" Method on the Defensive

A PERMANENT Intelligence Department, as part of a nation's military resources, is a modern phenomenon. Both for the Government, when it has to plan the scope of the preparations, and for the general who is to command, information on many definite points must be forthcoming from the Department, and from the Foreign or Colonial Office, according to circumstances.

A list that touches broadly on these points can be compiled, the items varying in importance according to the conditions :

1. The hostile resources in trained troops of all the arms, including supply, etc., services.

2. To what extent these are immediately available.

3. Reserves of trained and untrained men.

4. Organisation of his forces, and the distinctive uniforms.

5. The internal political situation, from which it can be judged whether he will enter upon the war wholeheartedly or not.

6. The strategical and tactical ideas that predominate among his military leaders.

7. The quality of his warlike equipments.

8. The geography and topography of the probable theatre of war, including statistics.

This item of statistics will often provide both a means of judging how far we can depend on the country for supply, and what effect on the hostile resistance will be achieved by the seizure of certain districts or localities.

9. Matters that bear on the enemy's ability to invade our territories, and the natural facilities he has for the purpose.

10. The extent to which other nations are likely to help us or to join the enemy, and, in respect of any who are likely to be engaged, the same kind of information we ask for about the primary enemy.

11. His mobilisation and concentration plans. These are naturally kept very secret, but are not of so much importance to us as they would be, say, to France in respect of Germany. A British campaign against a civilised Power would be waged as an ally, and the other belligerents would almost certainly have come to grips before we were on the scene.

A portion of the personnel of the Department take turns of duty in foreign countries likely to be our theatres of war, militarise the available maps, and do their best to enter into relations with intelligent natives or other residents, with a view to these acting as spies in time of war. All of these officers should join the commander's staff.

Intelligence is of two kinds. The kind obtained in peace has its complement in the kind obtained in the



field, whose most important part is news of hostile dispositions and movements.

Where the hostile troops are concentrating, and what is the nature of their strategical deployment, are usually very difficult indeed to discover. The outbreak of war is at once followed by the erection of a barrier against news, difficult to penetrate in proportion to the strength of the Government, the patriotism of the people, and the efficiency of the military screen. It is expected that aerial success against the enemy will help to lift the veil.

In South Africa we knew fairly well before hostilities commenced the number of our possible enemies, but we did not know they intended to bring heavy guns into the field. Ladysmith would have been at the mercy of these, but for the pure chance that ships' guns were obtainable in the nick of time from Durban.

Then again we were, during the preliminaries, taken by surprise by the action of the Orange Free State in joining her neighbour, which points to some negligence on the part of the Colonial and Foreign Offices, in contravention of requirement 10 in the list given above.

In item 8, geography, etc., we were again badly at fault. The only map of North Natal was a revenue map that showed little but boundaries of farms, while on the route to Kimberley, and only fifty-five miles from that town, the available map for the combat of Belmont was so faulty that the fight degenerated into a "colonels' battle."

When Great Britain entered upon the Peninsular War the ignorance that prevailed as to the total French strength in that theatre was profound. Wellington himself underestimated by half the hostile numbers,

but as even that estimate left the British much outnumbered, our general initiated a cautious policy, except in the Talavera episode, and no great harm was done (Map I.).

It was natural enough that, when a British army landed with the avowed object of helping Spain and Portugal to get rid of the French, its general should expect to be well served by both Spaniards and Portuguese in the matter of information. But the Spaniards in particular proved quite undependable in this connection, as in most others. As the long war progressed Wellington gradually organised an efficient system of spying, establishing relations with unofficial Spaniards and with foreigners; but in 1809, at the time of Talavera, his intelligence was still most inadequate. Having in May 1809 driven Soult out of Portugal northwards, Wellington had marched to the Tagus. On 10th July he was at Placencia; on 27th and 28th Talavera was fought, Joseph from Madrid with 50,000 men being beaten there. Soult in the meantime had refitted, but Wellington believed he had no more than 15,000 or 20,000, and had good reason to hope that, with 20,000 British and 40,000 Spaniards he would be able to take advantage of his interior position, beat Joseph first, leave the Spanish army to watch him, and march to Almaraz with the British troops to fight Soult coming down from Salamanca.

But Soult was actually bringing more like 50,000 men, who marched past the front of the mixed force Wellington had left at Ciudad Rodrigo, without any information being sent to our general. On 3rd September, when Soult's van was crossing the Tietar and his rear

already at Placencia, Wellington discovered the truth by the fortunate accident of an intercepted despatch, and just saved himself by slipping across the Tagus at Arzobispo.

It is usually much easier to gain adequate preliminary intelligence of a civilised foe than of an irregular or savage enemy. The organisation, numbers, etc., of the former can be had in peace-time without difficulty, but in the case of the savage it is hard to assess the numbers that will take the field, and maps of the country are usually vague. But while *ante-bellum* intelligence is easy to acquire in the case of a civilised enemy, intelligence in the field has become more and more difficult, owing to long range, smokeless powder, quick fire, and the development of entrenchment and concealment. The perfecting of airship and aeroplane work will have to be depended upon to overcome the difficulty.

When Frederick the Great joined his advanced guard as it passed through Borna on Leuthen, we read that he *saw* the whole Austrian army, and was able there and then to formulate his bold plan. No such confident movement is possible now, at such short notice. The cavalry can discover little more than the mere fringe, even if it has gained the upper hand of the hostile horse; if it locates the flanks, discovers something of the hostile depth, and distracts attention by threatening his communications, it will have done great things. The aerial work and the cavalry work, aided by spies, prisoners and captured documents, and completed by inferences drawn from these by the trained minds of commander and staff, will afford a picture supplying the general truth; but for the planning of decisive

attack or defence more is to be desired. This is afforded, in the offensive, by the tentative attack, in which the commander, having cleared the ground up to the enemy's real position, launches a considerable fraction of his force pretty evenly against the whole front, and thus arrives at a closer knowledge of the *shape* of the hostile dispositions, and obtains an inkling of the comparative strength at different points.<sup>1</sup>

It will usually happen, in fact, that the plan for the decisive attack can only be confidently fixed after some fighting. "You do not know how the enemy is disposed?" "Fight, and find out."

On the defensive, intelligence may be gleaned by the installation of a "false front." The difficulty is that if it is very weakly manned it may discover nothing, and if it is strong enough to compel the enemy to use his main columns, the troops on it may be seriously compromised before they can fall back on the main position, and the very retreat itself is dispiriting. Many authorities therefore deprecate the "false front" artifice. The defending commander may be sure of one thing, that the enemy will try to surprise him; and he will have to base his dispositions on the strategic situation to date, on the inferences he can draw, from the information *written on the ground*, as to the probable direction of the chief attack, and from such news as his aerial fleet and his cavalry have been able to gain.

Bodies sent out to gain intelligence must be amply

<sup>1</sup> This "tentative" attack is not a separate fight, but the beginning of the battle.



strong for the purpose. A squadron, meeting a regiment, will see the regiment, and usually nothing more. Hence the necessity for great cavalry divisions for strategic exploration, and plenty of mobile artillery to help them.

## CHAPTER VI

### MOBILITY

Requisites for Mobility—Its great Value—Frederick the Great in 1758—True Mobility—Importance of good Staff Work—Bazaine's Failure in this, 13-16 August 1870—Higher Mobility forces Enemy to Conform, both strategically and in Tactics

**MOBILITY** is dependent upon more than the mere composition of the force in question. A fine army, highly organised, highly trained, well disciplined, confident and of high spirit, whose chiefs know the geography of the theatre, are full of the will to conquer, know how to make use of physical facilities and obstacles, screen their operations and deceive the enemy—such an army, though composed of what are called slow-moving troops, may have a practical mobility, both strategical and tactical, superior to that of another force whose elements may be what are called mobile.

If a commander were asked what quality, beyond courage and good armament, he would ask for in the force he was to lead to war, he would probably answer that the army, or any part of it, should be fit for rapid, orderly movement in any direction, on receipt of an order at very short notice. Such a condition is only attainable on the terms stated above.

Bad organisation, for instance, of supply or transport has again and again prevented movement, at a critical

time, of a force otherwise quite fit for good work. Untrained troops have failed to reach their appointed place in time, from nothing but lack of training; undisciplined ones have shown the same weakness. Troops such as Frederick's or Napoleon's, or British in the Indian Mutiny, confident and of high spirit, have shown on foot a mobility of which a mounted force would not need to be ashamed.

The advantage of its possession is that it greatly helps the commander towards having "full strength" for the time of collision. Whether he is urging his whole army in order to have it at a certain place by a certain time, or is calling in detachments as he sees the day of battle approaching, or has his eye on catching the enemy still in some state of dissemination, a high mobility is often the only thing that will make success likely.

By organisation, training, discipline and the exercise of his own strong will, Frederick always succeeded in moving his army with a remarkable celerity, which contrasted sharply with the leisurely movements of his Austrian and Russian enemies. In 1758 he opened from Breslau by retaking Schweidnitz in Silesia on 16th April (Map VII.). On 3rd May he was in Moravia, and in a week was beginning the formal siege of Olmütz. On 1st July, owing to insufficient numbers and the loss of a great convoy, he had to raise the siege, and on 11th July had reached Königgratz on the Elbe, dogged all the way by superior numbers.

The Russians, who were to co-operate with the Austrians, were on 10th June crossing the Vistula in force. They were to march on the Oder about Custrin,

one hundred and fifty miles, and it was important for them to be on the Oder, sixty miles from Berlin, while Frederick was still engaged in Moravia ; but it was 1st July before they began to reach Posen, half-way between the two great rivers. The 18th July saw them only forty miles forward, frequent halts having to be made for supplies ; by the end of the month they were nearing the Oder.

The King had stayed a few days about Königgratz for various reasons, and he now had to manœuvre to shake himself clear of the enveloping Austrians and march to the Russians from Landshut. It was 10th August before he was really free to march. The Russians had bombarded Custrin on 1st August, but they were much disseminated, their cavalry in particular being scattered over a hundred miles, looking for supplies.

On 22nd August Frederick was near Custrin, one hundred and ninety miles in eleven marching days, a fine performance for an army that had been forced all the way from Olmütz to Königgratz in hostile country. On 23rd August the King was across the river, and two days later he defeated the Russians in a desperate battle at Zorndorf, the Russians suffering severely from lack of cavalry. Frederick's true and practical mobility, by which all available troops were on the field, gave him "full strength." The Allies' sluggishness lost them first the advantage of the King's distance, and at the battle the help of many Russian troops and of those of the Austrian ally, who was crawling north from Landshut many marches in rear of the mobile King. A chief in the position of the Russian commander longs for delay,



so that he may call in his detachments and have the aid of his ally; this brings on a defensive attitude or compulsory retreat, both an abandonment of the initiative.

True mobility does not consist of the mere power of pushing troops quickly to a certain point. They must arrive there so supplied and in such condition that they may be equal to the solid and prolonged work that may lie before them. All the many items of organisation in rear of the front must be functioning adequately and continuously, or the dash forward is a mere flash in the pan, like that of the French in 1870.

The mobility of a force, and especially of a great force, is largely dependent on clear and simple orders, followed by good staff work. In this connection Bazaine's army was greatly at fault during the period 13th-16th August 1870 (Map IV.).

On 13th August this army, five corps and some cavalry divisions, was deployed in a semicircle covering Metz on the east. The German 1st Army, three corps and three cavalry divisions, was facing Bazaine, while the five corps of the 2nd Army were taking parallel routes towards the Moselle south of Metz, and were on an average a good twenty miles from the river. On this day Bazaine resolved on retreat to Verdun, and issued an order full of hypotheses, which also seemed to condemn 150,000 troops, with a vast train, to confine itself to a single road from the bridges (five) as far as Gravelotte, though there were four possible routes by which to win clear. Now, the important thing in the case of so large a force is to get it started on as many roads as possible. The large units did, in fact, in some cases strike out on

roads of their own, but the delay and confusion were deplorable.

The accumulated effects were such that, as late as morning of 16th August, the French army was only about the level of Gravelotte, eight miles from the bridges, with cavalry a very short distance in front. Here Bazaine was caught by enemy coming up from the south, and a disaster of the first order overtook him. A bad march plan and indifferent staff work ruined the capacity of mobility.

In connection with mobility, and particularly tactical mobility, there falls to be noticed a point which the writer has not seen mentioned by any military authorities, but which he has himself touched upon elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> It is that the belligerent who enjoys the higher mobility, even if inferior in numbers, can compel the hostile troops to conform to his tactics, just as the possessor of the greater strategical mobility can count on retaining the initiative, if no serious mistakes be made. But in the strategical case a great numerical inferiority may confine the more mobile belligerent to not much more than the initiative of evasion, of harassing and escaping, of the power of self-extrication from difficult situations, which can of itself lead to no decisive success.

When we met the Boers in South Africa we intended extensions of two paces' interval from the beginning of the zone of rifle-fire, and we expected, thus acting, to be able to complete a pitched battle between dawn and sunset. The enemy concealed himself with consummate skill, he extended to a degree unheard of, he put practi-

<sup>1</sup> In "A History of Tactics" (Hugh Rees).

cally all his rifles in the fighting line, keeping no reserves of consequence. It was his faith in his mobility that induced him to the extension, and to the paucity of reserves, and it was this extension, capable of rapid increase from moment to moment, that not only put him above the risk of being outflanked, but rendered him capable of threatening our flanks on most occasions. This compelled us in turn to extend far beyond our practice—forced upon us, in fact, a change of fighting tactics.

The same phenomenon in the matter of extension, but in the opposite direction, appears in fighting enemies of the nature of Zulus or Dervishes, who intend to win solely by shock. Bodies of these savages can move more rapidly than civilised infantry, which must in consequence manœuvre in close order when near such an enemy. Skobelev, leading his Russian troops against the Tekke Turcomans, correctly issued a general instruction to his force: "In Central Asia, close order is the formation."

## CHAPTER VII

### IMPORTANCE OF ORGANISATION AND VALUE OF NUMBERS

Causes of the Importance of good Organisation—Some Principles—French in the Peninsular War—Wellington on first landing in Portugal—Contrast of French and Germans in 1870—National Armies, National Militia, non-National Armies—Advantages of the National Army—Its great Numbers are of special Value

THE necessity for Organisation arises as soon as a body of men, united for the execution of a common project, becomes too numerous for a single chief to control. The advantages of having the organisation of an army as perfect as man can make it are clear to every soldier of experience. If asked on what broad considerations the importance rests, he would probably answer that they were three :

1. Good organisation, as it ensures smooth working, makes for mobility, which helps towards retention of initiative, this again favouring the application of "full strength."

2. The commander is able to turn his whole attention to his proper work, his strategy and tactics. Having an instrument that can be depended upon to work, he can make the machine into a living organism, and carry out his plans with confidence.

3. The commander can be sure of obtaining the reinforcements he requires, both of men and horses to fill



gaps caused by war, and of fresh units, as well as a continuous supply of food and warlike stores.

Not only must his immediate fighting force be well organised, but it must be the same with his transport and supply departments, his railways, his lines of communications, and at his ultimate base. A supreme perfection, far from being realised in the British Empire, would be that its nations should have practical plans ever undergoing expansion and ever kept up-to-date, for the utilisation of their total resources in men and material.

It is not intended to discuss here largely what are the principles of good organisation, but the strategic influence of having it good or bad. A few words, however, on the principles will not be out of place.

One of these is that a commander, having his own sphere of action, shall not interfere in matters coming within the proper sphere of a subordinate. To do so is to vitiate the organisation, which should encourage each chief of any grade to be ready and fit to shoulder the full responsibility of his own post; and each of these, having learned his own duties, should be encouraged to study and understand the greater sphere of their seniors in rank. This will promote intelligent help by juniors to seniors.

Nor should any commander have too many chiefs to whom to give orders. The recent reduction of the battalion command to four companies is a recognition of this principle.

A notable instance on a large scale of the evil of not attending to this is afforded by the case of King Joseph, during his second sojourn in Spain in the time of the

Peninsular War. The French had over 250,000 fighting men in the country ; this vast, and for the most part splendid, force was divided into nine or ten corps, under as many marshals and generals who were jealous of each other. Joseph was no Napoleon, and had not the force of character to control such men as Ney and Victor ; and in any case ten large separate bodies, scattered through a hostile country, were too much for one man to control, unless he were a Napoleon. It resulted that there was again and again, at critical phases, a total lack of co-operation ; seldom in the history of war has there been such a series of failures in the matter of "full strength" as was exhibited by Wellington's enemies in the Peninsula.

Another rule is that the passage from peace footing to war footing should entail no dislocation of existing units. Thus, for instance, a battalion should be made up to war strength from a *reserve*, and not from another battalion. We were habitual offenders in this respect until the establishment of short service, followed by reserve service, and the consequent building up of an Army Reserve.

Organisation of transport and supply in war is an integral part of the matter. Wellington had sound reason for his complaints from the Peninsula of the complete inadequacy of preparation in this connection. During his first operation in Portugal in August 1808 he wrote to London : " I have had the greatest difficulty in organising my commissariat for this march, and that department is very incompetent. . . . This department deserves your serious consideration. The existence of the army depends on it, and yet the people who manage

it are incapable of managing anything out of a counting-house.”

The total medical transport, for instance, of 25,000 men amounted to half-a-dozen pack-mules.

Probably one of the most striking contrasts the history of war affords is to be found in the opening of the Franco-German War of 1870-1871. The great fundamental fault on the French side, in this connection of organisation, was the over-centralisation of authority in Paris—in contravention of the rule mentioned above, that no one man, and no one office, shall have too many units to attend to.

“ With each successive day obstacles and confusion increased, . . . partly due to the over-hurried movement of troops, and from day to day it became more evident at French H.Q. that, far from being in a position to carry out the proposed invasion of Germany, the safety of France herself. . . . The *moral* of the army also gave rise to anxiety. Want of transport for the troops soon showed the French that their haste was dearly purchased. The roads were blocked ; troops were sent to wrong depots ; railway stations were crammed with reserves ; restaurants were filled with men ; fresh arrivals poured in, some without clothes, some without arms ; and even horses, train and staff were wanting. The columns (ammunition, etc.) were out of gear . . . the commissariat department, never organised for war, encountered endless obstructions ; maps were served out to the officers, but maps of Germany only. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Translated from Major Scheibert's account, by Major Ferrier, R.E.

It was a woeful scene of national unpreparedness. A gallant people, badly governed and deceived by silly bluster in high places, was led like a lamb to the slaughter.

The late Colonel Henderson said wisely in his "Science of War" that "the relative value of armies is not to be arrived at by merely counting heads." He showed how, at the outbreak of the South African War, "the names of a round million of men figured on the muster rolls" (of the Empire), but that "force which cannot be concentrated at the point of conflict is hardly worth taking into account"; that "an imposing total is very far from a guarantee of the swift action and heavy blows which war so imperatively demands." That is, the imposing total must be organised for speedy and active work, if it is to be anything more than a sham.

The British organisation problem is a specially difficult one. Half of the regular army is perforce abroad, and we still depend on voluntary enlistment. The people do not yet realise the gravity of the menace of a foreign "Nation in Arms." A truly national army is found where the nation is so educated in a political sense that its able-bodied men are, *as a matter of course*, trained soldiers, each man having served for a continuous period, long enough to make him a "trained soldier."

The next grade is a national militia, like the Swiss, or the enemy we fought in South Africa. Each man has some training, but does not become a "trained soldier" for lack of time. Such an army is apt to be deficient in organisation, discipline and cohesion, and in officers competent for staff and for strategical commands.

The third grade is the non-national regular army,



recruited without legal compulsion, but to a great extent by the compulsion of hunger. Though such an army cannot be large, it may be of very good quality; on the other hand, great numbers are in our day almost a necessity.

Our Territorial Army is a sort of non-national militia, with a minimum of training.

It is generally claimed for the truly national army that its superiority is due to the following causes:—

1. Its moral value is greater.
2. Its training is adequate.
3. The numbers are much greater.
4. It contains greater intelligence and finer physique in its ranks.

The value of numbers in reason is undeniable. Even a confident genius like Napoleon took great pains to outnumber his enemy. Wellington said he had heard people talk of a good general being able to beat a foe who outnumbered him many times, but that he had not seen it done. He was of course speaking of enemies of something like equal quality, and also of winning a battle, not the whole operation of a campaign. He himself showed in the Peninsula that an army, greatly inferior in total numbers to an enemy in a theatre of great area, may, by skilful strategy, and by full use of the artifice of deception, do great things and eventually win. The difficulties that arise from lack of numbers are nowhere more clearly shown than in Frederick's Seven Years' War and in Wellington's six years of the Peninsular War. These consummate leaders won battle after battle, but the enemy's preponderance of total numbers caused successive necessities for retreats, and

for abandonment of what had been won. After years of successful fighting, Frederick was never able to march on Vienna, and make an end of that enemy; and it took Wellington five full years to reach France.

By hard fighting and consummate strategy, aided by the lack of co-operation of the French marshals, he gradually cleared for himself a good zone of manœuvre in Portugal, with the two fortresses of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz as issues. He provided himself thus with the interior lines with respect to the enemy, kept his army outside the "enemy's country," and attacked one at a time the hostile masses. Thus did he render of little avail the vast total superiority of the French, but each battle episode found him approximately equal to the enemy.

Such good fortune can hardly be expected in a great modern war. In 1870, for instance, the Germans kept their three armies, 460,000 strong, in touch as long as any French regular army remained in the field. Suppose that the powerful 3rd Army (the southern one), after winning at Wörth, had gone south to capture Lyons, Belfort, etc., and to occupy the south of France; in that case Sedan could not have followed the investment of Metz within fourteen days, and this from sheer lack of numbers. Now, this is precisely the kind of fault the French were committing in Spain—vicious selection of objectives, and contravention of the principle of "full strength."

The French were swamped, in 1870, by the vast hosts of Germany which, organised from front to rear, rolled on like a road-engine. At Wissemburg, 3rd August, 50,000 Germans met an eighth of that number of French,

and the gun ratio was 144 to 18; at Wörth, 6th August, the numbers were 97,000 to 50,000, the guns being 342 to 167; at Spicheren, 6th August, 34,600 to 28,000, the guns 108 to 90; at Gravelotte, 18th August, 187,000 to 113,000, the guns 732 to 520; at Sedan, 1st September, 155,000 to 90,000, the guns 701 to 408.

The general who knows how to use his superior numbers for crushing blows has, from their possession alone, a vast advantage. He can guard his communications, and still be superior on the field of battle; he can make formidable feints, and still be the stronger at the decisive point; he can hold the hostile front in sufficient strength, and still be able to envelop one or both of the enemy's flanks.

Therefore it is the duty of Governments to enable their generals to meet 100,000 with 200,000, if this be any way possible; and thereafter of the general to do his best to surprise the 100,000. For war is no idle game, and this branch of the etiquette of sport does not apply.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TRAINING—ITS INFLUENCE ON STRATEGY

Adequate Training on a good System necessary for *Moral*—Should be done by Officers who will command in War—Train so as to encourage Intelligence—Result of lack of Training in the "People's War," 1870-1871—Partially trained Troops may defend well, but fail in Attack—Bad System puts Troops at disadvantage—Good Marching depends on Training—Well-trained Troops will readily modify Tactics to suit particular Enemy

WHEN a nation has done all it can in the way of putting the greatest possible numbers in battle array, has spent as much as it can afford on armaments, equipment, supply, transport, etc., there still remain, apart from the excellence of general and staff, two great factors requisite for success—the spirit of the army, and its ability to make full use of the material offensive and defensive power with which it has been endowed.

