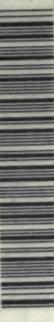


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# THE FRENCH ARMY BEFORE NAPOLEON

LECTURES DELIVERED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD  
IN MICHAELMAS TERM, 1914

BY

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# I

## THE HISTORY OF THE STUDY OF NAPOLEON

THE story which I shall attempt to tell you this term has no direct relation to the conflict in which the chief nations of Europe are now fighting one another to vindicate their opposite ideals of right, of human life, and of society. It is but a contribution to the attempt to understand the process of war. I have tried to focus into a few brief chapters the light which the inquiries of others have thrown upon the origin of modern generalship and modern armies. It is a fragment of history which at first sight may seem as remote from our present lives as the story of Thermopylae, of Leuctra, or of Cannae. It might perhaps have the attraction of novelty, for the field which it covers has hardly been explored by English writers. The lectures were written substantially in their present form in the spring of this year, when the ordeal into which we are now plunged was little more than the foreboding of a few observers who were but too conscious of their likeness to Cassandra. But if the historian's work is sincere it may have the quality of truth, which illuminates not only the past but the present and the future. So I have taken courage in this crisis to submit to you the results of my labours in the hope that the picture of the past

may illustrate the struggles of to-day, and that while our nation is trying to arm itself we may derive encouragement and instruction from the records of the like effort successfully made in another age by those French neighbours with whose fate the weal and woe of England are now indissolubly associated.

War is an affair of the spirit, of what, in the imperfection of our analysis, we call the intelligence and the will. The first word of the military vocabulary—attention—belongs to the spiritual region. The most fertile source of success or disaster is a spiritual factor, surprise, the contrast between attention and inattention, between a mind alert and a mind in lethargy, between forethought and neglect. Every one is familiar with the handicap which arises when troops that are led with decision come upon troops unready and a leader without a plan. The workings of surprise are seen on a grander scale when a Government finds itself unexpectedly plunged into a war of which it has not foreseen the conditions, and in regard to which it has failed to make a true estimate of the forces which will confront it and of those with which it can oppose them. This phenomenon was illustrated by the war of the First Coalition against Revolutionary France.

On the 20th of April, 1792, the legislative assembly at Paris gave its vote in favour of a declaration of war against the King of Hungary and Bohemia. The Englishman, Arthur Young, was just then correcting the proofs of his *Tour in France*. He had spent

several years travelling in that country for the purpose of studying French agriculture, and was therefore, perhaps, better acquainted than any other observer with the state of the country and with the temper of its people. Six days after the declaration of war he wrote a postscript to his volume.

‘In the last moment’, he says, ‘which the preparation for publication allows me to use, the intelligence is arrived of a declaration of war on the part of France against the House of Austria; the gentlemen in whose company I hear it, all announce the destruction of France—*they will be beat;—they want discipline;—they have no subordination;—*and this idea I find general. So cautiously as I have avoided *prophetic* presumption through the preceding pages, I shall scarcely assume it so late in my labours;—but this I may venture,—that the expectation of destruction to France has many difficulties to encounter.’

The event was to prove that Arthur Young had seen deeper into the situation than the gentlemen in whose company he heard the declaration of war and even than the Governments which rushed or were hurried into it. After four years’ struggle against Austria, Prussia, and Sardinia, reinforced in the second year by England, Spain, and Holland, France, so far from having been destroyed, had extended her frontier to the left bank of the Rhine and induced Prussia, Spain, and Holland to make peace and acquiesce in her expansion.

The factor which had evaded the observation of

the Governments of the Coalition was the real nature of the Revolution. Louis XIV had said, 'L'État c'est moi'—'The State—why *I* am the State'. Fifty years of reflection and discussion of discontents had given the French people its reply, which was, 'L'État c'est nous'—'We are the State'. They had constituted the whole people into the State and given it the name of the nation. Thus reconstituted, France developed an energy which none of her adversaries could rival. But the source of this power was hidden from the statesmen of Austria, Prussia, and Sardinia, brought up as they had been to the very conception which the French had rejected. As soon as the Coalition had become dangerous to France her Government concentrated its powers in the hands of a 'Committee of Public Safety' of which the mere name was a sufficient indication that the energy of the whole people would be concentrated on the war.

If the Governments of the Coalition were unable to perceive that the Revolution was a transformation, like that which occurs when the chrysalis breaks and sets free a winged creature, still less could their generals be aware that a similar process had taken place in the French army, in which twenty years of strenuous work and thought had made possible a new organization, a new method of making war, and a new generalship.

This new development was not fully revealed until after the Treaty of Basle of 1795, when the war against Austria and Sardinia was taken over by the Directory. In 1796 both the French and Austrian

Governments expected the decision in Germany, where the Directory entrusted its armies to two generals, Moreau and Jourdan, both already distinguished by success. The Austrian Court gave the command to the Archduke Charles, a young prince who had shown capacity for command, and now justified his appointment by defeating his adversaries one after the other. In Italy the outlook for France seemed desperate. The French army of Italy was unshod, clothed in rags, half-starved. It lacked transport; it had no money. Under the stress of privations its discipline was beginning to fail. Its experienced commander, Schérer, though he had won in the autumn the battle of Loano, declared himself helpless unless he could be supplied with reinforcements, provisions, and funds. But the Directory was penniless; it could not create transport out of nothing nor raise troops in a country exhausted by the exactions of the Terror. The Directors risked the hazard of giving the command to the young general, Bonaparte, who had confidence in himself, and had rendered some service in the suppression of a dangerous riot.

Bonaparte reached Nice and took over the command on the 27th of March. He set to work to organize the scanty equipment of the army, and sent on troops from the line of communications to reinforce the divisions at the front. In a fortnight he was ready for the field and made his first move. Five days later he had already four times defeated the Austrians. Then he turned upon the Sardinians who



in another five days were in helpless and hopeless retreat on Turin. A month after his arrival at Nice he sent to the Directory the terms which he had dictated at Cherasco to the King of Sardinia (April 28). Before the approval of the Directory could reach him he had chased the Austrians across Lombardy and completed their expulsion by the battle of Lodi (May 10). A few days only were needed to organize his communications and arrange a new administration of Lombardy. He then set out for a fresh campaign, but was interrupted by a revolt at Milan and Pavia. After five days, however, he was again at the front, and when he attacked the Austrians at Borghetto they retired into the Tyrol. He then arranged the investment of Mantua, and while it was proceeding made an expedition with a small force to Leghorn, exacting a contribution from that city and extorting a truce and 21,000,000 francs from the Pope. On the 3rd of July he was again before Mantua, of which he began to press the siege. The Austrian Emperor had collected a fresh army to relieve Mantua. On the 29th of July it attacked Bonaparte's troops, still dispersed. Bonaparte raised the siege to turn against this new army, which he defeated at Castiglione on the 5th of August, and by the 12th it was back in the Tyrol. Three fresh Austrian armies one after another attempted to crush Bonaparte and relieve Mantua. They are remembered by their defeats at Bassano, at Arcole, and at Rivoli. The battle of Rivoli was fought on the 14th of January, 1797. On the 2nd of

February the garrison of Mantua capitulated; on the 11th Bonaparte was at Ancona, and on the 19th dictated at Tolentino a treaty by which the Pope ceded Avignon, Bologna, and Ferrara, and paid another fifteen millions to the French Government. On the 10th of March Bonaparte set out with his army towards Vienna. The Emperor Francis had recalled the victorious Archduke Charles from Germany to interpose between the French army and his capital. But on the 16th Bonaparte brushed aside the Archduke at the Tagliamento, and continued his advance through Carinthia into Styria. On the 18th of April the Archduke agreed to the preliminaries of Leoben, and the war was over.

If the success of the French in the revolutionary war from 1792 to 1795 had been due to the exertions of a united nation under a determined Government, their success in the Italian campaigns of 1796-7 sprang from a fresh source, the personality of Napoleon and the new generalship of which he alone had the secret.

We may then regard the failure of the old monarchies in their conflict with the Revolution as due to the political surprise arising from their inability to appreciate the force that springs from the national spirit of a people. We may see too in their failure in presence of Napoleon the military surprise arising from inability to appreciate the force that springs from a transformation of the methods of conducting war. Men found it hard to grasp that Napoleon represented a new art of war. It required the startling

campaign of Marengo in 1800, the great disasters of Ulm and Austerlitz in 1805, and the tremendous catastrophe of Jena and Auerstädt in 1806 to make his adversaries realize that their only hope lay in adopting new methods appropriate to the new conditions. The best they could do was to copy Napoleon.

To appreciate a great metamorphosis, political or military, is not the work of a moment and is hardly possible for those outside of it. Napoleon himself was unable to modify the ideas that had lifted him to supremacy. His fall repeats the conditions of his rise, but with the *rôles* exchanged. He had been created in the effort of a nation in arms against a group of absolute monarchies ; he was undone by a group of nations in arms to upset his own absolute monarchy. Here was the political surprise turned against him, for he failed to perceive that while he had been conquering Europe he had also been forcing upon its peoples the very conception of nationhood which had transformed France and given him his opportunity. He was the victim, too, of the military surprise, for though he may have perceived that his victories had compelled his antagonists to transform their methods of conducting war, his own methods remained unchanged. He had inspired no disciples to develop his ideas, and the spirit of initiative had fled. The flexibility and mobility of the army of Boulogne could not be given, on the endless plains of Russia, to the immense army of 1812. The manœuvre which separated the Austrians and the

Sardinians in 1796, when they had no idea of uniting, was frustrated in 1815 by the determination of Wellington and Blücher at all cost to stand together.

After Napoleon was gone men found themselves in a new Europe, and recognized that in the changes which had taken place he had been the principal agent. The experience of his contemporaries, however, supplied them with no standard by which they could measure him; they could see only that he transcended them all. The word 'genius' served to absolve them from the attempt at explanation, for it suggests an incomprehensible power. Not until after a century of the efforts of historians has it become possible to trace the working of Napoleon's mind in the conception and execution of his work as a general.