The spirit of the army depends on matters that go deep down; it has its roots in the national character, and this again is much affected by the traditions of the nation from its previous dealings with the foreigner, from far away back in history; it varies from generation to generation, and from century to century, in accordance with progress or retrogression in that paramount side of social development, the development towards a reasoned liberty. But the spirit of an army



requires a final buckler to render it steady and secure, a feeling of confidence in its method of fighting. The man must feel that the way he has been taught to fight is the best possible ; the regimental officer must feel that his men are able to do what they are supposed to have been taught, and can be trusted to do it, each man to the best of his power ; these same officers must have the confidence of their men, who should know that their officers will not blunder them into impossible situations.

If you wish to ensure the ability of a company for war, let them be trained by the man on whom should fall the credit of their success or the disgrace of their failure. This officer must himself be trained ; the best and most deliberately thoughtful soldier intellects of the country must co-operate in laying down the system of training, and the officers who directly command the rank and file must have the principles of that system so assimilated that they will apply them as by instinct.

Though not concerned in this place with the merits or demerits of any particular system, it may be noted that the greatest stress is rightly laid, in the regulations of all the leading armies, on the importance of so training as to foster the intelligent initiative of the individual. This is an idea that began to show its value when the French Revolutionary armies took the field. Burning enthusiasm and a comparatively high standard of intelligence were the characteristics of this rank and file, for whom also there was scant time for peace-training. The tactical methods that the French had already adopted, which aimed at flexibility and mobility, suited these levies well, there being plenty of work allotted to numerous skirmishers. Therefore the drawing out of

the individual intelligence began to assume a distinct importance, such as it did not have to an appreciable extent in the earlier days of rigid lines and no skirmishers.

A conspicuous instance of the result of insufficient training is afforded by the "People's War," that period of the Franco-German struggle which followed the investment of Paris. Almost no regular troops remained, but vast levies were made, the chief mass concentrating south of the Loire. On several occasions these raw troops, raw but animated by a splendid spirit, were pitted against inferior numbers of Germans, sometimes as attackers, sometimes as defenders; and only once did they succeed in winning even a mere tactical victory. That occasion was the battle of Coulmiers, near Orléans, on 9th November 1870 (Map IV.). A pretty obvious strategical stroke was feasible, for the German force was forming front to its right flank, and the French had a total of some 70,000 with 160 guns against 15,000 infantry, 5000 cavalry and 110 guns on the German side. Nothing but the tactical inferiority of the French troops prevented their general from extending his left, placing a substantial part of his force on the enemy's line of retreat, and rendering the event decisive.

It is particularly when called upon to *attack* an enemy of superior tactical ability that troops learn their disadvantage. The temporary power of the defensive sometimes conceals the weakness of the rawer troops. Thus in December 1870 General Faidherbe held his own for two days on the L'Hallue near Amiens against a German attack of approximately equal numbers, but

no counter-attack was found possible, and the French eventually found it advisable to retreat. A few weeks later, on the Lisaine near Belfort, Bourbaki led over 100,000 French levies to the attack of von Werder's 45,000. Again, as at Coulmiers, the German right might have been enveloped by the superior numbers, had these been well-trained troops. After two or three days of gallant effort Bourbaki had to abandon the attempt, and in a week or so more his whole army was destroyed by the superior capacity of inferior numbers of Germans.

There have been many instances also of the disadvantage of an inferior system of training. The armies which Frederick the Great defeated consisted of highly trained troops, whose defeats were due not to lack of training, but to an inferior method. No doubt it often happened that a Russian or Austrian or French general saw well that some particular movement would save the situation in face of what the Prussians appeared to be aiming for, but refrained from action because he knew his troops were not trained to make such movements expeditiously enough and without confusion. Frederick was able to manoeuvre, while they, as soon as he was within striking distance, were tied down and became a passive prey. The Prussian system gave greater mobility; aided by the King's fine tactical *coup d'œil*, it therefore assured the initiative, and imported "full strength" at the crisis.

At Rosbach a French commander attempted, with a tactically inferior but numerically much superior force, to play against the King his own method, and failed, simply because the ready mobility of the Prussians



enabled Frederick to break up speedily from his position and then attack French head of column before it could deploy.

The effect of good training on marching power is very great, and we know that it is often on good marching that the success of a strategical combination depends. An example is found in connection with the first battle of the War of Secession.

Federals and Confederates began the war with hastily trained levies, commanded for the most part by officers of no experience, and the staffs were to a great extent mere ornamental appendages. It followed that the early marches were scenes of confusion. General Beauregard, of the South, with 22,000 fair troops, was already on 17th July 1861 on Bull Run in North Virginia (Map V.); Johnston and Patterson, with 25,000 more, were still about fifty miles in rear, behind the Blue Ridge. Though these had a railway to help them, it was 21st July before the bulk of the rear force reached Bull Run.

Now, the Northern general, McDowell, left Washington on afternoon of 16th July with 35,000 troops, intending to catch Beauregard before help could arrive to him. The distance was barely twenty-five miles; but such was the indiscipline on the march, both of the raw troops and of the transport, that the chance of attacking Beauregard when still isolated was lost. Thus a good strategic blow failed, because the troops that were to effect it, brave and eager as they proved themselves, had no training.

A year later we read of the same troops—"arrived from Franklin, after a continuous march of thirty-four



miles," in full numbers and fit for operations after a short rest.

Besides the numerous instances in which actual failure resulted from lack of training, there have been plenty of occasions when a general, wishing to make some stroke and seeing his way clearly to it, has had to abandon the venture on account of the known untrustworthiness of the troops, of whom a delicate manœuvre would have had to be demanded—the untrustworthiness being due to no *moral* taint, but to lack of tactical ability.

If troops, put into the field, find the superior methods of their opponents baffling and bewildering, *moral* suffers at once. The commander-in-chief feels it, and turns to over-caution, abandoning the initiative if he ever had it. The regimental officers feel it, and lose confidence in the ability of their units to face even equal numbers. The determination to attack evaporates, and defensive ideas take its place.

That the Russian system of training was inferior to that of the Japanese has become clear since 1904. On 17th July of that year General Count Keller had attacked the enemy on the Motienling, and had failed with a loss of 1000 men. In his report he wrote: "If . . . we have not been able to gain the upper hand, I am compelled to conclude that the detachment does not show enough guarantees of capacity to measure itself with the Japanese, even at equal numbers. . . ."

In South Africa our troops were thus taken by surprise by a new method of fighting, but we had the good fortune to have an enemy whose strategical ideas were quite undeveloped; and we were thus given time to

alter our fighting ways. It was one of those cases, common in the history of war, where one has to modify as best one can, during the campaign, the tactical methods that have been used in the peace-training. Troops that have been trained intelligently, commanded by officers who have been encouraged to develop their initiative, will give the best account of themselves under these circumstances.



## CHAPTER IX

### DISCIPLINE

Discipline specially important in Checks and Reverses—Depends on the Officers, to whom must be afforded (specified) Conditions—Modern Methods differ from the Older—Affection of Soldiers towards Officers—Louis XV.'s Army for Capture of Hanover—Danger of allowing Plundering—Col. Henderson on Discipline and Ordinary Good Behaviour—A disciplined Nation

It is usual to find that an army whose organisation is good, and whose training is adequate, enjoys also the great benefit of a good state of discipline. The reverse is also usually true, so that a good deal of what has been said in the two previous chapters applies to the subject of this one, and several of the examples cited are equally applicable here.

An army lacking in discipline may not exhibit its weakness seriously, as long as things are going well and hardship is at a minimum ; things, however, are not likely to go well for long in such an army. But when reverses occur, it will gradually or quickly revert to the condition of an armed mob. In this state, those who have the most reason to dread it are its own officers and its own fellow-countrymen.

The production of discipline depends on the officers, and these are not given a fair chance, unless the following conditions are fulfilled :—(1) that they are in com-

mand of their men for a reasonable spell of time before hostilities begin ; (2) that those chosen are of the right quality, and themselves so trained, and so zealous in the teaching of their men, that these feel the officers' superiority and know they can be trusted in difficulties ; (3) that the corps of officers be accorded by the nation a quite special recognition, as composed of men of honour who have eschewed the usual race for wealth, in order to devote themselves and their lives to the service of their country ; (4) that, under the Code of Military Law, the commander-in-chief has ample powers of speedy and condign punishment.

Another important matter is that the baleful influence of party politics be not allowed to intrude into the military services.

When looking back over the military history of Europe, one finds that a change of a certain kind has come over the methods by which a state of discipline is maintained. In earlier days, fear was the predominant factor, promoted by an extreme severity of punishment ; as it used to be said, " the soldier must be made more afraid of his officer than of the enemy." Fear of this quality is, in a way, still necessary, but it does not nowadays need to be dragged into the foreground, but is kept as a reserve. And, what is more, the fear is of the action of a strict, but perfectly well understood, code of law, and not of the arbitrary action of any officer. That law has been enacted by the representatives of the people, and can only be modified by them—this, at least, in the British Empire.

In earlier days European armies were all of the non-national kind, as ours still is. They were small in



numbers and expensive in cost, and their individuals of the rank and file were usually, in the matter of *moral* and educational advancement, far behind the average of their country. Frederick writes of the armies of his time that they were composed of the scum and dregs of a nation, sturdy rogues and vagabonds, fugitives from justice, men whose chief aim was the hope of plunder, and who had a constitutional objection to the humdrum toil of the ordinary citizen. With such troops nothing but severity could ensure discipline.

A strong factor in discipline is the growth of something like affection on the part of the soldier towards his immediate officers. This feeling is fostered by an obvious care by the latter of the individual welfare of the men. Frederick, speaking of his own army, says: "With such troops . . . you can undertake anything, if you are careful to have food for them." And again: "A general who does not provide enough food, were he superior to Cæsar, will not long be a hero." That is the point. The officer should be something of a hero in the eyes of his men, recognised at once as honourable and brave, careful of their welfare, niggardly of their blood. To such officers most men will accord a ready obedience in the worst of straits.

A full training, and a discipline arrived at in this way, plants in the soldiers the instinct of co-operation in action. The more adverse the circumstances, the closer they cling together, when undisciplined troops would scatter in rout and panic. They know their officers are doing the best they can for them, they look to them confidently, and they help them by obeying; they see that they may be beaten, but they see also that

they can emerge from any situation with honour, at least, unimpaired.

A contrast may be cited as an example. It comes from the beginning of the Seven Years' War, when the French sent an army to capture Hanover, then an appanage of the British Crown. "This plan," says an old writer, "was at first attended by all the success imaginable, and was in the end rendered ineffectual, only by the rapaciousness and ignorance of the French general who then commanded." He means the unspeakable duc de Richelieu who, appointed to the post by the favour of Louis' mistress, Madame Pompadour, so plundered his own army that his successor thus reported to Louis XV.: "I find your Majesty's army in three divisions; the first is above ground, but is in rags, and the men are *perforce thieves and plunderers*; the second is in the hospital; the third is underground. Am I to march them home, or to stay on here till the first two divisions have joined the third?"

There is often a very serious strategical danger in the kind of indiscipline that leads to plundering and the ill-treating of inhabitants. Wellington was always un-pitying to this kind of malefactor, and strove through the whole course of the Peninsular War to conciliate the inhabitants by the exercise of a strict discipline, which removed fear from the minds of non-combatants. On entering France, it became even more important that the countryside should not be roused into a guerrilla warfare. The Basques and Gascons of South-West France would be specially hard to deal with, if roused. Therefore Wellington redoubled his precautions, ordered that everything was to be paid for in

cash, and would not allow to enter France large bodies of Spaniards, on whose discipline he could not depend. That he was repaid is shown by the complete absence of trouble with a fiery and jealous population, and by the complaint of Marshal Soult, his adversary, that the farmers concealed their stores from the French (who had no money to pay for them), and brought them to market when the enemy arrived.

Colonel Henderson, in his account of the Seven Days' Battle on the Chickahominy in 1862, says: "The majority of the infantry . . . streamed in disorder to the rear. . . . As at Bull Run, the disciplined soldiers alone showed a solid front among the throng of fugitives. Not a foot of ground had they yielded till their left was exposed by the flight of the remainder."

There is a distinction to be made between discipline and ordinary good behaviour. I quote again from Colonel Henderson:

"Temperate, obedient and well conducted, small as was the percentage of bad characters and habitual misdoers, the discipline of the Southern soldiers was still capable of improvement. The assertion at first sight seems a contradiction in terms. How could troops, it may be asked, who so seldom infringed the regulations, be other than well-disciplined? For the simple reason that discipline in quarters is an absolutely different quality from discipline in battle. . . . Subordination to the law is the distinguishing mark of all civilised society. But such subordination, however praiseworthy, is not the discipline of the soldier, though it is often confounded with it. A regiment of volunteers, billeted in some country town, would probably show a smaller



list of misdemeanours than a regiment of regulars. Yet the latter might be exceedingly well-disciplined, and the former have no real discipline whatever. Self-respect—for that is the discipline of the volunteer—is not battle discipline, the discipline of the cloth, of habit, of tradition, of constant association and of mutual confidence. Self-respect, excellent in itself, and by no means unknown among regular soldiers, does not carry with it a mechanical obedience to command, nor does it merge the individual in the mass, and give the tremendous power of unity to the efforts of large numbers.”

It is evident that the discipline of the soldier is something *sui generis*.

The makers of armies in the eighteenth century, and indeed for the greater part of the nineteenth, aimed at turning out machine-made soldiers, drilled into a high state of discipline. We recognise nowadays that a far more potent weapon for war is obtained when the effort, at first sight self-contradictory, is made to produce an army completely trained and disciplined, and to have its individuals at the same time accustomed to use their own intelligence to the full and encouraged to cultivate personal initiative. This has made the task of the officer harder than before, but the dual aim can be achieved. If not achieved, the army will go down before those who do succeed in it.

A disciplined nation is one that has learned enough of the value of co-operation, and that has been sufficiently instructed in regard to the country's position among the Powers. Such a nation will produce a disciplined army, if training be adequate, organisation



good, and the corps of officers be composed of men of the right sort. When the individuals understand the nation's dangers, they will submit readily to authority.

The habit of discipline is most easily inculcated in early youth. Schoolboys can be disciplined more readily than men whose first taste of it comes at the age of twenty. This alone is a strong argument in favour of cadet corps and all such institutions.

## CHAPTER X

### PHYSICAL FEATURES OF A THEATRE OF WAR

Strategist looks first for Facilities for Movement—Then for Barriers—Napoleon on Obstacles—Desert Difficulties—Railways—Roads retain their Importance—Information wished for, but not to be found in Maps, in case of Railways, Roads, Plains, Rivers, Mountain Ranges—Narrow Range difficult to defend—Nature of Transport depends on Country and Climate—Strategical Barrier often helps Assailant—Napoleon in April 1796—Geographical Difficulties are the Opportunity of the great Strategist—A Line of Railway may Dominate the Strategy of a Campaign—Great Reconnaissances ordered by Napoleon—Obstacle of Landing on Hostile Shore

A COMMANDER with unknown country around him is like a mariner without a compass. On occasion, an adequate knowledge of the country may be of even more importance than information of the enemy's dispositions.

The knowledge can seldom be minutely exact, for mere maps, however accurate, are usually prepared for civilian purposes, and fail to show many items of information necessary for the strategist and tactician. They require, in a word, to be *militarised*, and supplemented by reports. But, if reasonably accurate, they afford, even when done on a small scale, the data requisite for the formation of a strategic scheme.

It is important now to inquire what are those things

that affect military operations and which depend on physical features.

The first thing a strategist will look for is facilities for movement. These are roads, railways, navigable rivers and canals, plains offering no great obstacles to troops and their trains. Then the points will be sought for where routes meet, what is the nature of the interdependence between the different kinds of route, and where routes communicate with each other. Points where they become defiles are important, for the defile implies a barrier and is often a strong defensible region.

Therefore the strategist now searches for barriers, which are of several kinds. They may be mountain ranges, formidable rivers, great tracts of dense forest, marshy regions, deserts, the artificial obstacle of fortifications. He will study the existing means of traversing these barriers and of avoiding them.

Of the natural obstacles that have been enumerated, Napoleon says that the desert is the worst, and that a river is the least troublesome, speaking of the case when enemy is disputing the passage. He had had notable experience of two kinds of desert, and of all the other barriers as well. Of deserts, he had experience of a natural one in his march from Egypt to Acre in 1798, and in the return march to Egypt. The enemy did not trouble him, at least on the march north, and he took great care in his preparations for water and food ; but both marches were painful, and the return one was a scene of misery.

In 1812 he had experience of an artificial desert, effected by the Russians all the way from the Niemen to Moscow ; and here, but particularly on the return

journey, the enemy was formidable enough to have to be seriously reckoned with.

To operate in a desert usually compels one very marked modification of the invader's possibilities; he is forced to keep down his numbers to the lowest safe figure, on account of the difficulties of supply. Napoleon, in 1812, did not expect so complete a desert; as things turned out, his huge army could only have been fed on the condition of great slowness of movement, with frequent halts for days of the whole force, all food and forage having to come by road from distant depots in rear. A single railway would have rendered his gigantic project feasible.

The forced diminution of numbers was notably shown in our effort to rescue General Charles Gordon ("Chinese Gordon") in 1884. A substantial army left Lower Egypt and concentrated at Dongola and Korti, where the Nile makes an extensive semicircular loop to the east; so far the river was usefully employed for transport. Then came news that urged speed, owing to Gordon's precarious position. The journey round the great river bend by Berber would take too long, and it was determined to make a dash north across the desert to Metammeh. The distance was one hundred and fifty miles, but the watering-places were few; therefore a substantial part of the army had to be left behind, and a flying column only sent.

Years later, when (Lord) Kitchener marched to Khartoum, no such haste was requisite, a railway was constructed to keep up with the troops for a great part of the way, and the whole powerful army was able to move along the river.



Railways in the hostile territory, which the enemy abandons in face of our advance, will usually be damaged by him ; these consequently cannot be counted on for use immediately we reach them. If these railways cross large rivers, or pierce mountains by long tunnels, it may take months before the lines are again available throughout their length. Again, the line may pass through a hostile fortress, which will have to be reduced before the line can be fully utilised. If the surrounding country be easy, from a railway engineer's point of view, a by-pass may be constructed clear of the fortified zone. The Germans in 1870 had an experience of this kind immediately after the battle of Gravelotte. Having to march west in search of MacMahon's army, they found Toul, through which the main railway passed, held by the French. The attempt at a by-pass was made and abandoned, and transhipment became necessary, until the fortress fell.

It follows from what has been said as to enemy damaging railways that the roads in front of an army become of great importance. The great highroads being known, every effort will be made to gain information about secondary roads, and about the lateral roads that serve to join the great roads. The condition of all of these at different seasons import information not obtainable from maps.

In the same way, great rivers will be known as to their general course, and as to the points where there are bridges over them ; but some of the small rivers shown on a map may be important obstacles, owing to the nature of their banks and their beds and the swiftness of their currents.

Forest regions, again, may have parts where there are clearings, and parts where the trees are scattered, affording passage to all arms. Marshy tracts may be traversable with guides. Discovery of unexpected facilities of this kind, and skilful use of them, have played a great part in war.

A very general statement of the topographical information wished for, but not shown on maps, would read somewhat as follows :—

**RAILWAYS.**—Points where really serious damage can be done by the enemy ; facilities, for repair or reconstruction, in the vicinity ; water supply along the line ; alteration of gauge ; liability to flooding.

**ROADS.**—Which are metalled, and where materials for repair are available ; where the gradients are prolonged and severe ; present condition, and condition in the worst season.

*Example.*—Our official account of the Russo-Japanese War says, in respect of Korea : “ The roads, or rather unmetalled tracks, are of varying width and generally steep and stony. During dry weather, cavalry, infantry and mountain artillery can move freely, but in wet weather, or when the ground is thawing, movements are extremely difficult.”

**PLAINS.**—Nature of crops, if any ; whether much fenced, or quite open ; whether the surface varies much, according to season, in the matter of practicability of passage ; solidity or otherwise of the villages ; water supply.

*Example.*—The same official account says, of the valley or plain of the Liao-Ho in Manchuria : “ Immense crops of millet and beans are grown. . . . During

the rains it (the millet or kao-liang) quickly grows to between 12 and 15 feet in height, thus obscuring the view and serving as a screen for troops. . . . July and August are the hottest months. . . . The rainy season generally occurs during these months. . . . The rainfall is at times so heavy as to inundate the country and cause damage to the railway. . . . The country is generally ice-bound from November to March, when the rivers, being frozen, are passable for heavy traffic. Roads in the European sense do not exist, being mere tracks through the soft soil, and after heavy rains, or when the thaw begins, become impassable. The lack of good means of communication limits the period during which military operations can be carried on to the dry season, for the cold in winter is so severe that troops are practically forced at that time to resort to quarters."

**RIVERS.**—If large, and flowing in the direction of the proposed advance—their navigability, whether continuous or not; supply of local boats, and whether these are suitable; whether enemy, when met, must confine himself to one bank.

If their course is athwart the line of advance—whether the enemy can come forward far enough to dispute the passage; dominance of one bank or the other at various places; whether passable without bridges in dry season; extent to which fords are apt to be obliterated after rain; where the country is apt to be flooded.

If to be defended, a permanent or temporary fortress on both banks is of great advantage. The confluence of two large rivers often affords a still greater advantage,



by affording three fronts ; for the defenders these can be closely knit by frequent bridging within the defended zone, while the enemy has to operate on comparatively wide exterior lines.

**MOUNTAIN RANGES.**—The vicinity of any pass that has a good road is the important region. If the enemy has a fort blocking the pass, or can strengthen his defence of it by field works, facilities for turning the pass are plainly of value. The long spurs, jutting out from the main range, that are a common feature, are worthy of study. If on your side, their existence may render communication, between troops attacking different passes, only possible by long detours to the rear. If on the enemy's side, your study of them will show to what extent he will be hampered in his defence by the same kind of difficulty.

You should know during what months snow may be expected in the passes, for, after the range is won and passed, you may find your communications cut.

A range that is narrow, quickly merging on each side into easy ground, is usually more difficult to defend than a range in which the mountain country extends, in the direction of attack, for several marches. If, in this latter kind of range, there are facilities within the range for *lateral* concentration of defenders, along with readily defensible defiles on the slopes facing the assailant, the barrier will be difficult to force. Wellington had this advantage in the Pyrenees (Map I.), in 1813, after Vittoria, when Marshal Soult pronounced his assault from the Nivelle. By delaying the French in the long defiles from St Jean Pied de Port to Pampe-luna, and through the Maya Pass to Pampeluna, the



British commander was afforded time to bring up strong reinforcements from his left, which was on the Bidassoa and towards San Sebastian, thus baffling an attack which began well and looked most formidable.

Climate and the nature of a country have an important bearing on the kind of transport with which a commander must supply himself. The British army has had more varieties of this kind to deal with than any other army. In West Africa and China, and in cases like the Abor Expedition, we have had to depend greatly, sometimes entirely, on carriers, as the Japanese had to do in Korea. These can indeed go wherever troops go, but each man carries barely fifty pounds, and they are liable to fits of panic and desertion, and require a great deal of supervision.

Pack animals—mules and ponies and donkeys—are the next stage, used freely in our Indian hill expeditions. Elephants, camels, bullocks are all used on occasion, both for pack and draught, and it is important to study the conditions beforehand so that the right kind may be provided in sufficient numbers, and time be afforded to organise them and to become familiar with their use.

Wheeled transport, with horses or mules, is the regulation mode, but the nature of the country, and the local draught cattle and forage must be studied, for the regulation carts and waggons are sometimes not suitable. Thus we used bullock waggons in South Africa for the rear echelons of heavy transport. In fact, it is usually found that the local people have evolved a system of transport that is the best for their own country.

Only water transport bears any comparison with the facility afforded by a line of railway. It has been

calculated that a single train, carrying three hundred and fifty tons two hundred miles in a day, does the work of ten thousand General Service waggons. A single freight-ship of quite moderate tonnage will do the work of ten trains.

A theatre of war must also be studied in relation to its suitability for motor road transport, fast or slow. In a country like Great Britain, where the network of roads is very close, and the roads for the most part good, it is plainly indicated that the Territorial Army, which is to withstand raids or an invasion, should have all of its rear echelons of the mechanical type, thus easing the strain that will arise in war-time on the equine resources of the country.

Reverting to the subject of a strategical barrier, a note may here be added. It is that the existence of a barrier is often of great advantage to an assailant. This sounds like a paradox, but it has proved itself true on many occasions in the history of war. It is the existence of the barrier with its issues that induces a defender so often to disseminate his troops in a cordon, in the effort to block all the issues ; if the barrier were not there, he would probably be wise enough to keep a greater concentration. And it is the existence of the barrier that enables the assailant to conceal his movements from the knowledge of the enemy, and thus fall upon one part of him in superior force.

A notable example is afforded by the opening phase of Napoleon's campaign of 1796 in North Italy, which has already been referred to in Part I., Chapter IV., and will be dealt with again more fully in Part II., Chapter III. It was the barrier of the Ligurian Apennines

that enabled Napoleon to interpose his mass between the Allies (Map II.). Without it, he could not have reached the allied centre ; he would have had to fight them in conjunction.

It is to be expected that the trend of lines of communication will depend greatly on physical features. In the case last cited, Napoleon had his line to his left flank, with the sea close at his back, affording a narrow zone of manœuvre in the direction of his single line. This is what differentiates the strategy of 1796 from that of Waterloo. There Napoleon had the same problem of two allies for enemies, extended in a long cordon and weak where they joined ; but there was no barrier and he had a broad base and a wide choice of lines of communications.

It is truly the case that difficulties caused by physical features are the opportunity of the great strategist. They help him to do unexpected things, and the resulting surprises are the means of decisive victory. He uses them so as to have "full strength" in its most complete signification. The tortuousness of mountain regions, the apparently forbidding barriers of great rivers, afford him the means of ensuring that he shall be most strong at the decisive collision, and that his enemy shall be least strong.

The geography of many countries, perhaps notably of Central Europe, looked at broadly in its great ranges and rivers and plains, has had a marvellous effect in assimilating campaigns in them. The Danube and the Rhine and the Bohemian mountains are great permanent facts that are seen to have a perennial effect upon the course of wars in widely different ages. Under varied



conditions of numbers, armaments, progress in civilisation, great features like these have forced military operations into grooves, decisions have occurred within a small radius of certain points, the steps that led to them have often had a remarkable similarity.

In our days, when the transport of armies tends to become every year more bulky, the existence of a line of railway will often dominate completely the strategic plan of a campaign, just as in the past a single good road often did so. Such facilities will sometimes be abandoned for the purpose of effecting a surprise stroke, but it will only be for the moment and with intention of picking up quickly another line of communications equally commodious or more commodious. Thus Lord Roberts abandoned the Cape Town-Kimberley railway line (Map IX.) when he broke the Boer strategic front between Magersfontein and Stormberg, but he had an early prospect of using the Queenstown-Bloemfontein railway instead, and of recovering touch with Cape Town from this railway through De Aar. Sherman became a flying column through Georgia, but he was aiming at a much more commodious base on the Atlantic Coast.

Napoleon used the St Bernard Pass in 1800 to surprise the Austrians in Piedmont (Map II.), but he was confident that in a few weeks he would have acquired a broad base from the Riviera to the St Gothard.

Sir Redvers Buller, attempting the relief of Ladysmith, was so beset by geographical difficulties to right and left that he was compelled to guard jealously his Durban railway communication, and was confined in consequence to purely tactical outflanking ventures,



having no scope for strategic turning movements. The Japanese in Manchuria were in the same plight, and their strategy in consequence lacked the wide venturesomeness that rendered Napoleon's campaigns so remarkable.

The master of war was always at great pains to make himself acquainted with the military features of the country before him. When he foresaw, in 1805, that he would be at war with Austria, he formed in his mind the general outlines of his plan, and he then sent out experienced officers, Murat, Savary, Bertrand, etc., to make a great reconnoissance beyond the Rhine and in the Danube valley. The orders for these officers are to be found in Napoleon's correspondence, and the student can trace in them the germination of the plan of campaign. His officers, despatched on such work, had a general instruction of the following kind :—"When I ask for a reconnoissance, I do not wish you to provide me with a plan of campaign. The word 'the enemy' ought not to appear in your report. Your business is with roads, their nature, the slopes, the heights, the defiles, the obstacles; to verify whether wheels can pass—and to abstain entirely from plans of campaign."

Two considerations come into play in such work. The first is that the reconnoissance, whether done in peace or war, should be carried out by a trained military officer; the second is that the information he is ordered to collect should be in relation to a more or less definite plan of operations already conceived by the superior who sends out the officer. Thus, for an advance down the valley of the Danube on both banks, navigability and

boat supply would be asked for, as was done by Napoleon on the occasion just referred to.

A matter not yet touched upon is the obstacle implied in the operation of landing upon a hostile shore. If the actual landing can be done without opposition, then the geographical knowledge requisite is little more than that of the facilities for disembarkation, while the knowledge of how to deploy rapidly thereafter and gain a zone of manœuvre may also come into play ; but if the enemy may appear before the landing is complete, then a good tactical covering position may assume a capital importance.

If the coast-line be extensive, the secrecy of the sea affords scope for effecting surprise, and this would always be done, unless some great strategic advantage would accrue from forcing a landing. The Japanese did all their landings in Korea and Manchuria in such a way as to avoid opposition ; so did British and French in the Crimea, and Wellington at Mondego Bay.

## CHAPTER XI

### SELECTION OF OBJECTIVE

Masters of War have one Objective—Failure of Boers in South Africa—Napoleon on French Action after Talavera—Examples of Wrong Objective—von Moltke in 1870 chooses rightly—Unfounded German Criticism on Lord Roberts' Strategy after Paardeberg—Instances where "Chief Hostile Mass" was not the True Objective

LITTLE more than a century ago two great geniuses retaught the militant world the art of war. These were Napoleon and Nelson, and the lesson they taught was that the main hostile force ought to be the chief, and therefore—always remembering the principle of "full strength"—practically the sole objective. To destroy the hostile thing that chiefly menaced was their aim, knowing that everything else would quickly drop in, once that was achieved. Thus Nelson sought the French fleet, and was prepared "to follow it round the world," if necessary.

In the same spirit Napoleon taught.

But war is no pedantic art, and in it "every case is a particular case"; so circumstances will arise, and have arisen, in which it is wise to avoid the mass and choose another objective.

It is usual to find writers complicating the discussion by talking of principal, secondary, eventual objectives,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See, *e.g.*, Derrécagaix in "La Guerre Moderne," an excellent work.

and what not ; but this is mere verbiage. Masters of war have one objective. This does not mean that they are blind to other things, for they have an unswerving resolution to reach and deal with that objective, *in spite of the enemy* ; but these supplementary considerations are, for them, not objectives. If these were objectives, they would reach them against all difficulties and in spite of changes of situation ; but it is only in the case of the true objective that they allow themselves no abandonment on account of difficulties or changes in the situation.

Consider the failure of our enemies in South Africa (Map IX.). Their avowed aim was to drive us into the sea, and occupy Durban, Port Elizabeth, East London and Cape Town. Their objectives should therefore have been our three armies that advanced on the railways from these places, to the exclusion of everything that was not hindering them from driving these three bodies into their ships. Our Ladysmith force had, of course, to be hemmed in, but Kimberley and Mafeking, with their small garrisons of irregulars, were no real hindrance, and only needed watching. Instead of this, these places were constituted chief objectives by the untrained strategic minds, and the rest of their forces, rendered too weak, abandoned the initiative, and sank into trenches on the Tugela, at Stormberg and Colesberg, and on the Kimberley railway line, to cover their faulty pursuit of their false objectives.

When Wellington, having won the battle of Talavera (1809) (Map I.), and heard of the danger that threatened his rear owing to the advance of Soult in unexpected



strength from Salamanca to the Tagus,<sup>1</sup> was forced to retreat to the south of the Tagus towards Elvas and Lisbon, his retirement was hardly molested, such was the ignorance of war on the part of Joseph, Napoleon's brother and King of Spain. Napoleon himself (according to de Jomini) commented as follows :—

“ If Joseph had been a better soldier . . . he would have given Wellington no breathing space. . . . He should have fallen upon the enemy wherever he found them, were it towards Lisbon or Cadiz. Never did so fine a chance present itself in the whole Spanish war. . . . Soult proposed, it is said, to the King to move on Lisbon by forced marches, at the moment when Wellington was seeking safety towards Badajoz. The moment certainly might seem favourable for anticipating the enemy in the Portuguese capital and thus upsetting his whole defensive plan. But why rush to Lisbon, when Wellington had the power of basing himself on Cadiz ? It was against *his army* that the four Corps should have been directed. . . . The most experienced soldiers have generally agreed that this was the decisive moment of the whole war, and that failure come in the end because this chance was let slip.”

At a later stage, when Massena was breaking himself against the lines of Torres Vedras, the same Marshal Soult was playing about in Andalusia and besieging Cadiz, instead of aiding Massena in dealing with the true objective, the British army.

At an earlier stage, in 1808, Napoleon was himself in Spain. He quickly defeated three Spanish armies, entered Madrid, and made plans for subjugating the

<sup>1</sup> See Part I., Chapter V., p. 45.

country, ignoring the little army of Sir John Moore, which was concentrating on the middle Douro, and was within an ace of defeating Soult on the French line of communications. Napoleon, in dispersing 100,000 Spaniards, thought he had disposed of the "chief hostile mass," and he can only be excused on the ground of his then ignorance of the character of the commander and the quality of the 30,000 troops who formed Moore's little army. That 30,000 was the "chief hostile mass."

There are countless instances of wrong selection of objective. In 1877 the Russians proposed to cross the Danube (Map X.) and march to Constantinople without disposing of the substantial Turkish forces to right and left, at Widin and in the Quadrilateral. With the forces they brought to the invasion, Constantinople was too far off; and when Osman Pasha, from Widin, seized and fortified Plevna close to the proposed line of march, they had to conform and Plevna became the prime objective.

Geographical objectives have sometimes led commanders astray, when the living army was the true objective. Some of the above examples are examples of this. Another is afforded by the action of Benedek, the Austrian commander in the war of 1866 against Prussia (Map VII.). He seems to have fixed his eye upon a certain region in North Bohemia, towards the Upper Iser, and there he was going to mass for battle, regardless of what the enemy might be doing. When his mass, coming from Moravia in the south, was close to the Elbe about Josefstadt, the Prussian right wing was reaching the Upper Iser, their left wing was passing the mountains in three columns, on Nachod, Eipel and

Trautenau. He missed his chance of falling upon their left wing in strength, apparently because he had made up his mind to go towards the Iser. A region was fixed in his mind, and not the live army of the enemy.

Von Moltke's directive, in the same campaign, to the Prussian armies to make Gitschin their aim was in a different category altogether, as the comments in the Prussian Official Account show. It was not to be Gitschin regardless of the enemy, and was not understood as such by any of the recipients of the order.

In 1870, the 1st and 2nd German Armies, marching from Trier and from the Bingen-Mannheim region respectively, had for objective the French concentration of five corps that stood between the Saar and Metz (Map IV.). When the latter sustained defeat on 6th August at Spicheren in the person of one of its corps, and fell back on Metz, the troops were still von Moltke's objective for his 1st and 2nd Armies. The fortress was a secondary matter, or he would not have run the risks of Vionville, and of the battle of Gravelotte, with his front towards his own base.

After Gravelotte the intention, to be sure, was to march on Paris, but that city was not the objective; it was simply the point where MacMahon would be likely to rally all available troops. That this was so is shown by the eagerness with which the Germans sought to discover the whereabouts of the remaining field army of the French and its movements, and the unhesitating manner in which von Moltke wheeled his 200,000 men to the right as soon as ever he had a hint that the enemy was really committed to the insane attempt of marching round the German right flank.



If one can imagine von Moltke having at this stage been guilty of the error of making Paris his objective, one may suppose he would have detached a couple of army corps and a cavalry division to hang on to MacMahon's flank, and have continued his westerly march with the other six corps. He might have been able to walk into Paris, but his communications would be cut, Bazaine would be relieved, and the commander of the investment of Metz would have had to fight against superior numbers without hope of reinforcement.

In the operations of the 3rd Army, advancing from Landau and Germersheim, there is no less clear indication of correct choice of objective at the opening of a war. The French intention to make a premature dash across the Rhine was known to the German General Staff; but when it was seen that the intended shot was hanging fire, and it was judged that their own preparations were approaching completeness, headquarters knew that the best way to prevent an invasion was to attack. The following order was sent to the Crown Prince, commanding 3rd Army:—

“30th July, 9 P.M. His Majesty holds it opportune that 3rd Army, as soon as it has been joined by the Baden and Württemberg Divisions, should advance south by the left bank of the Rhine, to seek the enemy and attack him. By this means we shall be protecting in the most effective manner the whole of South Germany.”

Baden and Württemberg, afraid of a French invasion, had wished that 3rd Army should defend their part of the Rhine by remaining on the right bank. This would not only have committed the Germans to double



lines of operations, but would have lost them half their initiative. The kind of operation which the South Germans were urging is due to a faulty conception, the corrector of which is this—that the placing of forces between an enemy and his objective is not the only way of preventing him from reaching it, and is often not the best way.

Certain comments in the German Account of our war in South Africa, on Lord Roberts' operations after the capture of Cronje, have bearing on the subject of this chapter. "Even granting that the occupation of the capitals was effected without much trouble or bloodshed, those successes were illusory, seeing that the live force of the enemy was not crushed out of existence. . . . Not the crushing of the enemy, but the occupation of towns and districts, became more and more the purpose of the British military endeavour. . . ."

Now, why in reality did Lord Roberts move from Paardeberg to Bloemfontein? Because the main enemy had gone there, and because it was quite necessary to reach a railway for supply purposes. The same reason applies to the march on Pretoria, and we find that no such blame as the German Staff implies is imputable to Lord Roberts.

A few examples can be found of cases where the "chief hostile mass" is properly not the chief objective. One occurs in 1814, when the allied armies of Bohemia and Silesia, operating the invasion of France, took Paris for their objective. At the moment when Napoleon, abandoning the direct defence of Paris, began to aim at his enemy's communications, the latter did no more than place a corps to face him, and continued the march

on Paris, taking the principal strategic point as objective. Paris had this quality for political reasons. Once in the Allies' hands, it could be made to decree Napoleon's abdication. The capture of Paris assured them a result more prompt than could be gained by continuing to fight a chief of the Emperor's capacity.

An instance that may come in the future, if Great Britain is beaten on the sea, is worthy of note. Our islands would be thronged with armed forces, all likely landing-places would bristle with cannon and be seamed with entrenchments. If the enemy did not care about the risk of landing, he would set to work to starve us out. Here the enemy would have begun the war with the usual and proper objective, our war fleet, but the next objective would not be our military force, but the stomachs of forty-five million people.

In warfare with hill tribes on the Indian Frontier, the objective is frequently the chief village, simply because the enemy is apt to be elusive. If the tribe is known to have massed, the mass becomes the objective ; but if no mass, prepared to fight, is ascertained, the destruction of his villages and towers and crops is often the surest way of achieving submission.

## CHAPTER XII

### MORAL FACTORS IN WAR

*Moral* may not be lost, though Circumstances produce Indiscipline—Moore's Retreat—Confidence preserves *Moral*—Ignorance of Enemy's Quality prejudicial to *Moral*—Orders should suggest that Commander is Master of the Situation—The Religious Sanction—Spirit of Troops must be sustained in Marching, as well as in Fighting—Bad Effect of Over-Caution—Chief should study Character of Opposing Chief—And of his own Lieutenants—Napoleon's Errors in this in 1815—Army should know Enemy's Characteristics—Examples

“In war, the *moral* is to the physical as three to one.”

NAPOLÉON,

THE *moral* of an army has been touched upon incidentally, in preceding chapters, and particularly in discussing offensive and defensive. For *moral* is at its best when troops feel like winning, and nothing produces this feeling more readily than a vigorous offensive, or even a successful defensive if troops feel that the defensive attitude is part of a purposeful plan. The defensive for part or all of an army is on occasion a necessity, at least temporarily. It is therefore important, during training, to show to troops that, when entrenched on the defensive for a specific purpose, they are superior in power for the time to an enemy of greater numbers than themselves. This may help to dissipate the usual depressing effect of waiting to be attacked.

British armies in the Peninsula afford several

examples. Sir John Moore's force had to the full "the battle discipline" discussed in Chapter IX., but little of the law-abiding character of civilised society. In the retreat from Benavente through the snowy defiles of Galicia to Corunna, the rearguard brigade, in contact with the enemy and fighting almost daily, comported itself heroically, and there was no falling out or straggling, no loss of guns or baggage. The rest of the army, lacking the stimulus of combat, marching monotonously and ill-fed through dreadful country, exhibited a scene of straggling and general indiscipline that would have disgraced a gang of brigands. The rearguard, with all its combat casualties, lost fewer men than any other brigade of the army.

But the magic of the call to fight at Corunna rehabilitated entirely the military virtue of this army, and the battle was a monument of discipline, *moral* and courage. Such armies, however, are not perfect armies. Their lapse might have been punished by the enemy, in circumstances that are quite conceivable, but their true *moral* was marvellously unimpaired, because they had confidence in their chiefs and in their own fighting capacity. The circumstances conducing to indiscipline were temporary, and did not have long enough to bite into the old-established foundations of military virtue.

The confidence just mentioned is a strong factor in the preservation of *moral*, and another is the confidence of an army in its weapons.

Ignorance of the enemy's quality is apt to have the bad effect of producing unnecessary fear or unsafe confidence. Both are prejudicial to the continuance of a good *moral*. A rude awakening in the case of over-



confidence produces an exaggerated estimate of the enemy, an uncertainty as to what fresh surprises of superiority may at any moment appear, and a consequent loss of *moral*. For uncertainty is apt to lead to depression. A prolonged feeling, for instance, of doubt as to the enemy's intentions, unless one has the initiative in full swing, produces a very bad effect. This is especially true of the defensive, and is one of the strongest objections to that attitude.

It is therefore always advisable to let troops know as much as possible about the enemy's quality and his methods of fighting and his armaments; also about his dispositions. There are obvious reasons why a chief cannot always make known, in an open order, all of his own dispositions and plans; but in all cases, whether troops are to be taken into complete confidence or not, orders and communications which come to their ears should be such as to suggest that the chief is perfectly master of the situation.

A word should be said on the remarkable influence of the religious idea. Every reader of history knows the value of the sanction of religion in relation to staunch fighting capacity. The belief, amounting to assurance, that God is on their side, has again and again nerved men to the achievement of the impossible. This condition is a hyperbolical elevation of the sentiment of the justice of one's cause. "Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just"; and history shows that the assurance that his god is fighting on his side, and that he is fighting in his god's quarrel, puts a keen edge on a sword and nerves the arm as nothing else can do.

It is usual to say that this sort of sentiment is out of

date in civilisation, and that patriotism and sense of duty must take its place, or even a mere desire to uphold the nation's material status. But these can never be so strong as the religious idea.

*Moral* is important in all the activities of a campaign. Successful marching, involving great strain and depressing monotony, may be the turning-point of a campaign. It is particularly important, when such strain is imminent or in progress, that the troops should understand the need for it, and should feel that this effort is putting them on the road to victory. This will never be so, unless they have confidence in their chiefs. Napoleon sometimes imposed heart-breaking marches on his corps, but the troops were confident that, the more arduous and sudden the call, the more complete and glorious would be the coming victory.

Over-caution, which is obvious to the troops, has a bad effect, meaning by over-caution the caution of a mediocre leader who waits too long for detailed intelligence of the enemy, who halts and takes a position and entrenches the moment there is the least uncertainty. The army feels at once that it is not master of the situation; fears arise, and *moral* is depressed. Sir C. Napier, the conqueror of Sind, speaks of "that perpetual entrenching which teaches troops to think themselves inferior to the enemy." It is true that hasty entrenching had not the same value as in our era of much more destructive weapons, but the principle remains. It is right to entrench whenever there is time, just as Cæsar's legions used to do; but it is dangerous to *moral* to stay in the entrenchments merely because they afford some security.

A word here on surprise night attacks. Only the very best troops should be used, for a high *moral* is essential. Numbers are less important than quality. A dozen quotations could be given from the *dicta* or writings of good fighters in support of this.

Great leaders have ever sought to understand the character of the opposing chief, studying most carefully his record in peace and war. On his knowledge of his adversary's nature he can often found the outline at least of a plan, or of some important detail of it. At a given moment in a campaign the chief considers, ponders over, all the things the enemy can do. Material causes, he finds, render some of these less likely than others, and the problem is often still further narrowed down by consideration of the character, rash or cautious, confident or hesitating, of the opposing chief.

When Napoleon and Wellington came into direct opposition for the first and only time in 1815, each underrated his adversary. Wellington seems to have had little conception of the unequalled strategical power of his opponent, who won handsomely in the opening strategy of the campaign. Nor does he seem to have been penetrated by an understanding of the Napoleonic method of one blow at a time, and that in full strength, a method that sprang naturally from the objective genius of the great master of war.

On the other side, Napoleon underrated Wellington. He acknowledged, as the Peninsular War went on that Wellington had gained "an ascendancy" over his marshals, but called him "no great general," "a good man at the war of positions, but of little enterprise," etc., etc. A full understanding of the quality of the



Duke would have imposed some caution, even on Napoleon.

A chief will also study the character of his lieutenants, and allot their tasks accordingly. Correct judgment in this is a common accompaniment of the capacity for high command. But even the greatest have made mistakes in this, an outstanding case being that of Napoleon in his last campaign. He took Soult as chief of staff, a bad selection ; he gave the task of following the Prussians after Ligny to Grouchy, a cavalry officer who had never acted independently before ; he allotted to Ney, whom he himself had called "stupid," the separate work of attending to the British at Quatre Bras ; and all the time he had at Paris, sitting in the War Office, Davout, incomparably the best fighting marshal that remained to him.

Having appointed a lieutenant and knowing his character, orders and instructions to him will be of a tenor conformable to that knowledge. In many cases, misunderstood orders are the fault of the issuer of them.

Along with knowledge on the part of the chief of the opposing commander's quality, the whole army should know the enemy's characteristics. It was with this view that Lord Roberts, on assuming command in South Africa, issued to the troops the valuable paper of warning that appears in full in our Official Account of the war. There may be a general doctrine in an army, but special notice must be taken of the immediate enemy's peculiarities, and adaptations made.

If, for instance, an enemy is known to be of a fine physical courage, who dashes impetuously without reserves, an initial defensive will often be advisable.



Such an enemy exhausts himself rapidly, and can be dealt with by counterstroke.

Double lines, or wide exterior lines, are dangerous against an enemy who explores well and has high strategical mobility, but these systems are comparatively safe against a bad explorer or a strategical sluggard. The Prussians used this method against the Austrians successfully in 1866 in Bohemia, but had Benedek had anything of the quality of Napoleon, von Moltke would have paid dearly for his invasion plan.

Flank marches near a tactically able enemy are hazardous. A notable case is found in Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz, and another in Wellington's at Salamanca. Against a sluggish or timid enemy, the risk is slight, as Frederick the Great showed again and again ; but at Kolin he paid the penalty.