The history of Napoleonic studies, so far as they are concerned with the art of war, falls roughly into three periods, of which the first ends with the publication (1858 to 1869) of Napoleon's correspondence, and the third begins in 1888.

The first period was dominated by the passions and prejudices that had accompanied the events. The Bonapartists sought to glorify Napoleon; their adversaries to vilify him. Foreigners could write the history of their own armies, but had only limited means of following the history of the French army or the workings of Napoleon's mind. The chief contributions of this epoch to the appreciation of Napoleon came from two great students of the theory of war, Jomini and Clausewitz. Each of them was under the spell of the conception of genius.

To Jomini Napoleon was the compeer of Caesar, of Hannibal, and of Alexander. To Clausewitz he was 'the very god of war'. Each of them prepared himself for his theory by writing the history of campaigns both of Napoleon and of his predecessors. But their ways of regarding their subject were different.

Jomini's object was to find out by comparison between Napoleon's campaigns and those of Frederick the principles of action which were common to them both and might therefore be of universal validity. He analysed their operations and classified them according to their geometrical form. The base of operations, the direction of an army's advance and that of its front can each be represented as a line. Jomini examined the relation between these three kinds of lines. The base and the front can both be divided into three parts, a centre and two extremities. Any line of advance must start from one of these three parts or points of the base to reach one of the three points of the enemy's front. A single line of advance will bring the army either to the enemy's centre or on to one of his flanks. If the enemy has his forces scattered it will be effective to pierce his front and so to divide his forces; in any other case it is better to strike upon one of his flanks or to pass it and move upon his communications. To advance upon a single line keeps the army united and is better than an advance by two lines, which divides it and exposes it to be beaten in detail.

Jomini's analysis and classification of operations, in spite of its artificial terminology, was correct and

useful. It was the first scientific exposition of strategy as a system of principles, and it has been used by all the subsequent strategical thinkers. Willisen in Germany and Hamley in England are Jomini's disciples, and the appreciation of Napoleon's campaigns has been for the most part little more than the application to them of Jomini's categories. The formal lore of strategy has been advanced but little since Jomini published his *Nouveau Précis de l'Art de la Guerre* in 1837.

Accordingly the military literature of the nineteenth century is hardly intelligible without a study of Jomini's chapter on strategy. But Jomini's work was not begun until long after 1796. Its terminology and its categories were unknown to General Bonaparte, though its analysis was read with approval and admiration by Napoleon as Emperor. In the attempt to follow the course of Napoleon's thoughts in his early campaigns it would be an anachronism to bring in the terminology or ideas of Jomini. It is safer to study Napoleon's own letters and papers.

If Jomini sought for the common element in the generalship of Napoleon and his predecessors, Clausewitz dwelt on the difference between them. Jomini sought for principles as precepts for guidance in action. Clausewitz thought general principles in the shape of precepts or rules of little avail in the presence of the infinite variety of the situations of war.

The question which Clausewitz put to himself was how it came about that Napoleon's wars were so fundamentally different from most of those which



had preceded them. His answer was that the energy with which a war is carried on is a product of two factors, the strength of the motive which actuates the belligerents and the degree to which that motive appeals to the population of the States concerned. The French Revolution had called a nation to arms. France therefore acted with the utmost energy. On the other hand, the cause for which the Governments of the Coalition were fighting was by no means vital to them and scarcely interested their people. The success of France was therefore predetermined. When the French forces came under the control of Napoleon, 'the very god of war', the overthrow of the old monarchies was inevitable. But the pressure of the French Empire upon the populations then aroused such bitter resentment that the nations one after another rushed to arms, and thus the overthrow of Napoleon was as much predetermined as had been his unprecedented conquests.

This portion of the theory of Clausewitz is, however, not derived from the generalship of Napoleon. Its root idea comes from an essay in which Scharnhorst in 1797 reviewed the revolutionary war of 1792-5, in which Napoleon had not yet had a command. Scharnhorst attributed the success of the French to the energy and unity of the French nation, and the failure of the Allies to their discord and their inadequate efforts. The subsequent exertions of Prussia in and after 1813 confirmed Clausewitz in his view of the importance of the distinction between national and dynastic war.

Little light then is thrown upon the ideas or methods of Napoleon by the principal doctrine of Clausewitz, important though that doctrine has been in its effects upon the subsequent development of war. His thesis is that a nation in arms will be stronger in war than half a nation in arms, and that a nation will not prepare itself for war unless and until it knows the reason why. This is evidently a doctrine for the statesman rather than for the soldier. It is the political rather than the military aspect of war. It is, however, inseparable from the view of Clausewitz that war is primarily a conflict of wills. Clausewitz is always laying stress on the truth that the spirit is more than the form. This leads him to undervalue the strategical analysis of Jomini and the system of positive precepts which the Swiss strategist had set up. Clausewitz sees that the essential operation in war is fighting, and that therefore every strategical combination depends for its success on crushing in battle the enemy's resistance. Lose your battle, and all your strategical combinations fall to pieces ; win your battle, and you have torn to shreds the enemy's combinations. This root idea of Clausewitz recalls Machiavelli's pithy maxim : '*Una giornata che tu vinca cancella ogni altra tua mala azione.*' A day that you win blots out every other faulty action of yours.