Faced by an enemy of superior mobility, great caution is requisite, as we found in South Africa at Sannah's Post and other places. With such an enemy, it is also very difficult to effect a decisive stroke.

Savages who have no cavalry are easily overawed by squadrons. In one of our Indian expeditions, the operation on hand was to carry the troops along the right side of a fairly broad valley, against a village a few miles distant. Swarms of tribesmen covered the hills on the left, ready to plunge down on the flank of the column ; but the ostentatious deployment of a few troops of horse facing up the valley frightened the hillmen from interfering.

In the same way savages, unaccustomed to artillery, have an inordinate fear of guns ; one gun may be worth a thousand men, on occasion.

## CHAPTER XIII

### POLITICS

The Necessary Preponderance of Politics—Japan and China, in Russian War of 1904—Politics may rule Choice of Theatre—Germany, France, Belgium and Great Britain in a War—Russia in 1877, after Plevna—Politics may tempt to Postponement of Preparations—Britain and Boer Republics—Use of Black Auxiliaries—Desire to please a Nation may produce a "Political Battle," as at Busaco

WHILE the interposition of politics in military affairs has often had a most baleful influence on the operations of a nation's naval and military power, it is needless to insist that such operations must be subordinated to political considerations. For a moment's thought shows that warlike operations are nothing more than an extension of a nation's political activities. When diplomacy, backed by a significant show of strength, fails to impress the antagonist with due respect for the danger he is incurring, the navy and army are mobilised. Then again political considerations come into play, for the choice of where to fight may have to be made under the pressure of the supposed or expressed opinion of other nations, who may join in to one's detriment if their interests are not attended to. But when all the political points are duly weighed and a decision is taken, the statesmen should leave the conduct of the war to the naval and military chiefs.

When Japan found that diplomatic action was not going to succeed in inducing Russia to relax her grip on Manchuria and her threat on Korea, war was inevitable. Both political and military considerations pointed to Korea as the first theatre, once naval superiority was on the way. After that, purely military considerations advocated an offensive alliance with China ; for, though Chinese armies were of no great account, they might have vexed Russian communications and roused the Manchurian population. But politics would here come into play. Japan knew that the participation of China would be against the views of Great Britain and of the United States, for a reason that would weigh also with the Japanese themselves. If Russia were victorious, not only Manchuria and Korea, but perhaps Peking itself, would have formed part of the spoils of war ; and Germany, with her footing at Kiao-Chao, would have extended her holding, while France would probably have made claims for more territory in the south. The partition of China would have begun, and Japan would have seen herself debarred from all future conquests. We should have been forced, against our will, to take a hand in the game of spoliation, and the United States would have found their markets seriously curtailed.

Thus politics imposed on Japan that she should not accept the aid of China, however tempting that aid might be to her commander-in-chief.

In most cases the military advantage of a certain theatre is so great that no other consideration can be allowed to influence the choice ; but this is not always so. These cases are found to be very often occasions when sea power comes into play. Suppose that Germany

is again about to attack France. She knows that the French have a most formidable fortified front from Epinal to Montmédy, and that this front can be conveniently turned by an advance through South Belgium (Map IV.). We, it is to be hoped, should feel compelled to carry out our pledge to defend Belgium; but if Germany had become so powerful on the sea that we could not speedily have an army on the Sambre, the enemy would choose that theatre with some impunity. If, on the other hand, we could reinforce the Belgian army in a few weeks with 150,000 men, Germany would think twice before bringing us and Belgium into the quarrel, and would choose another theatre.

Again, political considerations may induce a belligerent to push on with the next stage of a campaign, when ordinary military prudence would advocate a pause. This may happen from the force immediately available being dangerously small for the object in view, or from the season and climate being such as to render the proposed advance very costly. Into this category comes the determination of the Russians in 1877, when they had captured Plevna, to push on at once for Constantinople, although the winter was imminent and the snow in the Balkan passes was apt to be deep. The haste was urged by the fear of British intervention.

Political considerations may sometimes tempt a nation into postponing preparations to a dangerous extent, and this is particularly likely to happen in nations like our own, which do not arrange to have vast forces ready at short notice.

When relations with President Krüger became



strained, purely military considerations urged the despatch of large forces, but two political points intervened. They were (1) that the Government, hoping for a peaceful settlement, was loath to do anything to precipitate war, (2) that it felt itself arraigned before, or at least watched by, the public opinion of the world, and could not afford to be pointed at as a bully.

Again, it was for political, but also humanitarian, reasons that we did not allow our black subjects in South Africa to have a part in the war. If we had allowed Basutos, Kafirs, Matabeles, Zulus, to take the war-path, the campaign might have been much shortened, but there would remain a legacy of a dangerous kind in renewing the fighting instinct of the blacks, who can be counted in millions. We should have had the difficult task of disarming these hordes, and the world would with justice have set down a black mark against the British race. Politics, in fact, said that this was to be a "white man's quarrel," and we refrained even from using our Indian troops.

Political considerations, then, in their connection with war, are usually bound up with the question of the effect of our proposed proceedings upon the feelings of other nations who may possibly intervene; but sometimes it happens that a particular action is taken on account of its effect on one's people, or on an ally, or on a subject race who may be simmering on the verge of rebellion.

Wellington's stopping to fight at Busaco is a case in point (Map I.). He had prepared the lines of Torres Vedras, and was retreating from the Portuguese frontier at Almeida before the superior numbers of Marshal

Massena, leaving the fortresses of Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida to their fate. Reports from Lisbon announced dismay among the inhabitants, and with these people dismay was apt to turn quickly into disaffection or worse; also dissatisfaction was being expressed in England. So Wellington, having found a position where he was confident he could repel attack, faced about and fought a "political battle," all the time intending to continue thereafter his retreat to the lines, unless the French defeat should be severe enough to force them into a definitive retreat.

Equally political were some of our dispositions at the opening of the South African War. The posting of Symons' Brigade at Dundee in North Natal, and the whole Ladysmith entanglement, were politically inspired pieces of false strategy, for these positions could be, and were, quickly enveloped by superior forces.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE INFLUENCE OF FORTRESSES

Wide Differences of Opinion—Object of Fortification—Two Categories of Fortresses, Statical and Dynamical—Views of Authorities at various dates, Clausewitz, Napoleon, Brialmont—Field Army must not submit to Investment—Plevna threw Permanent Fortification into Temporary Discredit, but France and Germany have both been fortifying largely—German Staff on the Subject, in 1905—Von der Goltz in 1883, and in 1895—German Fortifying has no Defensive Basis—French Fortified Line—Question of Base Magazines on the Frontier—Summing-up of the whole Discussion

**THERE** are few subjects in connection with war which have given rise to more differences of opinion than this one of the value of fortification, its influence on the course of a campaign, sometimes good and sometimes harmful. Every student of the history of war finds himself face to face with the question at almost every turn. The experts, whose exposition of a campaign is before him, venture upon more or less dogmatic opinions backed by cogent examples ; but it is not uncommon to find the same man seeming to express different opinions at different times, when under the influence of the study, in one case, of operations in which fortresses saved the situation, and, in another case, of operations where they had a pernicious effect.

Stated in very general terms, the object of fortifica-

tion, permanent or hasty, is to enable one to hold a given area of ground with fewer troops. The fewer the troops tied to the spot, the greater the number available for active operation, from which alone comes decisive success. This applies also to such a matter as the fortification of dockyards and important mercantile harbours, a work which sets the fleet free to pursue its proper mission, the seeking out and destroying of the enemy's ships.

In every country there are points whose possession must be forbidden to an invader. This necessity produces one category of fortresses, the category that may be called statical. They are at strategic points which are such under all circumstances. Such points are the capital of the country (in most cases), the great arsenals, the great depots of supply, the dockyards (in the case of a maritime country). These places must on no account be lost, and the fortifying of them renders them secure, for a time at least, without having to ascribe to their defence inordinate numbers of troops.

An enemy can defeat you decisively without capturing any of these places, as Napoleon often showed. So there comes into play another kind of fortress, a dynamical category, whose specific object is to be a near support for the active operations of the field army, whether in attack or defence. Sometimes these works are permanent, with plans prepared in time of peace for the addition, at need, of field works to close the gaps between the permanent forts. Such fortified zones may be of the greatest utility even to an army that fully intends to take the offensive.

We have finally the fortification undertaken as the



campaign progresses, purely of the field or temporary type, but capable of most formidable extension if time be available, as the Russians showed at Liao-Yang and Mukden.

The permanent fortress is naturally the more difficult to capture, and for its defence should require fewer men per yard of perimeter than the other. The Japanese attempted to "rush" Port Arthur in 1904, and paid dearly for the venture. It emerged quite clearly that, if the military engineer of our day be given a free hand at building a modern fortress, it will only be taken by the art of the engineer in regular siege.

Strategically, the point of importance is that the fortress has been built at a particular spot for a particular reason, all of which is known to the enemy beforehand. If he thinks he can do without the object thus guarded, or finds the effort of capture inadvisable, he may leave it alone, in spite of which the fortress may quite justify its existence and its costliness for the defender; but the field fortification, strategically placed as the campaign progresses, will usually compel the enemy to attempt its capture, or submit to considerable dislocation of his plan of campaign.

All the great authorities have stated their views on fortification in general, and one finds considerable vicissitudes of opinion at different stages of military history.

Clausewitz says: "Fortified places are the first and most important supports of the defence. An army on the defensive, deprived of fortresses, presents a hundred vulnerable points—it is a body without armour." Thus countries like Belgium, compelled to the defensive,

expend a large proportion of their military budget on fortresses like Antwerp and Liège.

Napoleon says : " Strong places are useful both in offensive and defensive warfare. Doubtless they cannot of themselves hold back an army ; but they are an excellent means of delaying, embarrassing, weakening and disquieting a victorious enemy."

General Brialmont, a Belgian, who directed the modern fortification of Belgium and Holland, and was " lent " to Turkey for similar work after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877, says that on each principal line of invasion there should be two or three good fortresses, in one of which the entire army can take refuge. But when an entire army takes refuge, its fate is sealed, if the enemy is numerous enough to invest the place. It has happened seldom, if ever, that an invested force has escaped destruction, unless there was a field army adequate to relieve it. The force has, it is true, interior lines, can mass and attack a single point and be sure of a temporary preponderance of numbers there ; but the attack has to be purely frontal and against an entrenched and obstructed enemy. The closer the attack progresses, the more it is struck on both flanks by the reinforcements the enemy brings in from right and left. A portion of the fighting men may break through, but will hardly succeed in taking with them materials for a second combat, and will be an easy prey in the open, unless there is another refuge, fortress or relieving army, in the near vicinity.

It is therefore the unpardonable sin for the commander of an important field army to allow himself to

lose his freedom of manœuvre by submitting to investment.

General Pierron and other French authorities prefer to fortify points on the flank of the enemy's line of advance to the capital, on the ground that the fortifying of a modern capital involves so vast a perimeter and so large a garrison.

Bornecque wrote: "The final end of all defensive action is to maintain possession of a given point in order to gain time, which is one of the principal objects of war." Stated thus, there is a lack of vigour in the argument.

When the defence of Plevna astonished the world, much military opinion comported discredit to the idea of permanent fortifications. Viollet-le-Duc wrote: "Except for very special purposes, the day of permanent works is over. In future warfare temporary fortifications ought to play a principal part, and may be made to do so." Nevertheless, both France and Germany, and France in particular, have spent many millions in vast fortress enterprises. The recent actions of these two nations are worth considering.

In 1905 the German General Staff issued a paper: "The Fortress in the Napoleonic Wars and in Modern Times." It acknowledges recent change of opinion in respect of the fortification question, and ascribes such fluctuations to two orders of ideas. The first is the effect of the "uninterrupted progress of technical skill" in making works extraordinarily strong; but the attacker, it says, will always find means to overcome a passive defence.

The second idea is thus expressed: "Military history



teaches, besides, that the technical improvements are not the sole cause of these fluctuations (of opinion). The dominating spirit of an army exercises in this domain a preponderating influence. As a general statement, predilection for fortresses corresponds to periods in which the conduct of war is timorous, . . . while in the epochs of great decisions the destruction of the hostile forces is sought and obtained, in despite of all fortified obstacles."

Now the Germans themselves have been doing much fortification during the last fifteen years ; and yet there is no sign in the German army of reversion to a conduct of war more timorous or less keen for rapid decisions. For twenty years after 1870 the Germans expressed scorn of the French "infatuation" for fortresses, and themselves did no fortifying except at Strassburg. Von der Goltz in 1883, in "The Nation in Arms," heaped scorn on the fortifiers. In 1895 ("The Conduct of War") we find him lending his powerful aid to the idea that permanent fortification—he refers to Metz in particular—can give great help to field operations. Since that date, Germany has been fortifying largely on her western and north-eastern frontiers, as the details of her budget show. In 1899 half-a-million was spent, rising in 1906 to a full million.

The Germans are a thrifty race, and do not spend such sums without a clear aim. Either (1) the General Staff was contemplating the defensive, or (2) it wished to bring forward nearer the frontier the great base magazines, or (3) it was contemplating the usefulness of fortresses in assisting offence. There is nothing to show that the first of these is in question, for you will not find a German



authority willing to stake the safety of his country on masonry and concrete and steel.

Von Bernhardt writes in 1898 ("Elements of Modern War"): "The supremely important thing is to plan operations as completely as possible by combining for the purpose all the material means of the State. . . . This truth applies equally to fortifications, means of defence tied to the soil, useful only if they are attacked, and having the drawback that they withdraw from the decisive theatre enormous resources in personnel and in material. Only those fortresses are useful which, on reasonable forecasts, will be useful for the conduct of *active operations*."

In fact the Germans do not build them because they are strong, but because they are to be strategically useful. At the same time the clause, "useful only if they are attacked," is too absolute, for the strong fortification of a place, useful or indispensable to you, may deter your enemy from meddling with it. His statements, however, and those of many other German writers, dispose effectively of the idea that the German fortification has a defensive basis, or is indulged in because modern skill in construction can make fortresses very strong.

The question now arises whether the new fortifying on the western frontier is the consequence of the simultaneous modification of the grouping of the Continental Powers, the Franco-Russian alliance placing Germany in an inferiority in the matter of trained troops. Taking von Bernhardt again as spokesman, an interesting view emerges, for he declares that, even if the double menace is put in force, there should be no passive defence.

“ One should only employ the defensive on an occasion when the offensive has lost all its natural advantages, that is when, no *manceuvre* being possible, action is restricted to a well-fixed line of operation, or when, fighting only to gain time, the aim is to postpone a decisive battle. . . . There are, of course, limits. The minority with which one wishes to conquer must be in every case large enough to beat a pretty considerable part of the enemy in a decisive fashion, so as, by this victory, to restore equality ; it is the law of number. But, moving within the limits of this law, *the weaker in numbers ought always to take the offensive.*”

In ideas of this nature we shall probably find the root-thought that led the German to call in the aid of permanent fortification. The smaller army would like great freedom of *manceuvre*, so as to have a chance, through skill and surprise and speed, of falling upon a part of the enemy at a time. The smaller army may be the German, if both France and Russia take the field, and the German army in Lorraine is to seek freedom of *manceuvre* by forbidding to the French certain lines of advance, and by providing strong screens for the concentration of field troops.

France, in her great fortification scheme, which in its inception was purely defensive, will now seek precisely the same advantage (Map IV.). Her scheme has been on a vast scale. There is a great group of forts round Belfort, guarding the gap between the Vosges and the Jura ; another fortified zone round Epinal and Remiremont ; a third for Nancy and Toul, followed by a line of forts of various sizes up to the fortress of Verdun and beyond it. This is the first line, and there is a second

at the plateau of Langres, and at Rheims and Laon and La Fère, while Paris is also completely defended. All these works are believed to be of the highest quality. The idea is that certain parts of the frontier are forbidden to the German for any rapid successes at least, while the French army *can* issue anywhere. But the enemy has now an analogous defence, though not so complete a one, in his fortified areas round Strassburg, Metz and Diedenhofen, with a second line of bridge-heads on the Rhine. It is a sort of stalemate, and it is more than suspected that both parties, and especially Germany, are considering operations through Belgium. The Germans, by marching through Belgium south of the Meuse, would emerge about Mezières, and turn the whole French first line. This is now looked upon as so likely that France is said to be resolving to make the Mezières region into another first-class fortress.

The bringing up of the great magazines nearer the frontier seems at first sight a very natural action, for the transport of the vast stores required at the strategical deployment would be so much relieved. Blume in his "Strategy" writes: "It is advantageous to possess *on the frontier* one or several fortified magazines." But he contemplates an immediately successful invasion, and not the more difficult situation the General Staff had in view.

In 1903 General Schröter wrote in the same strain as Blume and goes on: "These (magazines near the frontier) must be . . . shut up in fortresses." But von Moltke in 1867 was denying steadily the need for fortified *magazines* close to the frontier: "A good rail-



way network on our rear, . . . will completely assure our supply."

If stores, essential to the field army, be put into a frontier fortress, the army is apt to be hampered in its freedom by having a point as base ; and, if cut off from the fortress, will lose the use of those stores. Marmont in Spain, at a time when Wellington was master of Portugal, put his siege-train into the fortress of Ciudad Rodrigo, close to the frontier ; the fortress at once became to him a source of anxiety, seriously interfering with the help he should have been affording to Soult farther south ; and when the fortress fell the French also lost the means of retaking it.

Let us see how the existing German fortification scheme can really be used to help offence. The fortified zone, Metz-Diedenhofen, protects the right half of the expected chief concentration directly, while it also protects indirectly the central gap from Metz to Saverne. For though the Germans would not be completely ready, if the French began a "premature" invasion from Toul and Nancy, they would certainly have already at Metz, independent of its garrison, a substantial force quite fit to trouble the left flank of the invasion. This force could act with boldness, having the fortified zone in immediate rear, and great reinforcements arriving daily, as concentration progressed. Any detraining that was to have been done on the gap would be effected some marches back, as was done by 2nd Army in 1870, and the invasion would soon find itself up against the fortified zone of Strassburg. Thus would the Metz group of works be assisting offensive operations, if the French pushed through the forty-five-mile gap.



If, again, the armies were ready simultaneously, it would be impossible for the French to know what field force was hidden in the Metz area. A great battle in the gap would always be liable to interference from Metz, which fact would compel the French to keep a special reserve or flank guard on that side, and after all the whole German field army might be working towards the ground between Nancy and Epinal. The fortified Metz area, acting now as a screen, would be assisting offensive operations.

The conclusions at which we arrive from the German proceedings and writings may conveniently form our summing-up of the brief discussions in this chapter.

The General Staff has no intention of the defensive in its fortifying, even if the double attack on the Empire should place them in numerical inferiority; the fortresses have been built from no craven fear, but positively as an aid to vigorous offence; the Staff is imbued with the sound, virile idea that numerical inferiority is no excuse for planning deliberately a defensive attitude; this inferiority may be met by a system of fortification, planned in strict subordination to definite designs of offence; the system will also have the advantage of enabling a large part of the concentration to be done, and safely done, close to the frontier, when, if no "premature" hostile invasion takes place, the full gain may accrue from one's mobilisation and strategical deployment being completed before those of the enemy.

Tactically, a fortress can provide extension of a battle front, render a flank safe, and, on the defensive, be a screen for troops awaiting the time for counter-attack.

## PART II

### CHAPTER I

#### THE OPENING OF A CAMPAIGN

Mobilisation—Its Special Difficulties in Great Britain—Concentration Plan should provide a sufficient Zone of Manœuvre—Note on interfering with Hostile Deployment—“German” Doctrine of Deployment and Advance—Its Advantages and Dangers—“French” Doctrine—Its Advantages and Dangers—Exploring and Protective Echelons—Third Method, Convergence of Isolated Columns—Prussians in 1866, Japanese in 1904—British Oversea Invasion—Britain as Ally on the Continent

THE opening of a campaign is preceded by mobilisation of the armed forces, or of that portion of them that is held requisite for the purpose in view. This has been already touched upon in the chapter on Organisation, where it was pointed out that the conversion from peace-footing to war-footing should give rise to no dislocation of existing units. Other principles are that the mobilisation plan should be worked out beforehand to the smallest details, be rehearsed partially from time to time with typical units, and have the actual work connected with it decentralised, while every officer and man should understand clearly his share in the work.

The operation, though done on a larger scale among the great military nations, is simpler in system for them

than for us. Our special difficulties are due to our voluntary system, to the fact that half our army is scattered over the earth, and that units at home are shifted from station to station at short intervals of a few years.

Following upon mobilisation comes the concentration of regimental units into the higher units. This is followed by concentration of the highest units (army corps on the Continent) into armies, an operation which is naturally done towards a threatened point, or in accordance with a plan of offence. On the Continent the contiguous territories render the nature of a first concentration a matter of the highest importance, for the concentration is at once followed by the opening warlike move, the strategical deployment.

Before discussing the two chief theories on the subject which we may conveniently call the German and the French doctrine, one principle that applies to all methods may be briefly disposed of. Whatever be the nature of the concentration, it is essential that there be a sufficient zone of manœuvre. The commander wishes from the detrainings to deploy in a certain manner in accordance with his plan. If he has not ensured plenty of space free from hostile interference, he may well find himself engaged before he is ready, and have to begin altering his plan from the very outset. This means an early loss of the initiative.

Since it is so important to have this initial unrestricted zone, the commander will naturally find it advantageous to take all steps to deal with the enemy's advanced troops. Such operations may have to be undertaken before the commander has his own deployment com-

plete, and great caution should therefore be exercised, unless there is very good reason to believe that the enemy is even less near to readiness than he is himself. An energetic attempt to interfere with the enemy may bring on combats difficult to break off, and may drag the commander into the necessity of dislocating his own growing deployment, to the eventual detriment of his plan of campaign.

There are two ways of preventing interference with your concentration and deployment—namely, by sheer distance, and by the provision of a covering force. Kuropatkin in Manchuria wished to do it by distance, but was prevented by fears at home for the safety of Port Arthur. The two methods may also be combined. The “covering force” may be a fortified zone, as it is in the case of the French and the Germans.

Briefly, this point may be stated thus—detrain, or disembark from your ships, at such a distance that you have ample free space to effect deployment, and the beginning of your advance, without fear of premature collision of masses.

The nature of the concentration must depend greatly on the railways. When the railheads are favourable, the detraining may almost constitute the deployment; in other cases, considerable marches, often flankwise, of many large units may have to be made. It is then that the zone of manoeuvre must be specially ample.

The strategical deployment is the first move of the plan. Therefore the nature of the deployment will be founded on the doctrine of war that is in the commander's mind, or that is in vogue at the nation's military headquarters. The two chief doctrines, for



“*La grande Guerre*,” be it understood, have been alluded to already as the “German” and the “French.”

The “German” doctrine leads to an immediate deployment as for battle, a sweeping advance on a broad front, the idea being to roll the great machine onward, impose one’s will upon the enemy, and not hesitate even when the hostile dispositions are only very imperfectly known. This broad advance has at least the advantage of rendering supply more easy, but its success may be greatly dependent on topography. Physical features, and a hostile fortress or group of works, are apt to bring about gaps or crowding, and it is before these have been readjusted that an active enemy, armed with good intelligence, is likely to present himself.

This early formation of a great line renders it difficult for the army to make any considerable change of formation with speed. If the commander has made a good forecast of the hostile dispositions—that is, of what they will be when he reaches the enemy—no change will have to be made. The intention in this system is that, as soon as any part of the great front impinges upon the enemy, everything to right and left shall wheel inwards and envelop him. But if the forecast has been substantially wrong the difficulty of taking up a fresh formation may be very great, and will certainly cause delay. A force deployed finds anything but advance or retreat far from easy.

It is on the success or non-success of this wheeling-in that everything will depend. We are speaking of very large forces; a German deployment against France may well display 800,000 men. On a front of eighty

miles there would be 10,000 to a mile, or nearly 6 per yard, a reasonable density for battle. A wing, wheeling inwards, might easily meet with a substantial defensible obstacle, such as a river, held by a delaying force of enemy, and be neutralised for some days by inferior numbers, thus affording the enemy the chance of being the stronger where contact first took place. Ground also, formerly looked upon as weak, can be rendered astonishingly strong by a few days of skilful entrenching—strong, that is, in a delaying sense.

One thing at least is quite certain—that an attack of this “German” kind, made by a resolute and confident commander leading huge numbers of good, highly organised and well-equipped troops, can only be sustained by counter-attack. The worst thing possible would be to allow the “German” attacker to proceed far with his inward wheel, because scope for manœuvre would quickly vanish. This enveloping method, aiming at smothering the enemy, whether it be attempted from an initial deployment on a long, continuous front, or from separate points by convergence, has its dangers, for the belligerent who practises it, chiefly if not entirely during the strategic phase. The danger is over when the enemy begins to be really hemmed in, for he is then approaching the evil plight of the invested.

The “French” doctrine now comes up for discussion. It is the product, apparently, of much study of Napoleon’s warfare, and of a conviction that his favourite method must contain the true germs of strategic truth.

We know what Napoleon said: Concentrate your

army—" *en arrière et loin de l'ennemi* "—invade across a single frontier on *one* line of operations—turn or out-flank the enemy's wing without separating the army. The dominating idea was that, with one's troops well in hand and practically in one body, one can ensure full strength for the decisive battle. But we study not only Napoleon's *dicta*, but his acts, and we find that he effected his most complete successes when he operated in accordance with his *dicta*. From this study we find that his method usually resulted in the formation of what he himself called "*bataillon carré*"—that is, he approached the enemy in a mass that had as much depth as breadth. He meant to impose his will upon the enemy; he knew how the enemy was situated on a certain date, but he recognised that, by the time of collision, the enemy might be found to have made considerable changes of disposition.

We have said that the "French" doctrine appears to be the product of study of Napoleon's warfare, but it seems to us there is a lack in the doctrine of that strong objective spirit that put the master at the head of modern captains. This will presently appear.

The doctrine is thus described in von Löbell's Reports, 1908: "The leading idea is to await the reception of reports of the enemy's action before making final arrangements. Consequently, contrary to German procedure, they move on a narrow front with great depth."

The efficiency of this, if it is to meet an advance on the "German" method, depends almost entirely on the extent to which the chief is going "to await the reception of reports." Let him wait the least bit too



long and the initiative may be lost by restriction of the zone of manœuvre.

The formation adumbrated would, in a country well supplied with good roads in all directions, facilitate a rapid deployment whether to right or left, or to right and left, and would be good for a sudden necessity for an oblique or right-angle change of front. It will be seen that, in this connection, the method is superior to the "German" method, but also that this statement of facility for a sudden conversion almost implies a waiting for the enemy's action, and in this lies the danger of all such doctrines. The formation is good enough if the commander has the resolution to keep the initiative, and to force the enemy to conform to his actions. Granted this character in the "French" chief, the "German" method might lead to grave inconveniences, owing to the notorious difficulty of effecting a fresh grouping in an army already fully deployed.

Aircraft, and masses of cavalry with guns, would in both cases be pushed forward for strategical exploration, and for delaying and interfering with the hostile marches. Between the army and these specially mobile troops there would be travelling a protective screen of mounted brigades, artillery and engineers, stiffened sometimes with infantry.

Under the "German" method, both mobile echelons might at first be on two long lines, whose wings would naturally wheel inwards as the "French" enemy was located, and would then tend to become denser as the conversion progressed.

If the "French" mobile echelons began on similar lines of equal length with those of the enemy, the wings



would be weak, from distance of support. If, on the contrary, they began in a curve covering the army's flanks, great part of the hostile mounted troops would have an unopposed opportunity for envelopment, and would be quickly followed by the wheeling-in of the wings of the enemy's army. Unrestricted zone of manoeuvre would soon be lost.

The conclusion is that the "French" method requires for success that the chief have something of the ruthless decisiveness of a Napoleon. The "German" commander has a prearranged plan of great simplicity, and is to trust greatly to numbers, good organisation and good army corps leaders. The "French" commander is to make his plan when he touches the enemy, and is to trust to rapid dislocation from mass in accordance with a swiftly assumed resolution. At that moment when the "German" wheel is imminent, the "French" chief must be well on with his own operation, an operation that must be calculated to compel the enemy to cease wheeling and make in haste fresh dispositions towards a seriously threatened quarter. If a "German" advance can be in this indirect manner checked by a decision-seeking chief using the "French" doctrine, there would be good hopes of victory for the latter.

A third method of opening a campaign is that employed by von Moltke in 1866 against Austria, and by the Japanese in 1904 in Manchuria. This method, the starting of columns or armies from isolated points, is contrary to Napoleon's maxims, and is strongly condemned by him. He objects to columns entering the danger zone while still separated from each other. But

intelligence of the unpreparedness of the enemy, or a great preponderance of numbers, may render the risk justifiable.

In 1866 the Prussians were undoubtedly running grave risk when they passed into Bohemia (Map VII.) in three widely separated armies, even though two of these were quickly in touch. The Austrian commander, with his mass fairly concentrated, was rapidly approaching a central position, and it was only his pusillanimity that prevented him from meeting the Prussian 2nd Army with preponderance of force, before their combined right and centre armies were near enough to interfere.

In 1904 the Japanese had to make a descent from the sea (Map X.). Though they knew the Russians were very far from being ready for large and decisive operations, they wisely made their first landing far from the possibility of interference, near Seoul in the middle of Korea, after the first crippling by surprise of the hostile fleet. Kuropatkin then sent a strong detachment of his still very inadequate numbers to the Yalu, to watch and delay General Kuroki.

This, in conjunction with the knowledge of the enemy's unreadiness, made it reasonably safe to land their other armies at such places as Pi-tzu-wo and Ta-Ku-shan. If Kuropatkin had been ready for advance in force these landings, dividing their total forces into three isolated bodies, would have been the height of rashness. Under this condition they would have had to operate on a single line from Korea. But they knew their enemy was not ready, and they saw that an early grip on the railway, with its immediate consequence

the isolation of Port Arthur, was of immense importance to their fortunes.

Thus we may say, in brief, that they opened the military campaign by occupying a solid base, would have used it alone if necessary, risked for the other armies the more adventurous landings west of the Yalu, with the object of more quickly isolating Port Arthur, and with the intention of using these three armies convergently towards Liao-Yang, as an active covering force to protect the siege of that fortress. The plan was good, and safer than von Moltke's in 1866; by its success they would also reap a richer harvest than von Moltke had any right to expect from the risk he ran in Bohemia.

The mind naturally turns to British openings across the seas. In the case of South Africa in 1899, we had four separate ports with four distinct lines of railway to the hostile frontiers; tempted by the expectation of eventual, if not immediate, superiority, we endeavoured to cover all our territory at once, action that was only really justifiable if we could put on each line an army large enough to cope with the bulk of the enemy's forces. (He had the interior lines and the greater mobility across country.) Not being able to do this, we should have abandoned one at least of the lines, and of it held the seaport only. The political situation indicated the selection of the Cape Town line on which to operate, for it was in Cape Colony that the Boers had most hope of gaining hosts of active sympathisers. Abandoning Natal, fortifying Durban, holding it with 2000 soldiers and the fleet, we could have had 40,000 on the Kimberley line and 20,000 on the Port Elizabeth-

Bloemfontein railway, with all the mounted troops linking these two forces. Two lines thus linked would have given us that freedom of strategical manœuvre which is lacking to a force depending on one long line of communications. The two lines thus linked would have enabled us to shift suddenly and secretly troops from one to the other, or to any intermediate point, and the double line of operations would have been practically single.

In the case of a European campaign as an ally, the Continental Power would have already opened by the time we joined, and our plans would therefore be subservient to his. Our rôle would almost certainly be to perform the turning movement, which would obviate mixing up the allied armies ; but they would be quite in touch when the enemy was in presence. This is referred to later in the chapter on "Turning a Flank."

In Wellington's first operation in the Peninsular War, he landed in Portugal, then in possession of a French army corps under Marshal Junot. The Corps was scattered, and Wellington wisely worked on a single line from Mondego Bay, one hundred miles north of Lisbon, at a safe distance from the enemy, though the ministry suggested forcing a landing in the Tagus mouth. He then marched near the coast, his base being the fleet, won in a combat at Roleia, brought his base down to Maceira Bay, and accepted with success Junot's full attack at Vimeiro, where the British covered their new base. Wellington had more of Napoleon in him than many people give him credit for. We find that his actions contravened Napoleon's maxims



no oftener than did the actions of Napoleon himself.

It will be seen that the most effective summary of the discussion in this chapter is—open a campaign with a single eye to the wielding of “full strength” for the decisive collision.

## CHAPTER II

### STRATEGICAL FRONTAL ATTACK OF A SINGLE ENEMY

Single Concentrated Enemy, 1st and 2nd German Armies in August 1870 against Bazaine—Single Extended Enemy, Napoleon against Beaulieu on the Mincio in May 1796—Oyama against Kuropatkin in Summer of 1904—Earlier Stage of this Operation

THE title of this chapter should first be explained. The qualification "strategical" implies that the operation does not preclude tactical turning or envelopment of a hostile flank when battle has been or is being joined. "Single enemy" means that the hostile forces have a common base, and that, if forced back, they can and probably will retreat together. And we shall take two cases—enemy in concentration, and enemy extended or scattered. Further, we shall assume that we can impose upon him acceptance of attack.

The method of the frontal advance against the single concentrated enemy may be any one of the three methods discussed in the last chapter—a full deployment before contact, and a sweeping advance, called the "German" method; a concentrated advance, "*bataillon carré*," called the "French" method; a converging advance from isolated points, von Moltke's method. This one, however, would usually, against a single concentrated enemy, aim from the outset not at

frontal attack, but at envelopment strategically produced.

But no commander, however much he may prefer one method, can insist on operating in all cases according to his preference. The shapes of frontiers, the intrusion of neutral territory and the effect of topography on communications, all tend to compel modification of any *doctrinaire* plan. A case in point is the opening phase of the Franco-German war.

The German 1st and 2nd Armies, together constituting almost two-thirds of the total forces, had at the outset a distinct rôle ( Map IV.). It was known that the enemy would make his chief concentration between Metz and the Saar, and the two armies were to deal with this hostile mass. The 1st Army, at first only 61,000 strong, had to march south from the direction of Trier. The 2nd Army, 206,000 strong, was to have used the two railways, Bingen to Neunkirchen and Mannheim to Homburg, as far as the latter point in each case ; but news of French proximity to the Saar rendered it advisable to detrain near the Rhine. These forces had then some six marches to make to the frontier, and the paucity of roads through this part of the Vosges brought it about that the columns were of immense length. All the corps were aiming perforce at a narrow region, Saarbrück and vicinity, so that the " German " method was out of the question. If there was to be a great battle on the Saar, the army must deploy on reaching the vicinity of the place of collision.

This chief concentration of the French, Bazaine's army, was to be a distinct prey for 1st and 2nd Armies,

whose aim would therefore be to cut it off from MacMahon's army in Northern Alsace. 2nd Army having thus to deploy to the left from Saarbrück, 1st Army had to march on that place as a flank-guard against eventualities. MacMahon's army was to be dealt with by 3rd Army, 180,000 strong, moving on the Lauter from Landau. It was also important that 3rd Army should be able to come quickly into touch with 2nd Army, in case MacMahon should succeed in joining Bazaine.

It is pretended by some that von Moltke was aiming at converging the three armies, as in Bohemia in 1866, but the idea is inadmissible, for the order enjoining advance upon 3rd Army says distinctly: Cross the Lauter and march *south*.

Von Moltke's ideal was, no doubt, to achieve one great decisive battle between the Moselle and the Saar against both French armies. But MacMahon was free to retire westwards on Nancy and Châlons, as he did, instead of north-westwards towards Bazaine, and von Moltke himself acknowledges that the development of the German invasion would have to depend on just such chances as this. MacMahon, by retreating away from Bazaine, drew after him a much superior German force, and to that extent eased the pressure on the other French army; for, if he had fallen back on Metz and joined Bazaine, he would only have reinforced the latter by half the numbers which the 3rd Army would have added to the German 1st and 2nd Armies.

Thus the circumstances and exigencies of the theatre prevented von Moltke from employing either the "German" method or the method of convergence. He



had to employ, for 1st and 2nd Armies, the "French" method, but in a most imperfect manner, owing to paucity of roads and length of columns. The "*batillon carré*" was hardly visible on the date, 6th August, when collision took place. This will appear at once from a statement of the positions of the corps on 5th August :

*Bazaine's Army*

- 2nd Corps, Spichenen.
- 3rd Corps, Saargemünd to St Avold.
- 4th Corps, Boulay, Teterchen.
- Guard Corps, Courcelles.
- 6th Corps, to arrive from Nancy, etc.

*German 2nd Army*

- III. Corps, Neunkirchen (13) and St Wendel (21).<sup>1</sup>
- IV. Corps, Einod (18) and Homburg (18), 6th Cavalry Division at Rohrbach.
- X. Corps, Cusel (37).
- Guard Corps, Landstuhl (31).
- IX. Corps, Kaiserslautern (43).
- I. Corps, 1 Division at same place.
- XII. Corps, Winweiler (57) to Enkenbach (50), 12th Cavalry Division in rear.

1st Army had its leading divisions within thirteen miles, about Lebach.

The plan of the supreme command would be, for a pitched battle on or near the Saar, a deployment extending from Völklingen on the right to Saargemünd on

<sup>1</sup> The figures in brackets indicate mileage from Saarbrück.

the left, thirteen miles as the crow flies, fifteen miles along the river, affording a great density of ten men per yard, if all troops were forward. But the eagerness of the chief of VII. Corps (1st Army) led to his engaging heavily his 14th Division, the first to arrive, against 2nd French Corps at Spicheren. This brought on an unintended battle, in which the single French Corps, unsupported by any of the others, was smartly beaten by the ever-increasing German forces. The proposed great collision came to naught, for the French retired to a good position on the Nied.

Von Moltke was now rightly determined to aim at a planned battle on a large scale, and for this he must wait for his rear corps to come up, and also for some intelligence as to how the enemy was now disposing himself. Many writers seem to ascribe the cessation of advance entirely, or almost entirely, to this supposed "necessity for intelligence." But can anyone imagine that von Moltke would have suspended the advance for days, if the morning of 7th August had seen the bulk of the two German armies on the Saar? With such strength in hand, he would have advanced at once on a front aiming at the line Boulay-Faulquemont, acting boldly on the principle of "fight and find out."

But the French stood for no pitched battle on this side of the Moselle, and it began to look as if they would defend the line of that river, as they should have done. The German operations now aimed in a general way at delaying the escape across the river, by keeping a close grip on Bazaine with their right wing, while urging their left wing in echelons on the river passages above

Metz. By this means they would keep Bazaine from crossing anywhere except at the fortress, which would render his crossing slow and perhaps enable the German left to forestall him at the bridges upstream.

Thus we have, in August 1870, von Moltke directing his 1st and 2nd Armies in a disposition of great depth and comparatively narrow front, with the project of deploying them at the frontier and near the enemy, who is fairly concentrated to all appearance. The great battle being postponed by the French retreat, he is prepared to advance frontally on a deployed width of fifteen miles or more, as soon as his corps are up in line. The enemy again declining battle, and there being no further likelihood of effecting a decisive one on this side of the Moselle, von Moltke aims at seizing the up-stream passages before the enemy can establish himself solidly for the defence of the river, and the operations become a case of Turning a Flank.

Sometimes a commander will see his enemy so placed that the turning of a flank is practically impossible. This was Napoleon's situation when, in May 1796, he had chased Beaulieu from the Adda across the Mincio (Map II.). Both sides were about 40,000 strong. The Austrian line on east bank of the river was unturnable, for a movement for the purpose round their right meant marching round Lake Garda, an all-too-long *détour*, while the left rested on the strong fortress of Mantua, a few miles only from the confluence of the Mincio and the Po. The Mincio is deep and rapid, and Napoleon had no bridging train.

Beaulieu had a line of retreat northwards, up the Adige to Trent, the Brenner Pass and Innsbrück,

as well as roads leading eastward through Venetia. Napoleon was fairly concentrated on the Chiese, south-east of Brescia, when he made his plan for dealing with this situation, a plan in which surprise was rightly the chief weapon. He knew that midway between Mantua and Peschiera was the bridge of Borghetto, not as yet destroyed. The first move was a demonstration on Salo, as if meditating the march round Lake Garda. This was followed by the dispatch of Kilmaine's cavalry along the lake towards Peschiera, as if to threaten a dash across the Mincio near that fortress, with a view to cutting Beaulieu's northern communications. The three divisions all followed, as if for Peschiera on 29th May, openly and ostentatiously by daylight; but at 2 A.M. next day 30,000 men turned rapidly under cover of night towards Borghetto.

As at Lodi, the Austrians had a detachment covering the bridge; it was quickly driven in, but this time succeeded in breaking a span of the bridge. They then fought stoutly, but were driven out of range by sheer superiority of artillery fire, affording the French time to bridge the broken arch with timber. Beaulieu was thereafter severely handled, but escaped up the Adige with half his army.

Taking these two cases as models in some degree we see that, as against a numerically inferior enemy who is fairly concentrated, the procedure is to deploy on a front at least as wide as his, advance and find him, and, when his dispositions become fairly clear, proceed to outflank him on the strategic side. When, on the other hand, we do not outnumber him, we may find him unduly extended, or with his flanks safe; the procedure



is to concentrate towards a chosen point, after feints that will deceive him or at least keep him in suspense. In the former case we aim at a single decisive battle, for we must meet the total enemy ; in the latter, we hope to defeat him somewhat in detail, and may expect to make our first attack in such a way as to prevent the enemy ever having his whole strength for a battle. But such an achievement may well be impossible in our day, seeing the length of time required for a modern battle, unless the ground favours the project uncommonly.

In both cases we are doing our best to ensure "full strength." In the former we cannot prevent the enemy having his total force on the field, but we can keep him in uncertainty as to which of his flanks we shall deal with, the advantage on which a skilful assailant can always count ; and we shall then have "grand tactical full strength" for the decisive part of the battle. In the latter case, portions of the hostile army may well escape the shock, as happened at the Mincio ; but good intelligence of what the enemy's dispositions are, and immediate activity after the first success, will enable us so to maltreat his troops that the hostile chief will thenceforward find himself in a position of physical and, above all, of *moral* inferiority.

When we look at the case of the operations<sup>1</sup> that led up to the battle of Liao-Yang, after the Russian defeat at Ta-schi-chiao and the Japanese capture of the Motien-ling, we find the Russians retreating in two bodies on the prepared position. On 23rd August Kuropatkin had his Southern Group, three army corps and much

<sup>1</sup> Map X:

cavalry on the advanced position of An-shan-chan, astride the railway. The Eastern Group, two army corps and large portions of others, was on the Lien-tian-Anping position, and was more numerous than the other group. In general reserve, some of it as far back as Mukden, was a total as large as the Eastern Group.

Oyama, Japanese commander-in-chief, had 2nd Army (Oku), four divisions with 250 guns, assembled from Hai-cheng to Niu-chwang, and based on the sea at Yin-Kou. He had 4th Army (Nodzu), four divisions, about Si-mu-cheng and to the right, based on Dalny, which was base also of 3rd Army that was besieging Port Arthur. Finally, 1st Army (Kuroki), three divisions and some brigades, facing the Russian Eastern Group.

Kuropatkin's total command exceeded that of Oyama in everything but guns, but at each important point the Russians were going to be outnumbered.

Southern and Eastern Groups were separated by a gap of a dozen miles, while the Japanese are seen also to have had a gap; but the Japanese were going to have the initiative left to them, and this makes all the difference. The Russian gap was not wide enough for a deliberate interposing movement on the part of the Japanese, and the ground there was not commodious for communications; also it was near the great prepared position, whose existence was known to Oyama. He therefore planned a frontal advance against both groups, which would drive them into one mass close to Liao-Yang. He would then be able to try for an absolutely decisive battle, containing the hostile front by close attacks of 4th and 2nd Armies, and turning Kuropatkin's left by a tactical envelopment executed

by Kuroki's army. He so lacked in preponderance of numbers that he could not effect the necessary extension until he had driven the enemy into a smaller space.

We have here found a case where a commander drives his enemy into concentration, in order to effect a single battle that shall perhaps be decisive. He is confident that at least he will be able to inflict serious damage and push the enemy back ; and it should always be borne in mind that, at this stage of the campaign, the capture of Port Arthur was the primary object. Russia was likely to send a fleet from Europe ; the Japanese fleet was very efficient, but small ; Togo was quite fit to blockade the Russian fleet in Port Arthur, or to fight it if it sallied, or to meet the European fleet after the Port Arthur ships were disposed of, but did not wish to have to attend to both together. The Japanese warfare hung entirely on command of the China Sea. Therefore Oyama went to meet Kuropatkin's field force as far as possible from the place of siege and, with true strategical insight, was not content with covering the siege in a passive manner.

The earlier stage of this same operation is a case of converging isolated columns, and has been touched upon in the previous chapter. The operation seems to have had in a sense a purely frontal intention. There is a right column from the Yalu through Feng-huang-cheng and the Mo-tien-ling, a centre column from Taku-shan through Hsiu-yen and Si-mu-cheng, and a left column up the railway. There could hardly be an expectation of Kuropatkin standing in force far south of Liao-Yang, for the right column would then threaten his rear. The columns were simply expected to drive

the hostile groups far from the locality of the siege, so that failure in the great battle might not leave the Japanese with an inadequate zone of manœuvre in rear. Incidentally, though not unconsciously, the position of 1st Army (Kuroki) and the advance of 4th Army to Hsiu-yen were to prevent the enemy from sending adequate strength to deal with the advance on the railway. It is a case of the strategic use of a threatening flank position, without intention of immediate attack; though there is as yet no concentration, yet "full strength" is maintained, for everything is being used in the single aim of isolating Port Arthur. Each army, at the same time, is kept sufficiently concentrated, for the Japanese command did understand "full strength" on every scale and at every stage.



## CHAPTER III

### STRATEGICAL ATTACK OF TWO OR MORE ENEMIES

#### SECTION I

Plural Enemy in Conjunction—First Aim is to separate them—  
Napoleon in April 1796—Discussion of which Enemy to  
destroy first—Waterloo—Comments

THE intention in this chapter is to discuss the action of a commander about to assume the offensive, who is faced with more than one enemy. By plurality of enemies it is meant that two or more of them have distinct bases and lines of operations of their own, and that they are likely on retreat each to retire with an eye to safeguarding his own communications. The action which the plural enemy should take will sufficiently appear from the causes of success of the single assailant in the examples given, or will be specifically stated.

It is usually the case that allies combine because the one first in the quarrel does not feel strong enough to meet the enemy single-handed. In combination they may outnumber him, and their aim will naturally be to effect the collision when in conjunction, if conjunction is possible. The single enemy will, on his side, wish to meet them separately, in time as well as place; and, if they are already conjoined, will aim at separating them,

interposing himself between them, and hoping then to beat them in detail.