Of peculiar value in the work of Clausewitz is his conception of the critical study of a campaign, in which he distinguishes three processes. The first is to make sure of the facts, which is the business of

historical research. The second is to trace the connexion between causes and effects—difficult when we do not know, as is frequently the case, the real causes or motives of a general's action. The third consists in forming a judgment as to the suitability of the means employed for attaining the end aimed at. It is this third inquiry, whether the general chose the most appropriate means, whether he attempted the right solution of his problem, which exercises and develops the military judgment.

By this theory of military criticism and by the histories in which he applied it Clausewitz was the founder of a school of military historians, his greatest disciple being Moltke, the director of Prussia's armies in 1866-70.

Neither Jomini nor Clausewitz, however, could write the inner history of Napoleon's campaigns, for the most important documents were not accessible to them. The publication of Napoleon's correspondence, begun in 1858, was not completed until 1869. Its first volumes were used by Rüstow for his history of the campaigns of 1796-7—published in 1867—the first account of these campaigns based upon a close examination of the records.

The events of 1870-1 for a time prevented the correspondence from being fully utilized. The interest in Napoleon fell into the background. The French army was absorbed in its own reorganization. By degrees, however, it came to be perceived in France that the Prussian army had owed its success in great part to the teaching of Clausewitz, himself,

as he supposed, an exponent of Napoleon's mode of conducting war. Would it not be well for the French army to draw direct from the source instead of receiving its ideas through the medium of a foreign interpreter? There arose in France the impulse to seek military inspiration from the study of Napoleon's campaigns.

The first-fruit of this endeavour was a volume published in 1888 by Commandant Foucart, entitled *La Campagne de Prusse*, in which the author developed the events of the Jena campaign by way of commentary upon the orders of Napoleon. Soon afterwards the French Staff, equipped with a *Section historique*, began the publication of histories of the Napoleonic wars embodying the whole of the official correspondence so far as it is preserved. It is upon these histories that we have now to rely for our knowledge of the campaigns of the Revolution and Empire. They enable the modern student to follow Napoleon's thoughts in his own words and to trace the workings of his mind from stage to stage, and from day to day, during his campaigns. The third epoch of the study of Napoleon may thus be dated from Foucart's work of 1888.

In 1889 the French general Pierron published an essay entitled *Comment s'est formé le génie militaire de Napoléon I<sup>er</sup>?* General Pierron had read the history, published in 1775, by the Marquis de Pezay, of the campaigns of Maillebois in Italy in 1745-6. He was struck by certain resemblances between the operations there described and those

of General Bonaparte in 1796, and concluded, first, that the plan of the campaign of 1796 in Italy was borrowed by Bonaparte from Marshal Maillebois, and secondly, that Bonaparte must be regarded as the pupil or disciple of the Comte de Maillebois, the son and strategical adviser of the Marshal. At the same time Pierron pointed out that Bonaparte was indebted for some of his happiest ideas in 1796 to Bourcet's work, *Principes de la Guerre de Montagnes*, which had been presented by its author in 1775 to the Ministry of War. Pierron's essay gave a new impulse to the inquiry into the origin of the Napoleonic system of warfare, an inquiry which was undertaken, on the basis of a thorough investigation of the military history of the eighteenth century, by Captain, now Colonel, Colin, in a volume published in 1900, entitled, *L'Éducation militaire de Napoléon*.

Colonel Colin has shown that Napoleon's method of warfare was a new synthesis of materials all of which were ready to his hand, accumulated during the period between the beginning of the Seven Years' War and the Revolution. When Bonaparte, in 1796, took over the command of the Army of Italy, the generals, officers, and men of that army had been trained during four arduous years of mountain warfare. He made no changes, and none were needed, in its organization, in its armament, in its methods of fighting, in the formal tactics of any of the three arms, or in the methods of movement and supply. It was the army in which he had had his first experience of war and

had made his first essays in the art of directing operations. He was familiar with the country and with the enemy, as well as with the army which he was to lead. His contributions to its success were his own will and energy, his own conception of the nature of the war in which the army was engaged, and his own system of war. That system was the outcome of his thinking over the doctrines concerning the conduct of armies which had been evolved by the generals and staff officers of the French army of the *ancien régime*.

Just as the historians of the Revolution have by degrees come to see that the upheaval of 1789 and the subsequent years was the result of a long previous process of fermentation and growth in French civil society, so it has been gradually made plain that in the French army between the Seven Years' War and 1792 there was a constant effort at improvement, a serious study of war and of its forms and of the organization and training needed for it. The outcome of this stirring in the army and in military thought was seen in the organization and training of the new army of 1792-4, while the new growth in strategy, in the doctrine of operations, supplied the environment in which Napoleon grew up. He steeped himself in the best military thought of the pioneers who had preceded him. Their works supplied the elements which his insight and mental grip combined into that new system which so long puzzled and astonished the world. The importance of these recent researches is not merely that they

gratify our curiosity as to the early life and development of Napoleon—they stimulate rather than satisfy that curiosity. They supply a clue, previously wanting, to the comprehension of the strategy of which they disclose the origin. They give the key which unlocks the secret of Napoleon's generalship.