This was Napoleon's method of dealing with allies in conjunction. In thus attacking the centre a commander is not aiming at that readiest method of producing a favourable decision—namely, a success that will cause the enemy to lose his communications. At first sight this may seem to condemn the method, on the ground that the best procedure should be that which seeks the decision as the outcome of the first fight; but neither enemy's communications can be at once threatened except by a movement round his outer flank. If this movement were made, and the allies are loyal to each other, the still necessary battle will find them in conjunction. This, however, is the very thing the single assailant wishes to avoid, for the battle is the important matter, however skilful one's manœuvring may be. A commander who fights a pair of enemies together when by any means he could fight each separately and with preponderance, is not employing "full strength," which, it will be remembered, implies not only having everything possible of one's own for an important collision, but preventing the enemy having everything of his.

#### NAPOLEON IN APRIL 1796 <sup>1</sup>

The campaign which began in April 1796 in North Italy was the first in which Napoleon was commander-in-chief. His forces, about 40,000 in all, were posted as follows:—

<sup>1</sup> Map II.

Division La Harpe, 8000, about Savona.

„ Massena, 8000, Finale.

„ Augereau, 8000, near Loano.

„ Serrurier, 7000, Ormea.

2 brigades, 3700 and 3200, in the Col di Tenda.

4000 cavalry, mostly lacking horses, at various points along the coast.

Line of communications—the coast road to Nice.

The enemy were the Sardinians, some 20,000 strong on this front, under General Colli, and the Austrians, over 30,000, under Beaulieu.

Colli had his chief strength at the entrenched camp of Ceva on the Tanaro, at the source of which is Ormea, where Serrurier was. He had the fortress of Coni, blocking the road from Col di Tenda to Turin; his left at Millesimo on the Bormida. The whole front was some thirty-five miles long, but with a good lateral road. The base was Turin, fifty miles from Ceva *viâ* Cherasco.

Beaulieu had his forces as follows:—D'Argenteau, 18,000, at Sassello and Deگو; Provéra, 4000, on heights above Millesimo, between the two Bormidas; Pittony, 5000, in the Bochetta Pass; Sebottendorf, 15,000, at Adorno. The general situation was known to Napoleon.

Austrian advanced base, Milan; ultimate base in Italy, behind the Mincio; roads, numerous. Two good roads from the coast through the mountains—that by Col di Tenda and the Bochetta to Alessandria. Between these, three roads fit for wheels, but difficult—Savona to Deگو by the Montenotte; Loano to Millesimo by San Giacomo; Oneglia into the Tanaro valley. Tracks over the mountains—Finale-Cadibona; Savona-Cadibona.

Napoleon intended to attack. Months earlier, explaining his plan to the Directory, he said: "If the Austrians are in good enough heart to join the Sardinians, we must separate them, and to do that thoroughly, push them towards Alessandria, and as soon as they are separated we shall have a short time to spare" to beat the Sardinians. On the spot, he chose to make the venture by the Montenotte Pass.

Beaulieu, on the assumption that half or more of the enemy would soon be east of Savona, resolved on an offensive plan that is thus described by a contemporary French writer: "General Colli . . . was to make a strong diversion by the sources of the Tanaro. . . . Provéra was to help as required to right or left. D'Argenteau, with about 15,000 men and 4000 picked Piedmontese, was to attack from the Bormida valley, and endeavour to gain Savona. Beaulieu with the rest was to repair to Genoa, by the Bochetta. Thus the French were to be attacked on the whole line of the range from Tenda to Genoa."

There is here the old fallacy of "putting the enemy between two fires," with insufficient force to render the operation safe. "*Il faut,*" says Napoleon, "*déborder ou détourner une aile sans séparer l'armée.*"

The writer just quoted, no lover of Napoleon, adds: "These dispositions were good in themselves, but the corps that were to carry them into effect were too weak and too far separated from each other"—which is surely a champion instance of contriving to say two opposite things in the same breath.

9th April.—Napoleon at Savona, ordering Massena to Cadibona.



10th *April*.—Pittony on Voltri; Sebottendorf, a march behind. Pittony attacks a French brigade, which escapes west at night without pursuit. D'Argenteau starts with 10,000 men for the French entrenchment near the Montenotte Pass.

11th *April*.—Beaulieu, about Voltri with 20,000 men, hesitates. D'Argenteau attacks the entrenchment all day without success. Napoleon, hearing the firing, goes up and calls La Harpe to follow; orders Massena to push along the track through Cadibona, and Augereau to come down by San Giacomo to east of Millesimo, and attend to any Sardinian move from that place.

12th *April*.—Massena, marching through the night, turns the Montenotte Pass, and appears on d'Argenteau's right while that general has his hands full with La Harpe, who has attacked from the entrenchments. The Austrians lose heavily, and retreat in confusion. Beaulieu hears the heavy firing, waits some hours for news, and, when he has it, orders Pittony and Sebottendorf to counter-march.

De Jomini here well remarks: "Bonaparte knew well that while the weakened centre of a too extended line is the most favourable point for attack, all the results that may be expected from such a manœuvre depend on the rapidity employed in profiting by the first success."

Immediately the fight was over, La Harpe went to Sassello, seven miles, to clear the ground in that direction; then crossed the ridge to Dego, five miles; Massena marched into the east Bormida valley; Augereau climbed a ridge and looked down on Millesimo; Serrurier demonstrated at Garessio, to keep Colli in Ceva.

Beaulieu, not expecting a "tempestuous warfare" like Napoleon's, had ordered concentration at Dego. The result was that during the next two days bodies of Austrians were beaten, at and near that place, in detail, and the total *moral* and material damage was very great. Napoleon was then able to turn upon Colli, fighting him at Millesimo, Ceva and Mondovi, and received the Sardinian capitulation before Beaulieu had time to recover. The Austrians then retired into the Milanese, and this phase of the campaign was over.

That the victor adopted the best plan needs no insisting on. The first thing was to push the enemies apart, and then to choose which of them to destroy first. The question of this choice is worth considering.

1. Of the two enemies there will usually be one who, if left unbeaten or only very slightly damaged, will more easily interfere with our communications than the other could do under the same conditions. This would lead us to make an end first of the former, but it will be quite necessary, as a rule, to deal first a shrewd blow at the latter, and drive him from the immediate scene eccentrically. This is what we saw Napoleon do, though the Directory had ordered him to finish with the Austrians first.

2. One of the enemies may be so situated as to military strength as to afford a greater likelihood of rapid subjugation than would be the case with the other.

Here the exhaustion of Turin would arrive much sooner than exhaustion of the military strength of the great Austrian empire.

3. Of the two enemies one will usually be found to have a much larger zone of manœuvre in retreat than

the other. The enemy with the small zone could, other things being equal, be more quickly brought to bay, and to a decision. The Sardinians were plainly this enemy.

4. The actual zones of manœuvre in retreat being, in mileage, equal, we should still find that the topography of the two zones rendered the work of following up and defeating decisively one of the enemies more difficult than the work would be in the case of the other. The topography would here include consideration of hostile fortresses as well as of natural barriers.

5. The political situation has often a strong bearing on the problem. It will be known whether one of the enemies is less hearty in the quarrel than the other. Napoleon knew that the Piedmontese were attracted by the theories of the Revolution, and that their Prince was therefore in a weak position.

6. The subjugation of one of the enemies will sometimes bring to the victor a most welcome expansion of resources. The French army was in poor condition as to equipment and horses and commissariat, and could obtain from home nothing beyond recruits, arms and ammunition. The Piedmontese countryside was rich, and it abounded in fortresses and stores, and the French armies were past-masters at extracting what they wanted.

7. A consideration that is specially important, when the assailant's existing line of communications is narrow and difficult and long, leading also to a single point as base, is the following. The decisive defeat of one in particular of the enemies may open up new communications, broaden greatly the base, and thus enlarge

the liberty of manœuvre. All of this came from the subjugation of the Sardinians. The whole of Piedmont became an advanced base, for its fortresses were opened to the French, and the Mont Cenis Pass provided a fresh route from France.

### WATERLOO, 1815.<sup>1</sup>

When Napoleon returned from Elba in March 1815 he was quickly threatened by a coalition of European Powers. Two important attacks were projected—by Great Britain and Prussia from Belgium, by Russia and Austria across the upper and middle Rhine, while Austrians and Sardinians would invade southern France. Here then were two formidable masses assembling for invasion. No mass was to invade till all were ready, and this would not be till July.

Napoleon determined on attacking the northern enemy in June, and he was able to take to the Belgian frontier 125,000 men and 344 guns. Early in June this force stood at Lille, Valenciennes, Rocroi, Metz, Laon, and on the Paris-Laon road. When Napoleon concentrated, on 13th June, from Solre-sur-Sambre to Philippeville, with admirable speed and secrecy, the enemy—Prussians under Blücher, 124,000 men and 312 guns; British, Dutch, Belgians, etc., under Wellington, 95,000 men and 186 guns—were disposed on a front of more than one hundred miles:

*Wellington.*—2nd Corps, Courtrai-Leuze-Ghent.  
1st Corps, Enghien-Mons-Genappe.  
Reserve Corps, Brussels.

<sup>1</sup> Map VI.



*Blücher*.—1st Corps, Fleurus-Charleroi-Marchiennes.  
2nd Corps, Namur-Hannut.  
3rd Corps, Dinant-Ciney.  
4th Corps, Liège.

Napoleon's unerring eye fixed upon the triangle, Charleroi-Quatre Bras-Sombref, as the strategic point. From it the enemies' lines of communications diverged greatly, towards Ostend and the coast for Wellington, towards Namur and Liège for Blücher, and it was precisely opposite Charleroi that the Allies were weakest.

The French army was across the Sambre on 15th June; Wellington had made no movement of consequence, and Blücher's 1st Corps was beaten back to Fleurus. Next day, in the afternoon, three corps of Prussians were badly beaten at Ligny, Wellington holding his own at Quatre Bras against Ney's ill-managed attacks. Both Allies had to retreat, and it was fortunate that the Prussians proved a stauncher ally than Austria in April 1796. Napoleon had, by evening of 16th June, the strategical advantage, in that he had separated his pair of enemies, had to all appearance seriously shaken one of them, and had good reason to hope that this one must retreat eccentrically to the east. But we know that Blücher marched to Wavre, parallel to Wellington's retreat to Waterloo, and was able, owing to a succession of blunders on the part of Napoleon and of his lieutenant, Grouchy, to whom was entrusted the pursuit of the Prussians, to appear in a fatal direction on the scene of the decisive battle.

The reader will have no difficulty in comparing this campaign with that of April 1796; and will find it

interesting to apply to the case the seven considerations discussed above in connection with the 1796 campaign. Number 5 of those considerations, the political one, did in 1815 advocate the destruction first of the British, for it is generally agreed that, had Wellington been defeated and compelled to re-embark, the Allies would probably have accepted the terms which Napoleon had offered to Europe.

As to 6, the destruction of Wellington would have added the Belgian troops and the resources of their country to the French.

The question of the best initial disposition for the pair of Allies in cases like those of 1796 and 1815 may be briefly discussed. The object of the conjunction of the pair is to enable them to fight the decisive battle together; therefore they should be strong where they join. If each is selfishly solicitous about his own line of communications, the alliance is not of much value. Or, if for any reason not strong where they join, they should have a perfectly definite plan of falling back concentrically, without a serious battle, as soon as the enemy's line of advance is known to be against the centre. If, in 1796, the bulk of Colli's and Beaulieu's troops had been at Sasselto, Dego, Millesimo and Montenotte, and Napoleon had pushed through the Col di Tenda and Ormea, Colli's communications might indeed have been for a moment in jeopardy; but Napoleon could not have marched on Turin without dealing with the unbeaten field armies, Colli would have had Alessandria and other fortresses as temporary bases, and the Allies would have fought decisively in conjunction, which was the very *raison d'être* of the alliance. That Napoleon would have

carried his army round the Austrian left by the Bochetta is unthinkable, for Colli could have cut the French communications in a march.

The same remarks apply to 1815, where Wellington should have had two-thirds of his strength in the triangle Nivelles-Genappe-Frasnes, and Blücher two-thirds of his in the region Gosselies-Sombref.

## SECTION II

Plural Enemy in Separation—Napoleon's Appreciation in face of the 1815 Coalition—Charles of Austria in 1796—Faulty Plan of the French in Operating on Double Lines—Napoleon in Ulm Campaign, 1805—Zone of Manœuvre secured—Frederick in 1757—Von Moltke against Bazaine and MacMahon, August 1870—Franco-Austrian Campaign of 1800, Napoleon's Appreciation—Development of the Plan

Napoleon, writing in St Helena, states that in May 1815 he pondered over all the alternatives of action open to him. He considered first what could be said in favour of fighting in France, on the model of his meteoric campaign of 1814. This time he would, he thought, be better off for such work than he had been in 1814, for he would have a much larger army at his command, and would be free from the necessity of making that great detachment into Gascony, which was required in 1814 to meet Wellington's invasion from Spain. Nevertheless, he threw aside the idea of an initial defensive, chiefly, it may be guessed, for the political effect.

The next question was—which group to attack? The group in Belgium would be ready in June or earlier for

immediate action ; in fact Wellington had before June urged the coalition to allow Blücher and himself to invade France forthwith. A move against the Rhine group, only as yet half assembled, would therefore have been futile, for it could and would retire indefinitely, and Paris would be uncovered to a ready enemy from the north. To gain an early decisive success was very important, and this could be had much more quickly in Belgium than on the Rhine. A greater political gain would also accrue, as stated in Section I of this chapter.

Sometimes you may hope to be able to destroy the first of the two separated enemies, before turning in force on the second. Napoleon meant to do this in 1815. The justification of the hope hangs on the questions of comparative strength, the topography, the extent of the separation, and the comparative unreadiness of one of the groups.

In 1796, at the very time when Napoleon was astonishing Europe with his first campaign in North Italy, the young Archduke Charles of Austria was facing in the Rhine valley two French armies (Map III.). Charles had, west of Mainz between the Glan and the Nahe, some 80,000 men, with a corps on right bank of the Rhine between the Lahn and the Sieg. The French General Jourdan was in the Hunsrück and north of that, observing this Austrian mass.

A second body of Austrians, 70,000, was in the Rhenish Palatinate, covering Mannheim against Moreau, who was to the south about Strassburg.

The French Directory imposed upon Jourdan and Moreau, against their expressed advice, a plan on double



lines of operations. Jourdan, leaving his right at first in the Hunsrück, was to attract the enemy's attention northward by crossing his left at Düsseldorf, and then Moreau was to take the opportunity of passing the Upper Rhine. These moves would surely compel Charles to abandon the French side of the Rhine, and in this they succeeded; but the combination was bad, the Austrian forces on interior lines being substantially stronger than either Jourdan or Moreau, taken singly.<sup>1</sup>

Part of Jourdan's army, accordingly, passed the Rhine early in June, marched south to the Sieg, beat the hostile corps there, and forced it back to the Lahn.

Charles at once abandoned the left bank of the Rhine, and utilised his central position by marching the bulk of his army to the Lahn. Jourdan was hastening thither with all his men by Coblenz, but he was not in time to bring his whole force to Wetzlarfeld, where Charles was victorious. Jourdan prudently withdrew across the Rhine.

So far we have the Archduke correctly marching against that enemy who, making the first move, was the more dangerous. The French, on their side, had succeeded in drawing the bulk of the enemy north, and Moreau had been able on 23rd June to pass the Rhine at Kehl and was now moving towards the Danube. Charles had the news on 26th June. He left a strong garrison in Mainz, and 38,000 men under Wartensleben on the Main, and had now only 25,000 to carry to the

<sup>1</sup> Charles had intended to invade France, but Napoleon's successes in North Italy in April and May had withdrawn from the Archduke a large block of his best troops.

help of Latour, whom Moreau was pushing in front of him. He acknowledges in his Memoirs that he left too much on the Main. He fought indecisive combats with Moreau at Rastadt and Ettlingen, and concluded he was not strong enough to prevent Moreau reaching the Danube.

Resolving thereupon to continue operations farther east, he yet kept in plain view the advantage of having the two French armies separated. Drawing in all detachments except Wartensleben's, he fell back, reached the Danube on 10th August, and, being pressed by Moreau, fought the indecisive battle of Neresheim. On 13th August he crossed the Danube, and broke down all bridges as far as Donauworth.<sup>1</sup>

Charles had heard by this time that Jourdan was advancing on Wurzburg, Wartensleben retreating on instructions not to run serious risks, and his aim now was to draw Moreau south. Jourdan had Wurzburg on 25th July, and wished now to join Moreau; but stringent orders from the Directory sent him along both banks of the Main to Bamberg, just as orders were keeping Moreau, against his will, south of the Danube. This town was occupied on 4th August, and a fortnight later Jourdan was through Amberg and near the Naab, where Wartensleben was holding a strong position. Jourdan had Bernadotte's corps at Neumarkt, to cover his right flank.

It was after the battle of Neresheim that Charles resolved to slip away from in front of Moreau and march to the Naab, convinced that a victory over one enemy

<sup>1</sup> The troops shown on the map are for Napoleon's campaign of 1805:

would bring about the retreat of the other. Moreau he had found too strong. But, instead of taking enough troops to ensure the immediate and total destruction of Jourdan, even at the cost of leaving only a screen of cavalry in front of Moreau, he left 38,000 in the south with Latour, and led only 28,000 across the Danube. Moreau passed to south bank of the river on 19th August, and advanced to the Lech.

As soon as Charles saw his stronger enemy safely on this bank, he left Latour and led his 28,000 on Neu-markt. He himself says he ought to have taken 20,000 more. Bernadotte received the first blow, and was soundly beaten, but Jourdan contrived to fall back to Amberg. Wartensleben came up, and the French were beaten again on 24th August. Other combats took place, and Jourdan had to retire north beyond the Main into the Thuringian Forest. The French had now to abandon their siege of Mainz, and use the 20,000 besiegers to extricate Jourdan, who on 20th September was again across the Rhine.

Moreau was expected to push on to Vienna, two hundred and fifty miles, but he knew the Archduke had left, and he had no news of Jourdan. He had no love for the project of marching on Vienna, and he took three weeks to drive Latour behind the Isar, sixty miles. During the first week of September he edged troops to his left in the hope of gaining touch with Jourdan, but Jourdan was already behind the Lahn. Then came definite news, and Moreau retired to the Lech, and then forty miles farther to the Iller, which he reached when Jourdan was recrossing the Rhine. Pressed closely by Latour, and having to halt and fight at Biberach,

he then found that Charles was in possession north of the Black Forest and that retreat by Kehl was barred, so he had to file through the Höllenthal.

It would be a mistake to suppose that Moreau's army was demoralised; it was unbeaten, and was suffering only from the false strategy of the Directory.

In 1805 Napoleon was faced by the hostility of Austria and Russia, whose forces were widely separated, an Austrian army, much inferior in numbers to Napoleon's, being on the Upper Danube, when the Russian forces had not yet reached the level of Vienna.

The opening of this campaign has been already briefly referred to in Part I., Chapter I., and it now remains to show what measures Napoleon took in view of the fact that the Russians might arrive in time to interfere with the proposed destruction of Mack, the Austrian commander.

On 7th October the bridge of Donauworth was seized by IV. Corps (Sault), Murat passed over a cavalry division a few miles up-stream, and V. (Lannes) followed closely. Mack was hesitating on right bank of the Iller, near Ulm. Reports about the Russians were not precise, but it seemed they might reach the Isar in a fortnight. The necessary dispositions, therefore, must have reference to them as well as to Mack.

The Austrian general began a move as if to escape by Augsburg, but was met by Lannes and Murat. On 10th October he was back in the vicinity of Ulm, and Napoleon had his corps as follows:—I. (Bernadotte) and Bavarians crossing at Ingolstadt, with orders to reach Munich on 11th October; III. (Davout) at



Aicha, for Dachau ; II. (Marmont), following Davout, but for Augsburg ; IV. (Soult) on Landsberg ; Guard at Augsburg ; VI. (Ney) at Günzburg ; Lannes and Murat near him, to south-east.

This is Napoleon's disposition on interposing between the two Allies. There is a covering body of I. and III. and the Bavarians (a strong corps) against the Russians ; a covering body of Murat, VI. and V., against the Austrians ; a central force of II., Guard and IV. on the Lech, able to move to the aid of either covering body. The westward covering body may be looked upon as offensive, eastern as defensive, the Austrians being in presence and likely to be dealt with first. The eastward body is rather an "army of observation."

We have now brought the Grand Army to the point where Napoleon's dispositions are a lesson in dealing with two enemies between whom we have interposed ourselves. The western body, when it is closing on Ulm, is two marches distant from the central force, as is the eastern. An adequate zone of manœuvre is thus secured, the minimum zone, however, for safety with the numbers and the fighting tactics of that occasion. In our days of lengthy battles, the intervals would be all too small.

If Murat, in command of the western body (60,000), were suddenly attacked in force and driven back, he can be reinforced in a day by II. and the Guard (say 35,000) on a chosen field between Augsburg and Günzburg, and IV. (30,000) can come in before the end of the second battle on the Austrian right flank. If Bernadotte, commanding the eastern body (60,000), is similarly driven back, the same reinforcement can arrive in a march at a point midway between Munich

and Augsburg, with IV. troubling the left wing of the Russians.

Even if both enemies attack on the same day, second fights will take place at two days' march from each other, in one of which the central reinforcement will produce superior numbers for the French, and then the whole can turn with superior numbers against the other enemy. Napoleon has, in fact, manufactured for himself the interior lines, and in such a fashion that victory over one of the two enemies meant the destruction of that one.

The situation of 11th October was not one that could be allowed to continue long, and in fact Napoleon shortly heard that the Russian advance was slow, and that he might have as much as ten days in which to deal with the Austrians. Therefore, leaving Bernadotte's army on the Isar with instructions for wide reconnaissance, Napoleon took all the rest sharply against Mack, and received his capitulation on 19th October.

Let us suppose that Ulm had been, like Metz in 1870, a fortress capable of sheltering, feeding and supplying for a month or two an army of the size of Mack's. The problem for Napoleon would have been greatly changed. He would have been compelled to defeat the oncoming Russians before achieving the destruction of Mack. Napoleon never had a problem of exactly this nature to face. When he was besieging Mantua in summer and autumn of 1796, and was threatened by the Austrian Würmsers from the Tyrol, he at once abandoned the siege, and concentrated against the danger in the open field. But on that occasion he had inferiority of force,

and the garrison of Mantua was no field army. To find parallel cases to our supposition, we must go to Frederick the Great's siege of Prague in 1757, or to von Moltke's investment of Metz in 1870.

Frederick, entering Bohemia in columns from Saxony, Lusatia and Silesia, had succeeded in a junction of his columns near Prague, had there beaten the Austrians, and had driven them into the fortress. He was now besieging the equal of his own numbers, while a fresh Austrian army was collecting to the west at only four marches' distance. Leaving a watching force, he essayed attack against superior numbers at Kolin, and was badly beaten, was forced to raise the siege, and only escaped through the sluggishness of his opponents. Should he have raised the siege in the first case, and have taken all his men to Kolin? He could have gained two days on the Prague army by a little skill in evasion and in rearguard work. If this accession of force would have given him the victory at Kolin, the answer to the question is in the positive. It is certainly what Napoleon would have done.

The Germans, having won the battle of Gravelotte on 18th August 1870 and driven into Metz one of the two French armies (Bazaine's), had still to deal with MacMahon's army of four large corps, which was known to be assembling at Camp of Châlons, eighty miles to westward (Map IV.). The original German organisation into three armies was now modified, a large detachment being taken out of 2nd Army and constituted into 4th Army. Then—

1st Army of 3 corps and 2 cavalry divisions was to invest Metz on right bank.

2nd Army of 4 corps was to invest Metz on left bank.

While 3rd Army of 5½ corps and 2 cavalry divisions and 4th Army of 3 corps and 4 cavalry divisions were to march against MacMahon.

These two formed left and right wings of the marching force, and totalled some 220,000, including 245 squadrons and 828 guns.

Von Moltke rightly held it important to meet the remaining hostile field army at a distance from the investment, so as to ensure an ample zone of manœuvre. He therefore despatched 3rd and 4th Armies the moment the victory of Gravelotte was assured. The march was on a broad front, on what has been called in a previous chapter the "German" method.

By 23rd August the armies were on a front of forty miles, with left south-east of Bar-le-Duc and right about Verdun, the cavalry divisions on a wider front and some twenty miles forward. The greater weight was in the left wing. It was known that MacMahon had moved from Châlons, but his intentions could only be guessed at.

On 25th August the German right was midway from Verdun to Clermont, the left about Vassy, a forty-six miles' front. On this day the French were on the Aisne from Vouziers to Rethel, with the difficult Forêt d'Argonne between them and the nearest enemy. They were making no use of their cavalry. Von Moltke, on the other hand, from cavalry exploration and from other sources, knew that MacMahon had moved north-east out of Rheims, and therefore might be engaged in the rash attempt to march round the invader's right



flank to Metz. Their route in that case would be by Stenay and Montmedy, and two German corps were already near enough to that line to be able to interfere with the march, however speedy it might be.

MacMahon, however, was moving sluggishly, partly because he knew the danger into which he was being driven against his will, and von Moltke began a great wheel of his 200,000 men, with his cavalry on a vast curve from Arcis-sur-Aube on the left to the Meuse near Dun on his right, the curve passing west of Châlons. Touch was obtained near Vouziers.

MacMahon now begged to be allowed to abandon the venture, but this was refused ; so he aimed for a crossing at Mouzon. On 30th August his 5th Corps, acting as flank-guard, was surprised at Beaumont, and severely handled. Two days later his whole army was cooped up at Sedan, and surrendered after a hard fight.

This operation of von Moltke's, crowned with brilliant success, is a fine example of unswerving resolve to apply all available strength to the one object of destroying the remaining hostile field army. But that army, which might be formidable but could be outnumbered, had to be found ; therefore a concentrated advance would not fit the case. Lest there should be danger in the fifty-mile front, the cavalry form a wide exploration screen, far enough forward to give ample warning of any French concentrated advance. Finally, the whole force moves rapidly, in order that collision may come so far from Metz as to afford a good zone of manœuvre rearwards in case of accidents.

Suppose von Moltke had been content to post his two armies on a fifty-mile front along the Meuse, to cover

the investment. A sudden rupture of such a line, by a vigorous attack pushed continuously, usually entails a fresh concentration of the line well to the rear, an operation which, in our present case, would have brought the fighting dangerously near to Metz.

Thus we have von Moltke acting in the same spirit as Napoleon in 1805. Though the details of the two cases differ, yet in both the victor ensures an adequate zone of manœuvre, and arranges for the production of "full strength." In the same spirit Oyama went up to Liao-Yang to fight, when he was under the necessity of besieging Port Arthur, and at the same time of dealing with a hostile field army.

To return for a moment to comparison of the cases of 1805 and 1870.

Von Moltke had one of his enemies shut up in Metz, so that it was only a matter of time when, without outside help, that enemy would capitulate. Everything, therefore, except the minimum investing force, was available for seeking and destroying MacMahon.

Napoleon had indeed placed himself on Mack's best communication with the oncoming ally, but both enemies had still, on 11th October, the power of manœuvre. Mack might therefore evade destruction long enough for the Russians to arrive. Napoleon could not therefore take everything against Mack, nor could he leave a stationary force against Mack and take the rest actively against the Russians. The freedom of action still available to Mack was due to the great breadth of the Austrian base, the Tyrol, Austrian ground, being to south-east, and Bohemia to north-east. Therefore Mack must be at once sought and destroyed, in

contrast to the stationary investment established by von Moltke over Bazaine.

One more example may be briefly stated and discussed.

Napoleon in his Memoirs lays down what he wishes us to believe was his plan for the whole campaign of 1800. The enemy was Austria, who had a large army between the Rhine and the Danube, and another holding all North Italy, except Genoa and the Riviera.<sup>1</sup> This plan, of a fine simplicity, was not carried out, either because, as First Consul, he had not yet undivided power, or because the danger of Massena, besieged and starving in Genoa, diverted Napoleon, or perhaps because the plan was what he felt the best, *ex post facto* only.

“Napoleon . . . recognised that of the two frontiers . . . that of Germany was the predominant one, that of Italy secondary. If the Army of the Republic should be beaten on the Rhine and victorious in Italy, the Austrian army would be able to enter Alsace and pursue its success, without the supposed victorious army of Italy being able to operate any diversion capable of arresting the invasion, since, in order to have solidly the valley of the Po, an entire campaign would be required. If the French army were victorious on the predominant frontier, while defeated on the secondary, all that one would have to fear was the capture of Genoa, invasion of Provence, and perhaps the siege of Toulon. But a detachment from the French army in Bavaria, descending from Switzerland into the valley of the Po, would stop dead the victorious Austrians in Italy and Provence.

<sup>1</sup> Maps II. and III.

“ He concluded from this that no more should be sent to Italy than would raise the numbers to 40,000, and that everything else should be used on the predominant frontier. . . . 140,000 were already between Switzerland and Mainz, and a second army, in reserve, was being prepared between the Saone and the Jura. The intention of the First Consul was to repair in May with these two armies, and to carry the campaign in one rush to the Inn ; but . . . ”

But Napoleon's power was not yet absolute, and he found it good policy to give the Rhine army to Moreau, who was with it already, who was a favourite in France, and whose “ *retraite mémorable* ” in 1796 had excited the country's admiration. This, and the plight of Massena, led to the abandonment of a plan of grand simplicity, and the substitution of one of more complication.

Its growth can be traced in Napoleon's correspondence.

25th January 1800, to Chief of Staff : “ My intention is to organise an Army of Reserve, the command to be reserved for the First Consul . . . 3 Corps of 18,000 each.”

1st March 1800, to the same : “ Inform Gen. Moreau that his army will be of 4 Corps, 100,000 men,” the other corps, Lecourbe, to be in reserve, available for guarding Switzerland, or *combining operations with the Army of Italy*. This is the germ of the idea, brought to fruit at Marengo, of placing an army on the rear of the Austrians in north-west Italy.

In the same letter he wishes that, before 22nd March, “ the Rhine Army, in as great concentration as possible,



be in the interval between Basle and Constance." This offers the advantage, "of turning the Black Forest and annulling all hostile preparations to defend its gorges."

*5th March 1800*, to Massena : To keep four-fifths of his army (40,000) concentrated near Genoa ; that he will then be able to hold out till the tables are turned.

*22nd March 1800* : "Instructions for . . . the Rhine Army . . . will pass the Rhine, 10th to 20th April, will move on Stokach, and push the enemy beyond the Lech." The enemy, in fact, taken by surprise, will not be able to offer battle, having his forces extended in a cordon from Kehl to the Tyrol, and will have to retire far before achieving concentration.

Now comes the capital point of the "Instruction" :

"As soon as ever this aim (pushing the enemy well into Bavaria) shall have been accomplished, and we can be sure that the enemy's chief army, if it becomes strong enough to drive you (Moreau) back, cannot reconquer the lost ground in less than 10 or 12 days, the intention is . . . to detach your reserve corps and the best of "my Reserve Army, "to enter Italy by the St Gothard or the Simplon, and to operate a junction with Massena in the plains of Lombardy."

The weakness of this plan is due partly to its complexity, and it is clear that it contravenes the masterly "appreciation," given above in Napoleon's own words, of the predominance of the Rhine frontier. The French army on that frontier is promised only a temporary success, to be followed probably by another "*retraite*" which might not prove "*mémorable*" in any pleasant sense.

Moreau did not like the plan proposed for him, and Napoleon rightly did not press him to undertake anything of which he disapproved. What Moreau did do, and a comparison with the said plan, will appear in next chapter, "Turning a Flank."

Nor did Napoleon's own operation turn out as sketched by him, for Massena was prematurely driven into Genoa and starved out. Napoleon's hurried action in this juncture will fall to be touched upon in Chapter V., "Placing an Army on the Enemy's Communications."

## CHAPTER IV

### TURNING A FLANK

Objects in view in Turning a Flank—Influence of Topography—Mukden—Napoleon's Maxim—Liegnitz, 1760—Torgau, 1760—Maxen, 1759—Kulm, 1813—Telegraphy and Aviation in Connection with Turning Movements—Abandoning Communications in order to turn Enemy—Vittoria, 1813—Napoleon's Plan for Moreau in 1800—Britain as Ally on the Continent

THE object a commander has in view, when he proposes to himself to turn a hostile position, is usually a dual one. He hopes to vex the enemy by rendering him fearful for the safety of his communications, and he hopes that the manœuvre will surprise him. If surprise is achieved, he has reason to believe that the battle will find the adversary in the act of hastily forming a new front on a new position, which there has been little or no time to prepare, if the enemy was awaiting attack; if he was in motion and intending to bring about an "encounter battle," the manœuvring commander expects similarly to upset his plan. Tactically, an advantage may be gained, but this depends on the topography of the country.

The tactical difficulties may be increased by the manœuvre, but in spite of that the commander may deliberately elect to make his effort thus, for purely strategical reasons. He is forcing his enemy to form

front to a flank, a situation in which defeat may well lose for him his communications and quickly become decisive. But here again topography may come into play. Difficult or practically impossible country may intervene between the commander's forward wing and the hostile line of communications and of retreat, and this alone may render the enemy's situation, in the matters of supply and retreat, as safe as ever.

At Liao-Yang the Japanese performed a strategical frontal advance (Map X.), and during the battle contrived a tactical envelopment of the Russian left. At Mukden they performed the operation in a more strategic manner, round the Russian right. Having by this time disposed of Port Arthur, the army from there was skilfully concealed behind the left wing. The Russians were induced by various artifices into imagining that the new army was already on the right, for a gradual tactical envelopment of their left, as at Liao-Yang. The Japanese, when quite ready for work, obtained a good grip of the whole hostile front, and unleashed the Port Arthur army in a pretty wide turning movement by the left towards Hsin-min-tun, the divisions moving in echelon with the left in front, and with the right always keeping touch with the left of the original Japanese front. This caused a vast perturbation in the mind of Kuropatkin, who presently ordered retreat from the old front, which was holding its own pretty satisfactorily.

On both occasions the Japanese operation was executed on sound principles, and on both Kuropatkin was at fault. The fault lay in adhering to defensive work when the enemy manœuvred. The true method



of meeting a dangerous manœuvre is by counter-attack, either at the scene of the manœuvre or elsewhere.

Oyama acted in full accord with Napoleon's maxim : "*L'art de la guerre indique qu'il faut tourner ou déborder une aîle sans séparer l'armée.*"

These words contain the chief principle in respect of turning movements, and they apply to small affairs as well as great. Why did Napoleon lay such stress upon it? Because he feared that its violation would risk "full strength" for the battle. Accidents may delay one or other of the separated parts; trouble is sure to arise, if the enemy becomes aware in time of the venture, and is of a quality to profit by it by launching "full strength" against one of the separated parts. Even if successful, the venture is apt to have a less decisive result than when the principle of the maxim is adhered to.

The example of the battle of Liegnitz in Silesia in 1760 shows the punishment for violation of the maxim (Map VII.).

Frederick was on north bank of the Katzbach, on his way to join Prince Henry at Breslau. Daun, the Austrian commander-in-chief, was opposite to him on the south bank along with General Loudon, who had slipped away from in front of Prince Henry. Frederick's first attempt to move towards Breslau was frustrated, and, as Napoleon wrote, "His position was becoming critical. He had no longer bread; he was faced by forces the triple of his own. He renounced the project of Breslau, and on 14th August in the evening left Liegnitz, marching on Glogau for provisions and for the support of that fortress."

Thus the first round went against the King, and Daun resolved on attack for 15th August. He ordered Loudon to pass the river during the night beyond the Prussian left, and frontal attack was to be made in the morning by himself. The King was to be put between two fires, and would assuredly have been badly caught, had he been holding his original ground. But Frederick's whole army was in motion. Loudon, thinking he had only to do with outposts or baggage-guards, attacked briskly at 3 A.M. By 5 o'clock the affair was decided, Daun having no part in the fight, and "Loudon was thrown back into the Katzbach, having lost 10,000 men and 86 guns."

The army that separates itself loses unity of action, the condition indispensable for the ensuring of "full strength." "Ponder over everything the enemy can do," said Napoleon. This enemy had legs, and could therefore move. It was very likely he would recognise his danger, and march on Glogau. The idea of more thoroughly cutting him off from Prince Henry, and of interfering with his escape to Glogau, was good, but this was not the way to carry it out. The whole army, less detachments to watch crossing places, should have made Loudon's march. There would have been no "putting between two fires," but there would have been "full strength" for a decisive battle, used also in an effective direction.

On two occasions Frederick was himself guilty of the same breach of principle. One occurred only six weeks after Liegnitz at Torgau in Saxony. Daun was in a strong position in front (west) of the fortress, with Frederick marching on him from Wittenberg. The

King detached Ziethen on to the Leipsic road, and there resulted two quite disconnected advances. Daun, fortunately for the Prussians, did not turn his chief force in attack against Ziethen, whom he could have destroyed. Ziethen on his own initiative worked round towards the King, but the whole operation was scrambling and desultory, and Daun escaped with an indecisive defeat. Of this battle Napoleon remarks that "it was of all his battles the one in which he made most faults, and the only one in which he showed no talent."

The other case took place a year previously. Daun was posted with his right flank on Dresden, and faced north-west. The Army of the Empire was behind him, at Dohna and Gieshübel. Frederick at Wildsruf did not care about frontal attack, and hoped to dislodge the enemy by sending Finck with 18,000 men through Dippoldiswalda on Maxen. Here Finck met the Empire troops, and was taken in rear by Daun's reserve of 30,000 from Rabenau, and was destroyed.

If Frederick did not intend a battle—and he made no move of his own forces—his action in risking so important a force is hard to understand, coupled with the complete inaction of his main force, which should have been following Finck. He said afterwards that Finck had no orders to go so far, and he tried the general by court-martial.

The *moral* of such cases is that an enemy can seldom be reckoned an immovable object.

In this same part of Germany Napoleon made a mistake of the same kind in 1813. It was the day after the battle of Dresden, and the bulk of the beaten Allies

were retreating to Bohemia by Dippoldiswalda and Töplitz, pursued by several French corps. Vandamme was about Pirna with 40,000 French troops; to him came the order to march by Peterswalde, emerge at Kulm, and intercept the heads of columns as they came through the passes.

As part of the pursuit from Dresden, Gouvion St Cyr was pressing hard the corps of Kleist, which, seeing itself threatened by the congestion of retreating columns, struck out a route for itself to the left. During the night St Cyr's pressure ceased, and Kleist, after a few hours' rest, moved on and found himself on the heels of Vandamme. This general was in the act of engaging the head of the main column, when Kleist fell on his rear. Vandamme was destroyed, and the *moral* and material effect of the Dresden victory was lost. Napoleon had tried to turn an enemy *en séparant l'armée*. He threw no blame on Vandamme or on St Cyr, though the former ought perhaps to have taken the precaution of blocking the pass behind him, and the latter have dogged Kleist more closely.

In laying down a principle one must remember that there is no room for pedantry in the art of war. As Napoleon said: "*L'art de la guerre est un art simple et tout d'exécution.*" Therefore if a commander had such numbers that half of his forces could meet the enemy with reasonable certainty of success, it would be hard to say he should not separate his army, if this were the only way of ensuring a decisive blow. Lord Roberts, for instance, separated himself from Lord Methuen, when he marched to Klip Drift to relieve Kimberley, and to cut Cronje off from Bloemfontein. It is when



either part runs a real risk that separation is forbidden ; and the risk must be held to exist in relation to *anything the enemy can do*.

All the above examples are from pre-telegraph and pre-aviation days, and the question arises—would the perfecting of these remove the objection to “separations” ? It cannot be denied that these appliances preserve, for army and detachment, a close mutual knowledge of movements and positions and events, and a knowledge that may be well up to time. But this does not cover the whole matter.

To operate in two distinct bodies affords to the enemy four flanks instead of two.

If the two inner flanks are safe through the influence of natural barriers, then the parts cannot go to each other's help in emergency. If the barriers are friendly fortresses, on the other hand, they are barriers for the enemy and not for us. But in all cases the enemy may be able, if his information is good, to “contain” one part and bring “full strength” against the other. Mere knowledge on our part of what was going on might be of little avail, unless the enemy were adopting a quite passive defence.

It has been said that Napoleon's maxim requires that the army be carried bodily on to the hostile flank, but in many cases this would expose the manœuvring army's communications to an enterprising enemy. On occasion, the danger may be slight, owing to an already established ascendancy ; or the ground between the enemy and the communications may be itself a barrier with few and difficult passages, temporarily defensible by small bodies of troops ; or a friendly fortress may

be blocking the enemy's way to our communications. But there is a case in which, without any of these aids, the direct line can be completely abandoned. It is when the operating army has a broad base, which affords a fresh line of communications on that side where the outflanking movement takes place.

An example of this, the Vittoria Campaign of 1813, has already been given in Part I., Chapter II.

Moreau's case in 1800, mentioned in last chapter, now falls to be taken (Map III.).

Napoleon's plan was based on a correct appreciation of the value of Switzerland, now French, in connection with the Austrian dissemination from Kehl to the Tyrol. Here is the plan in his own words :

“To unite 4 Army Corps (Moreau's), by masked movements on the left bank of the Rhine, between Schaffhausen and Lake Constance; to throw four bridges and pass everything the same day . . . to pin Gen. Kray in the defiles of the Forest and the valley of the Rhine; to seize all their magazines and prevent their divisions from concentrating; to arrive at Ulm before him, cut off his retreat to the Inn, and leave his *débris* no refuge but Bohemia. In a fortnight this campaign would be decided; no circumstances could be more favourable, for there was never a better screen than the Rhine for masking movements.

“Moreau did not understand it; he wished his left to debouch from Mayence, which the First Consul did not like; but . . . he said to the Minister (of War) that it would not do to oblige a general to execute a plan he did not approve, provided he had only one line of operations. . . .

“Moreau opened the campaign, his left commanded by Ste. Suzanne, by the bridge of Kehl; St Cyr passed at Neuf-Brisach, reserve at Bâle, and Lecourbe, five days later, at Stein (on Lake Constance). Hardly had Ste. Suzanne passed than Moreau perceived that this corps was in danger, and ordered it back into France by Neuf-Brisach.

“This opening is contrary to the primary ideas of war; he manœuvres his army in the *cul-de-sac* of the Rhine, in the defile of the Forest, in presence of a hostile army in position. He manœuvred as if Switzerland was in the enemy’s occupation or was neutral. . . .

“Kray, thus forewarned, assembled his troops at Stokach and Engen, before the French army, and suffered no great harm; he would have been ruined without resource, if Moreau had been capable of understanding that all his army must debouch where Lecourbe issued.”

Napoleon’s plan ensured “full strength” in its double signification; it utilised the screen afforded by the Rhine; it utilised the shape given to the frontier by the possession of Switzerland, in conjunction with Kray’s dispositions; it was not afraid to leave the Rhine to be guarded by its fortresses, knowing well that the apparition of the whole French army about Stokach would stop dead all attempts at invading Alsace.

Moreau’s operations, on the contrary, could not produce “full strength” in time for a rapid decision, for his turning of the flank was only done by seriously separating his army; he delayed the turning movement, weak as it was, till Ste. Suzanne on the other wing was in grave danger; he was unnecessarily solicitous

for the defence of the Rhine ; he did not act so as to have the advantage of surprise, nor so as to seek a decision before the enemy could remedy his faulty dissemination ; he was content to push him back in leisurely fashion, and trust to the future to produce a favourable opportunity.

For the British army, if it has to act on the Continent (say) as ally of France against Germany, Napoleon's maxim is important. A project appeared in print some years ago for a landing of our expeditionary force in Denmark, to effect a wide flanking attack on Germany while she was fighting France in Lorraine. It is to be hoped that no such wild scheme will be adopted, but that we shall be found in close touch with a flank of the French army. In Napoleon's time, it may be said, we did successfully take France in rear, when she was fighting Central and Eastern Europe, by our separate operations in the Peninsula ; but the cases are far from being parallel. We started then far from the centre of French power, and the French in Spain and Portugal were in an insurgent and bitterly hostile country. To put our force into North Germany now would be equivalent to Wellington landing in 1808 at the mouth of the Loire, and attempting to march on Paris.



## CHAPTER V

### PLACING AN ARMY ON THE ENEMY'S COMMUNICATIONS

Requisites for Success in this Operation—von Moltke and Bazaine in August 1870—Campaign of Marengo—Napoleon's Errors

THIS operation is the extreme case of turning a flank, the subject discussed in the last chapter. A great ascendancy of *moral* or of numbers is usually requisite, and the operation must be favoured by topography or by breadth of base, if it is to be reasonably safe in execution.

The case of von Moltke placing his army on Bazaine's communications has been noted in Chapter VI., Part I. (Map IV.). On that occasion there was already some *moral* ascendancy, and there was a substantial preponderance of numbers ; for not only was von Moltke able to post an army corps and two cavalry divisions on the east of Metz to guard against the French breaking back, but the German 3rd Army, moving west from the Upper Saar on Toul, constituted a powerful flank-guard against any interference on the part of MacMahon, who was trying to concentrate towards Châlons. There was no particular topographical facility for the Germans in this case, and the success of the movement was really due to two things—the excessive sluggishness of Bazaine's retreat through Metz, and his neglect to defend the Moselle bridges between Metz and Frouard. To

this one must add the admirable mobility displayed by the German corps.

The case of Napoleon marching on to Mack's communications in 1805 has also been touched upon more than once. Breadth of base, mobility and skilful deception rendered the operation feasible and brilliantly successful.

In 1800 Napoleon performed his first operation of this kind. The situation of French and Austrians was as follows (Maps II. and III.).

Massena's force of about 40,000, in a miserable state, held Genoa and the Riviera to the Var. Moreau's Army of the Rhine, about 100,000, held the Rhine from Landau to Bâle. A reserve of 30,000 was in Switzerland. Napoleon was assembling secretly in Upper Savoy an "Army of Reserve," which he intended to lead in person.

Austria had 140,000 in Italy under Mélas, who was to invade Provence by the Var; 120,000 under Kray, disseminated from the Main to Suabia, were to stand on the defensive.

During the month of March Napoleon was uneasy about Massena, and sent him repeated instructions to keep concentrated. On 9th April he wrote to him as follows:—"Your mission is (1) to attract the attention of Mélas, (2) to induce him to divide his forces, (3) to operate your junction with the Reserve Army, when it shall be in Italy; (1) you will do by a strong feint from Genoa on Tortona, (2) by a sudden and secret march to your left and over the Col di Tenda, (3) by a sharp move north past Turin."

Napoleon was here reckoning without the enemy, who

was far stronger than Massena. The latter was caught *in a line*, contrary to Napoleon's advice. By 20th April Napoleon knew that Massena was in grips with Mélas, and he saw that the attraction of Genoa would facilitate his own project of marching to the Austrian communications. Speed was, however, urgent, for Mélas had Savona as early as 7th April, and was pushing two of Massena's divisions towards Nice; and Massena was probably already shut up in Genoa with only thirty days' food, and had to deal with 70,000 Austrians.