The year 1796 is thus the beginning of an era, the necessary starting-point for the historical study of modern war. But in the processes of life and growth there is no beginning; what we call a beginning marks equally the end of one development and the start of another. If the exploits of the army of Italy are the explanation of the subsequent history of Europe, their own explanation must be sought in the years that came before.

Napoleon and his soldiers were the outcome of the efforts, the controversies and the experiments of a whole generation of predecessors. If we begin the study of the campaign of Montenotte with Napoleon's arrival to take command of the army, we shall seem to be the spectators of a miracle. But if we first make ourselves acquainted with the previous experience of Napoleon and of his antagonists, and with the constitution and earlier adventures of the armies, we shall perceive that the course of the campaign could hardly have been other than it was. The one method would lead us to admire Napoleon and despise his enemies; the other, on which I invite you to accompany me for a little way, may enable us to understand both him and them.

## II

### THEORY AND PRACTICE DURING THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

IN my introductory lecture I suggested that the best way to understand Napoleon at work as commander of an army is to start from the ideas which had been developed in the French army in the period of his childhood and youth, which he had absorbed during the years of his apprenticeship to soldiering, and which formed the materials of his military studies between the ages of sixteen and twenty-six. Accordingly I shall devote this and the two following lectures to a review of the development of tactics and strategy in the French army in the period between the Seven Years' War and the Revolution.

The development of tactics, the art of fighting, has its material cause in the improvement of weapons, as that of the arts of marching and of combining the movements of armies arises from the improvement of communications and modes of supply. The development of modern tactics is synonymous with the improvement of firearms.

In the seventeenth century the foot-soldier's firearm was the musket, a matchlock which was not made light enough to be fired from the shoulder without a support until the time of Gustavus Adolphus. Mus-

keteers were formed for battle in groups of from a hundred to three hundred men, with a depth of as many as ten ranks, and with a front of from twelve to twenty-five men. The men were separated from one another by a space of three to four feet, in order to have plenty of room to handle their muskets. When the men in the front rank had fired, their places were taken by others from behind, who in their turn fell back to load and were replaced by fresh men. In this way a continuity of fire was maintained. But no general thought it safe to leave these groups of musketeers exposed alone to a charge of cavalry, and therefore, in the line of battle, between the groups of musketeers, were interposed groups of pikemen in a similar formation, so that charging cavalry would be met by the pike points of a small phalanx. The line of battle thus composed took a long time to form from the order of march. Once completed it hardly admitted of rearrangement or change. The several groups could slowly advance or retire, but evolutions were impracticable.

A typical seventeenth-century battle was Marston Moor, where the two armies were drawn up each with its centre formed of masses of foot, in two lines, with a mass of horsemen on either wing. The Parliamentary cavalry of the left wing, under Cromwell, defeated and dispersed the cavalry of the Royalist right wing, under Prince Rupert, while the cavalry of the Royalist left wing defeated that of the Parliamentary right wing. Cromwell then attacked and defeated the hitherto successful cavalry of the

Royalist left wing. Meanwhile, in the infantry battle, the Royalists had the better of the Parliamentary foot, of which the centre was broken. But when Cromwell had disposed of the Royalist horse he turned his Ironsides against the hitherto successful Royalist foot, which they broke and dispersed. So the horsemen turned into a decisive victory a battle which, as far as the infantry was concerned, was, before their intervention, already lost.

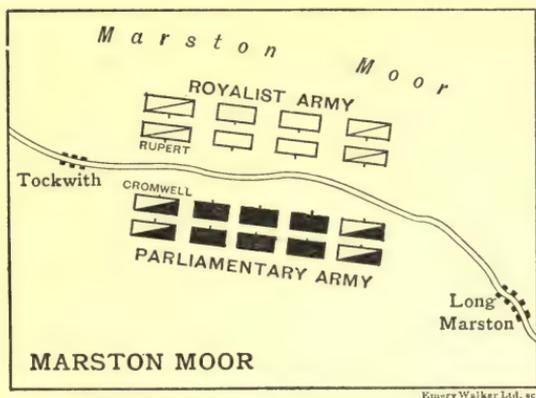


FIG. I.

Thus, in the middle of the seventeenth century, cavalry dominated the battlefield, for firearms were so clumsy and ineffective that musketeers unaided by pikemen could neither defend themselves against cavalry nor break up the enemy's infantry.

A late seventeenth-century attempt to turn gunpowder to better account was the distribution among some of the infantry of small bombs called hand-grenades. The men trained to throw these were called grenadiers, and were usually posted on the

flank of the line of musketeers and pikemen. Their introduction hardly seems to have had much effect.