From 8th to 15th May Napoleon was hard at work on his arrangements for invasion, which worked out as follows:—Thurreau, 4000, by the Mont Cenis; Chabran, 5000, by the Little St Bernard; Army of Reserve, 36,000 and 40 guns, by Great St Bernard; Béthencourt, 3000, by the Simplon; Moncey, 15,000, by the St Gothard.

The "Army" had some very raw recruits, for we find Napoleon giving orders, on 12th May, "to have all the conscripts to-morrow to fire some shots, to teach them with which eye to aim, and how to load!"

14th May, to Dupont, Chief of Staff: "Tell Moncey I shall be at Ivrea, 20th May; shall march by shortest route to Milan; am expecting strong resistance at the Ticino; 22nd or 23rd May about Arona." But there was no strong enemy in the Milanese.

Events moved as follows:—

18th May.—Lannes, advanced guard, routs 4000 at Chatillon; fort of Bard blocks the way, is masked and passed.

24th May.—Lannes routs 5000 at Ivrea.

27th May.—Lannes attacks at Chivasso a strong advanced post that is covering the concentration Mélas

is striving for at Turin ; Mélas so far thinks the main attack is coming from the Mont Cenis. Army, Chabran's division and Thurreau are concentrated at Ivrea.

Napoleon's latest reliable information at date showed the Austrian dispositions of 18th May : 12,000 at Nice, 6000 about Savona, 25,000 before Genoa, 8000 at Susa, 8000 before the Simplon and St Gothard, and the strong guards he had met at Chatillon, etc. The rest were still unaccounted for, but it could be inferred that Mélas was hastily concentrating at Turin. Napoleon had some 33,000 at Ivrea, within two marches, and it does seem that he should have forthwith attacked. Napoleon excuses himself on the ground that, in case of defeat, he had no safe retreat, Bard still blocking the way. But he knew now that there was no hostile strength in the Milanese, and that the Simplon and the St Gothard were therefore open, and here was an opportunity of beating part of the enemy in detail.

Lannes was left at Chivasso as a screen against Mélas, but Lannes could not prevent Mélas moving towards Genoa.

*31st May.*—Napoleon meets, on the Ticino, the 10,000 whom Moncey has swept before him. These retreat behind the Adda.

*1st June.*—"Triumphal" entry into Milan ; Moncey arrives a few days later.

*3rd June.*—Lannes at Pavia, capturing magazines. Letters found here show that the Turin forces would join at Alessandria, 9th-11th June, with Elsnitz's corps from Nice, and Ott's from the siege of Genoa. The march on Milan does not seem the able manœuvre it is sometimes called.



Napoleon's optimism at times surpassed the credible. On capturing these Austrian papers, he wrote to Berthier on 8th June, that "after their losses they can hardly number 20,000"; and he made dispositions that remind one of Frederick's opponents—Chabran, 3300, Ivrea; Thurreau, 4400, Susa; Loison, 5300, blockading Pizzighetone; Lapoype, 3500, holding Pavia; Lorge's division, Créma; Gilly, 3300, investing the castle of Milan; Béthencourt at Arona.

The total of Napoleon's troops was 57,845; of these 29,676 were disseminated on secondary objects, and he had only 28,169 in hand for the decisive battle of 14th June. On the very morning of the battle of Marengo, he detached Desaix, 5300, and fought till 4 P.M. with less than 20,000 against the Austrians, to whom he had granted three weeks to raise their force to 45,000. By sheer luck Desaix returned on the Austrian flank and won the battle, which was on the point of being lost.

In his efforts to excuse himself, Napoleon asserts that "it was contrary to the true principles of war" to "drive Mélas from Turin"; but why merely "drive"? It is more than probable that a victory against Turin would have raised the siege of Genoa and saved Massena.

Napoleon's own pleading shows him in an unaccustomed light: "The third alternative (marching on Milan) was offering all the advantages; the army, mistress of Milan, would have the magazines and hospitals of the enemy"—which was a gross exaggeration. What, besides, would be the value, if their capture gave the enemy time to concentrate in superior strength?

The fine situation at the end of May, brought about

by surprise, with its superiority over the near half of the enemy, was abandoned.

“If Mélas, as was natural, should march on Alessandria to join the rest, one could hope, by moving across the Po to meet him, to anticipate the junction and give battle.” This sounds like nonsense, the distances from Ivrea by Milan, and from Turin to Alessandria, being all in favour of the Austrians.

The events were as follows :—

*4th June.*—Napoleon at Milan, organising the Cisalpine Republic. Genoa capitulates ; Massena, being accorded “the honours of war,” proceeds to Nice, etc.

*5th June.*—Lannes crosses the Po near Pavia ; Murat with the cavalry captures a magazine at Piacenza next day.

*6th June.*—General Ott, the besieger, takes 12,000, not to Alessandria, but on Mantua.

*7th June.*—Elsnitz, from the Var, reaches Turin with 12,000 to 15,000 men. The mass of the French begins to follow Lannes across the Po. Lannes, with Murat, drives back a strong detachment sent on reconnaissance by Mélas.

*9th June.*—Ott meets the French advanced guard at Montebello, and is badly handled.

*10th-12th June.*—Napoleon in the Stradella position for three days, waiting for enemy to attack or manœuvre or attempt to escape.

Into such a position has Napoleon's false march to Milan forced him. The surprise invasion from the north afforded a great chance of fighting and destroying in detail the scattered Austrians, and now it is the French

who are scattered, with their chief mass waiting to be attacked by double its numbers.

Mélas making no move, Napoleon becomes uneasy, the usual result of leaving the initiative to the enemy. On afternoon of 12th June, without drawing in reinforcements, he advances ten miles to the Scrivia, looking for the enemy. "In the evening, position on the Scrivia; no news of the enemy; he must have escaped."

13th June.—Daybreak, passes the Scrivia into a plain; enemy must have gone, as he would surely not have missed the chance of ground so favourable to his superior cavalry and artillery; probably to Genoa.

Napoleon, making this assumption, detaches Desaix to the left, on Novi. In the evening Victor, advanced guard, engages 4000 enemy at Marengo; even at St Helena Napoleon calls this enemy a "rearguard." Victor pushes scouts to the Bormida in the dark, and reports "no bridges," which was contrary to fact.

14th June.—Mélas debouches by three bridges, and a strong battle ensues, with nearly two to one against the French, who after some hours are in retreat approaching a rout, when Desaix appears fortuitously behind the Austrian right. His attack, and a charge by Kellermann's horse, induce Mélas to retreat in his turn.

Never again did Napoleon *take position* on the enemy's communications, and never again did he voluntarily allow the enemy three weeks in which to concentrate.

## CHAPTER VI

### SEA POWER

Its Economic and Political Aspect—South African War—Spanish-American War—Limitations of its Influence—Its Aspect in Relation to Choice of Theatre—The Napoleonic Wars—Rome and Hannibal—After Trafalgar—War of Secession—Its Aspect in Relation to the Strategy of a Specific Campaign—The Peninsular War—Summary

THE economic value of sea command is fairly manifest. There will seldom be sea command without a large ocean commerce. The loss of the command would, in war, cripple the pecuniary resources just when the Government needs every penny. The retention of the command implies not only the continuance of the trade, but usually includes the stoppage of the enemy's sea trade. Thus Japan, commanding with respect to Russia in the Pacific, kept up her public revenues without difficulty. Thus Great Britain, during the Napoleonic wars and earlier, not only preserved her own share of trade, but increased it enormously at the expense of her opponents.

The degree of dependence on sea trade, as we know, varies enormously. To some nations the prolonged loss of it would be ruinous, to others harmful, to others of little consequence, if their land frontiers were open.

Our subject is the influence and the limitations of Sea Power, and we may conveniently divide it into



(1) its political aspect, (2) its aspect with reference to a state of war in general, (3) its aspect with respect to the strategy of a specific campaign.

(1) By the political aspect we mean, among other things, the influence of our sea power on other nations besides the one with whom we are at war, or with whom we are about to go to war. For example, when relations became strained with President Kruger, there was a pretty obvious desire on some parts of the Continent to intervene in our quarrel with the Boers; and again, when our early reverses occurred, there is little doubt that one Power would have stepped in as Kruger's ally, if it had seen its way to carry its great armies to the scene of the fighting. The vital political necessity to us of sea command has never more clearly appeared. There could be no question of interference until the British fleets were disposed of, and no sufficient coalition was forthcoming to effect this feat.

The sea power of the United States was dangerously weak when she declared war against Spain. No doubt she felt confident of being able to beat the Spanish fleet, but would she have been allowed to meet Spain single-handed if Great Britain had not kept the lists? The interposition on the side of Spain of the comparatively small German fleet of that day, a likely thing if it could have been effected without bringing us into the fray, would certainly have postponed indefinitely the success of the Americans. Here the known friendship of the greatest sea power enabled the States to carry through rapidly a successful, single-handed fight.

Again through our sea power we kept the lists for Japan.

These are political aspects of the influence of sea power. Its limitations in this respect are pretty obvious. A great land power can often afford to neglect the menace of a power that is strong on the sea alone. When Prussia, Russia and Austria were dealing with Poland, or Prussia and Austria with Denmark, the British fleet could have no bearing on the matter, and these powers could neglect our wishes, if we were not prepared to land great armies, which we did not possess. In this, substantially, lies the limitation of sea power. As a Russian general said at the time of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877: "The British fleet is without doubt most powerful, but ironclads cannot climb the Balkans."

(2) The second division of the subject is mainly concerned with the choice of a theatre in which to operate—that is, being on the verge of war, we consider carefully to what extent our sea power will enable us to choose the most effective point at which to make a stroke on land. In the past, an outstanding case was the prolonged war beginning with the French Revolution. Sometimes we chose well, sometimes ill. The abortive Toulon expedition at the very beginning was one of the latter cases; the same force employed to help the insurgents in La Vendée would probably have been more effective.

In the earlier years of Napoleon's career Europe did not understand the universal menace contained in the genius and character of the great soldier, and there was consequently little proper co-operation against him. During that period our Government may be justly excused for not quite knowing the best course to pursue, but a sound thing was done in clearing the sea first. By

the time that was achieved, great part of the Continent was Napoleon's. When we made up our minds to employ land forces in the struggle, the choice of points of attack seems bewilderingly large, but was really narrowed down by the following consideration:—the total of troops which we could produce bore so small a ratio to Napoleon's strength that we could only venture, except in one single direction or perhaps in two, to operate on land at a place and time when we could be sure of immediate support from large regular armies. That is, operations in central or northern Europe would have to be conducted in concert with Prussia, Austria or Russia, and the difficulty would always be to be there in time.

Napoleon's enormous resources must be kept clearly in view; the man who could keep 280,000 in Spain, when he was fighting for his life at Aspern and Essling and at Wagram (May and July 1809), near Vienna, would not have been much embarrassed by the landing of 50,000 British in North Germany, for instance.

The case of the keenly fought and almost drawn battle of Preussich-Eylau (8th February 1807), in East Prussia, is sometimes instanced as an occasion when we missed giving the help we might have afforded. No doubt 40,000 stout British troops fighting side by side with Russia and Prussia in that mighty struggle would have turned the scale, and Napoleon would have been glad to retreat in safety to France. Therefore, it is said, we ought to have sent an army in transports to Dantzic or Königsberg. This idea would be sound enough if the British Government of the day had been endowed with an uncommon prophetic faculty—one



can hardly blame them for not having it. The preparations for such an expedition would have had to be made at such a time that the army could land before the end of January ; we may suppose that the whole expedition would have to be on board ship in British ports before the end of December 1806, and that the beginning of all preparations could not be later than 1st October. At that date Napoleon had just left Paris, was collecting an army on the Main, and was going to meet Prussia at Jena on 14th October. When the news of that crushing blow reached England, would any one urge the British Government to continue preparations for an expedition to the Baltic ? The " tempestuous warfare " of Napoleon produced such rapid transformations that the point at which we were to act could not be chosen in this way—that is, with a view to joining in a particular battle or even in a particular campaign.

With all our sea command, the points where we could intervene effectively were few. Our enemy having the disposal of vast resources, we had to choose a point where he would find it difficult to bring his whole force to bear against us, far from the centre of his power. The great mass of the Grand Army during this period was more or less in the vicinity of the Rhine.

This practically narrowed us down to Italy and the Spanish Peninsula, and these are the " one, or perhaps two, places " to which reference was made above. Portugal was happily chosen. By sea it was near to England, by land it was far from the Rhine and Paris. The little country's geographical features were such as to make it an excellent manœuvring ground against superior numbers in Spain, and between it and France



lay a great country that was to prove determinedly hostile to the French.

The considerations just mentioned comprise the points on which the problem is to be solved, in a case like that of the Napoleonic contest, and when the hostile resources are very great. The first, proximity to Britain, is not so important in days of steamships. The others are—that the point should be far from the centre of his power, but a point whose possession by you is intolerable to him—the geography and topography should be in your favour—as much as possible of the territory between the point and the hostile power centre should present difficulties to him, either geographical or political, or both.

We, in fact, contributed in Spain and Portugal more to the cause of Europe than we could have done by using our little army on any other part of the Continent.

In discussing this case at some length, we have pretty clearly indicated the limitations of sea power in its bearing upon war in general. Substantially it shows that the fleet alone cannot bring about a decision in our favour, and that even the most complete sea command does not enable us to disembark our army where we please ; but it enables us, after eliminating the impossible places, to choose from those that remain the one where we can assure to ourselves the greatest military advantages. This very freedom of choice of time and place is the great weapon that the sea command puts into our hand.

In the Punic wars between Rome and Carthage a great military genius, Hannibal, went under because sea command had passed over to the Romans. When

this condition arose, Hannibal, confident that he could beat them on land, yet could only reach them by long and painful marches through Spain and Gaul and over the Alps, a prolonged struggle against nature and man. Near Marseilles he evaded a Roman force, only to find it had taken ship and was there to meet him on the Po. Thereafter, through thirteen years of remarkable manœuvring and still more remarkable fighting, he upheld the Punic cause in Italy, in a manner of which he alone was capable, deprived as he was of help from home.

When he had at last to leave the country, Carthage was still wealthy and formidable, and Rome must carry an army into Africa, if a Roman empire is to emerge. Without that invasion, there would be nothing more cogent than a treaty to prevent Carthage steadily rebuilding her fleets.

And so it has been with us in the past. Napoleon's sea power, crippled at Trafalgar, was again making head by building in various safe ports and estuaries, and especially in the Scheldt at Antwerp. Our Walcheren expedition, designed to destroy this nascent navy, is often held up to ridicule as an absurd project of our Government. It was, on the contrary, an admirable strategic stroke in its conception, but the land execution of it was so faulty that it failed. Napoleon himself thought it a masterly move. Its failure tied up many British frigates on blockading duty, and in 1813 Wellington, fighting on the Bidassoa, had to complain that, "for the first time, the communication by sea of a British army was insecure."

The fleet will not complete the victory. The

Confederate coasts, in the War of Secession, were pretty effectually blockaded in 1861, the first year of the war, but it was not till 1865 that the decision was reached. The blockade prevented the Confederates from continuing their chief trade, the export of cotton and tobacco, and also threw them entirely on their own resources for the supply of munitions of war. Neither North nor South had great military establishments when war broke out, or great arsenals for the manufacture of warlike equipments. When the blockade was established the North was able to get the newest and most efficient weapons from Europe, while the South had to manufacture for herself as best she could. Her lack of munitions towards the end hastened the final collapse, but the war would have gone on indefinitely had not the North vastly increased her land forces, and used them with admirable vigour.

Your sea power, if it results in sea command, renders the whole coast-line of the enemy your frontier, and makes that frontier impregnable to him ; impoverishes him by arresting his sea trade ; compels him to await in uncertainty the next blow, and probably induces him, therefore, to disseminate his forces ; deprives him of the hope of any ally who cannot line up with him by land marching ; renders your own ultimate base absolutely secure, thus placing you in the happy position of " fighting with limited liability," as it has been epigrammatically stated ; leaves to you the resources of the world, if you can pay for them ; enables you to pick up one by one the enemy's oversea possessions.

But your sea power does not enable you to decide the issue, unless the enemy is insular and unable to



feed himself on home produce ; nor to choose any point whatever for a landing ; nor to prevent the enemy being helped by an ally who can march to the theatre ; nor to preclude him from making efforts, in safe estuaries and harbours, to rebuild his fleet.

Modern fleets, it is true, are not rapidly improvisable, like the Roman galleys ; nor have many nations the capacity of laying the keels of a powerful fleet, simultaneously and at short notice. But the power that should expect, by beating the United States' fleet, for instance, to reduce that nation without occupying its ship-building yards would in two or three years have a rude awakening.

“An army, even a small army, supported by an invincible navy, possesses a strength out of all proportion to its size.” The whole history of England demonstrates the truth of this *dictum* of Colonel Henderson's. The struggle for India and Canada with the French, and the influence on Napoleon's career of the Peninsular War, are outstanding examples.

(3) We have come now to the stage at which the theatre has been chosen, and are concerned with the strategical advantage that accrues from sea command.

When Junot held Portugal in 1808 (Map I.), with his headquarters about Lisbon, Wellington's expedition, sailing from Cork to the Peninsula, had a great choice of landing-places. Santander and other ports on north coast of Spain were too near the sources of French power. Corunna and Ferrol were far enough away, but were also too far from Junot. To land at the Tagus mouth, as the ministry suggested to Wellington, would be to give oneself the task of fighting a way ashore ; to



go to Cadiz was to put the broad Tagus between us and the enemy. If from Cadiz we hugged the coast-line, so as to keep in touch with the fleet, we struck the Tagus where it was miles wide ; if by an inland route to a point where the river was negotiable, we ran great risk to our communications. But the adverse influence on Junot of this freedom of choice is manifest, for his uncertainty kept him from concentrating. Wellington's operation from Mondego Bay, touched upon in Chapter II., Part I., took Junot by surprise, enabled our army to fight with superiority of force at Roleia, and brought us dangerously near to Lisbon before Junot could concentrate.

Two great advantages, exemplified in the course of the Peninsular War, fall to be added to the above of speed and secrecy. They are the facility afforded by the resulting breadth of base for a voluntary change of line of communications, when by this means alone can a certain strategic stroke be safely brought about ; and the power of escape by a new line of retreat, when the old line is barred by an unexpected development of the hostile strength, either in numbers or direction.

The former advantage is shown in Wellington's action at the time of Vittoria, as described in Chapter II., Part I. The latter is exemplified in the case of Sir John Moore's plight when, being on the point of attacking Marshal Soult on the Carrion River, he heard that Napoleon in person, with 50,000 men, was marching from Madrid on to his rear.

Moore had started from Lisbon, his army escaped by Corunna. It might be said that if the line from Lisbon

to Corunna had been a land frontier, all British, Moore could equally have escaped. The difference is that no land frontier is impregnable ; in the actual case, all the power of Napoleon could not carry the pursuit one mile beyond Corunna harbour. And there is another difference—as soon as the transports were out of sight they were entirely beyond the ken of the French. While these were still wondering where the escaped army was going, it might be disembarking at Lisbon or Cadiz,<sup>1</sup> hundreds of miles distant, and nothing the French could do would avail to hamper the vast flank movement.

A great number of examples, actual and hypothetical, could be added to the above.

The student of history, who is on the look-out for them, could multiply them indefinitely. To study them adequately, he is recommended the tripartite division into which the subject has been analysed above, and which is now repeated : 1. The political aspect, under which we group (*a*) the effect upon all possible allies of your enemy, or the extent to which you can isolate him, (*b*) the power you have of “ keeping the lists ” for a friendly nation, even without entering the struggle in person, (*c*) the continuous warning-off of all nations from any projects they might otherwise conceive against your outlying possessions. 2. The aspect of sea power with reference to a state of war in general, under which we consider the latitude afforded in choosing where to strike, and the ability to cripple the enemy’s sea trade. 3. The aspect of sea power with

<sup>1</sup> Had Moore survived the battle of Corunna, his intention was to carry the army to Cadiz:

respect to the strategy of a specific campaign—that is, when the choice of theatre of land operations has been made, and afterwards when the fighting is in progress.

Finally endeavour, in each case, to find out what the sea power could not effect, either by itself or in conjunction with the available land army.

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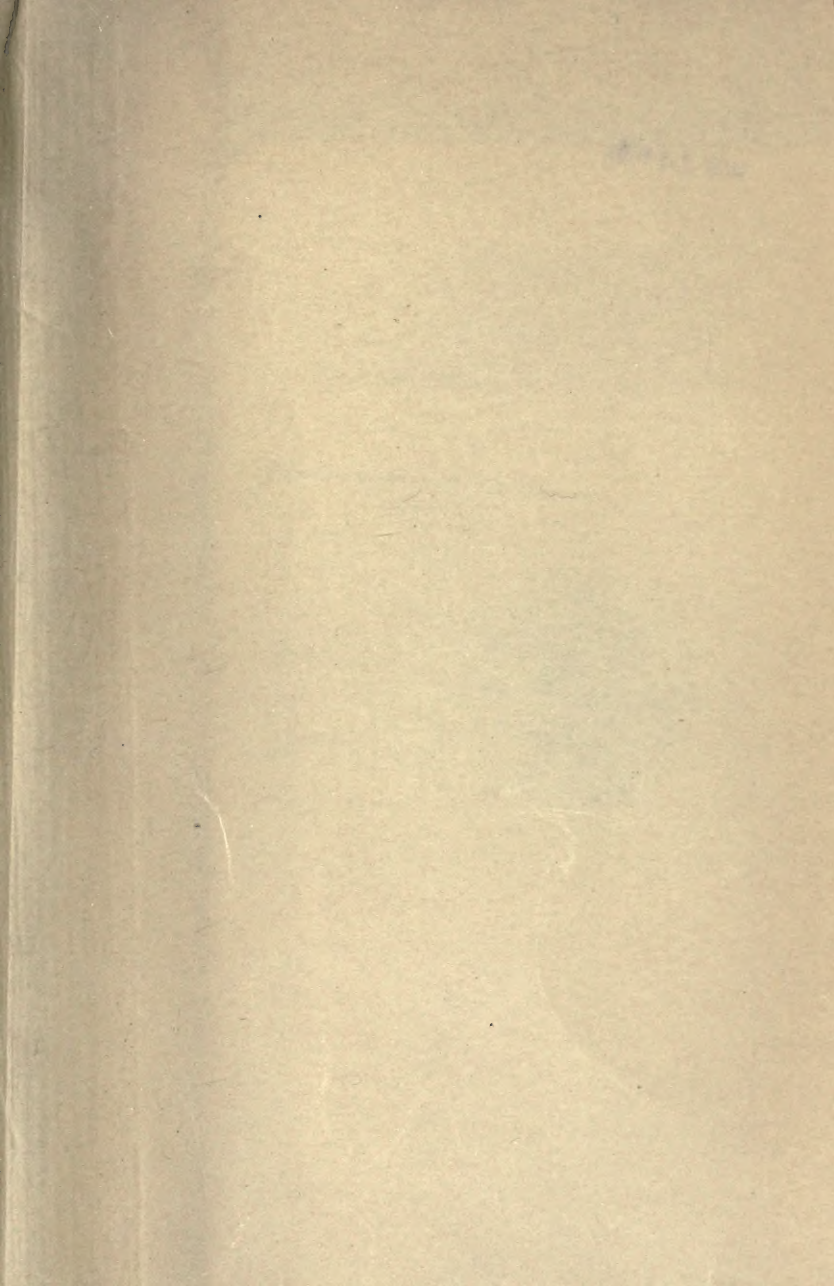
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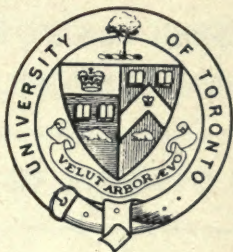
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