But towards the close of the seventeenth century came a new invention destined to change the face of the battlefield. It was the flintlock, a device for firing the powder charge of the musket by the sparks struck by a flint against a piece of steel, the necessary blow being given mechanically by pulling a trigger. By degrees the flintlock, *fusil*, superseded all other kinds of hand-gun. The old names musketeer and grenadier remained alongside the new name fusilier, but the armament of them all became the same. The invention of a bayonet, which could be fixed by a ring on to the barrel of the flintlock, transformed the weapon into a pike without detriment to its use as a firearm. Thereupon the pikemen disappeared and the infantry became uniform in character, all armed with the flintlock and the bayonet. Loading was made easier by the invention of an iron ramrod, which was first adopted by the Prussian army in 1719.

There was no further substantial change of the armament of infantry until long after the fall of Napoleon. The French flintlock of 1777 remained in use until 1840. Its maximum range was only 600 yards and its effective range not more than 275. The problem of infantry tactics in the eighteenth century was to find the forms and evolutions best suited to the use of the flintlock and the bayonet.

In order to fire, it was necessary that the men should stand side by side, but the weapon took some

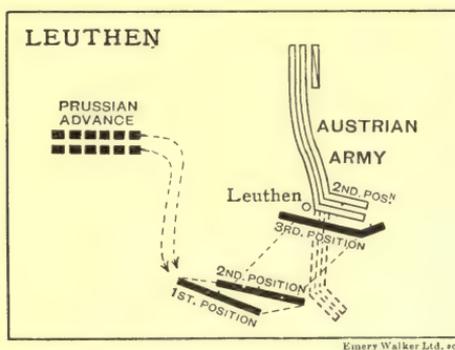
time to load, and if the line was to be always ready to fire or to be able to keep up a continuous fire it was necessary to have several rows of men one behind the other, called ranks, so that while one rank was firing the others could be loading. The normal formation when the flintlock was first adopted was in four ranks, of which the two in front knelt down, so that the two in rear could fire over their heads. The Prussian army, in which loading and firing were brought to the greatest perfection, was the first to dispense with the fourth rank, and three ranks remained normal throughout the latter part of the eighteenth century.

A continuous line of men shoulder to shoulder in three or four ranks enabled a given number of troops to produce the greatest volume of fire. But the formation of such a line required precise and accurate movements, during which the troops were defenceless, and, when formed, its weak points were the flanks, which had little or no power of resistance. A general would seek to form and post his line at the head of an open slope with his flanks resting on obstacles such as villages, precipices, or marshes. A second line was usually posted in support a little way behind the first. The front of this continuous line was formidable to cavalry, which would therefore seek to attack its flank or rear. The only defence of the infantry would then be to form another line facing to the flank or the rear, so that the ultimate defence against cavalry was to form a line facing in every direction, that is, to form a square. This took a little

time, so that infantry had always to be on its guard against surprise by cavalry. The whole army was kept together as a single mass, because of the fear that small bodies in isolation might be surprised and destroyed by cavalry.

The drill which was introduced into the Prussian army by Leopold of Dessau, the inventor of the iron ramrod, had for its objects to accustom the men to load and fire quickly, and to enable the line to be formed with promptitude and accuracy. The army marched in open column of platoons. A platoon was a body of seventy or eighty men in line of three ranks, and its front would be about twenty-five paces long. The next platoon would be twenty-five paces behind it, the distance which one platoon was behind the other being always exactly equal to the front of a platoon. In order, therefore, to form line on a given straight line, it was necessary that the column should first be placed so that the right or left flanks of all its platoons were on the line desired. The line was then formed by a simultaneous right or left wheel of all the platoons. The line thus formed was practised in advancing to the attack. As it moved forward, each platoon in turn halted to fire a volley, after which it quickened its pace to recover its place in the line. When close to the enemy the whole line advanced simultaneously to charge with the bayonet. The success of such an attack depended very largely on its striking the enemy's weak point, that is, his flank, which could hardly be gained except by surprise.

An army of 70,000 infantry, formed three deep, with 40,000 men in the first line, would be five miles long from flank to flank. To change front or position would take a long time, for whatever the new position, the flank bodies would have a march of several miles before they could reach it. This was the condition of which Frederick took advantage at the battle of Leuthen, in which his method is best exemplified. The Austrian army was drawn up in two long lines.



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FIG. 2.

The Prussian army came up in columns perpendicular to the Austrian front. Frederick detached an advance-guard (omitted in the sketch) to show to the Austrians in their front and to screen the march of his army, which moved to its right under cover towards a point in the prolongation of the left flank of the Austrian line. Here his columns wheeled into line and advanced obliquely until they were across the prolongation of the enemy's front. Then the Prussians advanced directly to the attack. The Austrians had not time to change front

except with a fragment of their army, and the portion attacked was crushed before the remainder could be brought into action.

Frederick had learned by bitter experience at Kolin the difficulty of a frontal attack. He found the Austrian army in position on a range of hills parallel to and commanding the continuation of his line of march. He determined to march his army past it, with the object of wheeling into line to his

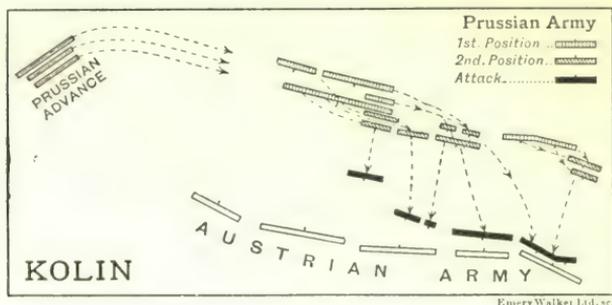


FIG. 3.

right when his army should be overlapping the Austrian right flank. The Austrians could see what he was doing and understood what it meant. They were able to modify their arrangements and to strengthen their right. The fire of their guns and sharpshooters against the flank of Frederick's marching columns was so galling that the centre of the Prussian army, against Frederick's intentions, prematurely wheeled to the right into line and attacked the Austrian front. Frederick's plan was upset and he was defeated.

His failure at Kolin probably impressed upon

Frederick the necessity of surprise for success in the attack on an enemy's flank and the impossibility of obtaining surprise against an enemy who could see what he was doing. This was the lesson by which he so brilliantly profited at Leuthen.

In the brief campaign of Rossbach the Franco-German army was at first placed by Soubise in a position so good that Frederick would not risk an attack upon it. It was then moved at the suggestion

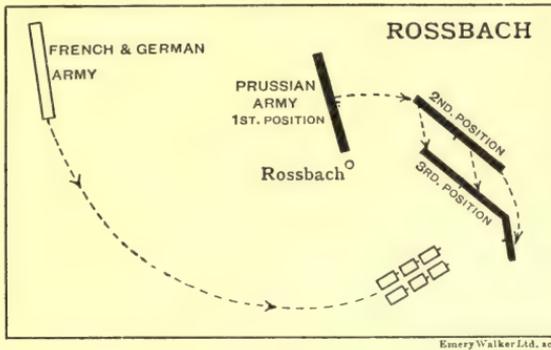


FIG. 4.

of Soubise to another good position which better covered its communications and threatened those of the Prussians. But the Prince of Hildburghausen, on this occasion in command, determined on the spur of the moment to prolong the march in order to reach the Prussian rear. Frederick, who was watching this movement, immediately marched off his army behind a ridge which concealed it, so as to form his line across the head of the French advancing columns, which had no time to form line to meet him, and were therefore caught in disorder and defeated.

It may be gathered that Frederick's victories were due quite as much to the swift judgment and fertility of resource, which enabled him to surprise the enemy, as to the formations and evolutions of his infantry, which he inherited and never substantially modified. His infantry never behaved better than in his first battle at Mollwitz in 1741. It was his cavalry, which there failed, that he afterwards improved. A successful army clings to the forms in which it has been victorious, and the formations and evolutions of Frederick continued to be employed with little modification by the Prussian army until its catastrophe in 1806.

✓ The French army owed its reverses in the Seven Years' War to incompetent generals appointed by a dissipated court, and to the division of command. Yet it possessed a number of officers of ability, experience, and judgment, to whom rather than to the Prussians was due the progress made in the art of war during the second half of the eighteenth century.

We have seen that the new infantry, armed with flintlock and bayonet, was strong in defence against frontal attack ; that, if its flanks were protected by obstacles, its powers of resistance were so great that it had little to fear even from a superior force, and that the game of the defence was therefore to seek a position which the assailant could not without great risk attack in front. From the new armament the infantry derived further capacities which were also new. It could defend itself while retreating, for

it could retire by alternate fractions, each of which in turn could keep off the enemy by its fire. A small force was therefore no longer exposed to certain destruction in presence of a large one. It could compel the superior enemy to form his line, which took time, could fall back before the attack was carried out, and could repeat this process again and again. Thus an army could protect itself by detachments suitably posted at some distance from it, provided the strength of each detachment, that is, its power of resistance, was proportionate to its distance from support. Sharpshooters well posted could inflict sensible loss upon the favourable target offered them by infantry in line or column. These were the elements out of which the French army gradually developed a system of war better suited than that of the old Dessauer to the weapons of the century, to the genius of the French nation and to the country in which its army had to fight, especially the broken and wooded country between the Weser, the Rhine, and the Main, which was the scene of its operations during a good part of the Seven Years' War.

Perhaps the greatest staff officer of the French army of the eighteenth century was Pierre de Bourcet, who entered the army in 1709, at the age of nine, and served with distinction in more than twenty campaigns. While yet a young man he acted as assistant quartermaster-general, and thenceforth was in many campaigns both in Italy and in Germany the confidential adviser of one commander-in-chief after another.

On every occasion when an important decision had to be made Bourcet would write a memorandum in which he analysed the situation and set forth in detail, with full explanations and reasons, the course which seemed to him the best. In very many cases his suggestions were adopted and were usually justified by success, and when they were rejected the results were seldom fortunate. It was he who proposed to Soubise, a day or two before Rossbach, the position which Frederick found too strong for him, and it was apparently he who suggested the move which Hildburghausen, by prolonging, turned into the occasion of defeat. The moral which he drew from the battle of Rossbach was that a movement across ground visible to the enemy, if attempted at all, should be made at night.

In 1764 Bourcet was appointed Director of a Staff College at Grenoble, where he taught the art of war for seven years, during which he wrote for his pupils a treatise entitled *Principes de la Guerre de Montagnes*. The book was not intended for publication, but a number of copies were made, of which one was sent in 1775 to the Ministry of War, and others appear to have been circulated among the students and other officers who could be trusted. In 1888 the work was printed but not published by the French Ministry of War. It contains the whole art of generalship as it was understood by the best French officers of the eighteenth century, and it is the more interesting because the principles are illustrated by a series of examples of actions in almost every one of which

Bourcet himself had planned the operations. They are also further illustrated by an imaginary campaign in the Maritime Alps, of which Bourcet knew every inch and which were to be the scene of Napoleon's first essays in planning campaigns.

Bourcet distinguishes between two sorts of war, the offensive and the defensive. The offensive always requires a great superiority in infantry and cavalry. The defensive with few troops can guard a very great extent of country. It is either simple or active, the first consisting in the defence of given passages where a few troops can resist the efforts of a great number, while the second, by choosing an advantageous position, intimidates an offensive army seeking to operate on its right or its left ; this requires that it should be posted in such a fashion as to be able itself to act offensively against some point in the rear of that army. The defensive general should assemble his army in a single position, which should be near the centre of the extent of frontier to be protected, and should have free communication to its rear. It should offer a front difficult of access, and its right and left should rest upon steep slopes, upon rivers of a considerable volume of water and too swift to be forded, or upon marshes, woods, or other obstacles which will not permit of a turning movement except by a very long march, or of a frontal attack except at a great disadvantage. The position should have a strong point on its right, its left, or in the centre, and this strong point should form a salient and be treated as a pivot. If the strong point is on one of the wings,

the other wing should be drawn back, and if in the centre, both wings should recede from it.

A general on the defensive must have several positions chosen and reconnoitred with a view to eventualities, and they should be held by detachments in order that there may be sufficient notice of the enemy's approach and in order to give the army time to move into one of them if that should become necessary. As examples of positions that can be held by small forces against a whole army, Bourcet names those of Rivoli in the valley of the Adige and of the Barricades in the Val Stura, of the first of which he had designed the defence in 1735, and of the second the capture in 1744.

'Never rest your right or left', says Bourcet, 'on a river which divides the two armies, even though the enemy be several leagues distant, for, if he should steal a march on you, you might suddenly find him in your rear or on your flank.' This is the precept the neglect of which by Beaulieu, in 1796, enabled Napoleon to cross the Po at Piacenza. Bourcet's conclusion about positions is that when their front is protected by steep slopes and they are well entrenched, they ought never to be attacked, that very few of them admit of an attack, and that the general maxim in mountain warfare ought to be to seek to turn them or to displace the enemy by manœuvres.

The strength of the defensive consists in its activity. It is dangerous, says Bourcet, to extend one's defence over a whole frontier, and much more

advantageous to remain united in a single position which cannot be touched and from which you can communicate with some part of the rear even if you have to abandon the principal *débouchés*. If you have prepared your supplies and well reconnoitred your frontier, you will always be able to 'play the shuttle', that is, to move to your left when you think you can no longer maintain yourself on the right, and to the right when the enemy moves in force to the left. If the enemy divides his force, you can combine your movements so as to fall on his weakest body and carry out whatever operations his dispositions may permit. This is in a nutshell the method employed by Napoleon when on the defensive in 1814, and is the gist of the theory elaborated by Jomini under the name of interior lines.

The object of the general commanding the stronger army and therefore taking the offensive must be either to bring on a battle or to drive back the enemy by the diversions which his superior force will enable him to make. In forming his plan for the offensive a general must subdivide the frontier on which he is to operate into at least two parts, one more favourable for his main purpose and the other suitable for some diversion. The plan should have several branches. Every effort should be made to mislead the enemy as to the part chosen for the main purpose, and in case these efforts fail the general should be ready to profit by a second or third branch of the plan without giving the enemy time to consider it. The examination of the operations in connexion with each branch

of the plan leads to the choice of the places of assembly for the troops of the army.

These should be chosen in such a manner that there will always be a body so posted as to be available to reinforce either the principal part of the army or the part intended for diversions. The general rule for the choice of the points of assembly of an army before the beginning of a campaign is that the troops should be collected in three positions not far distant from the fortresses belonging to the army, separated from each other by not more than one march, so that from the right position to the left the whole distance ought not to be more than seven or eight leagues—twenty-five to twenty-nine miles—and that it should be about at the centre of the belt of country over which the operations are to take place. This method conceals the real point chosen for the advance and threatens simultaneously all points in front of the army, which thus posted will be able to reach any of them in about the same time.

This rule of a preliminary assembly in three camps was constantly followed by Napoleon. It was perfectly exemplified in 1815 in the concentration before the advance to the Sambre.

If the enemy has a strong position the assailant should force him to leave it by turning it. In a mountainous country the strongest positions are the defiles or 'contracted places'.

'These contracted places,' says Bourcet, 'as they most frequently constitute the principal object of the defence, must compel the general who is

taking the offensive to seek every possible means of turning them, or of misleading the enemy by diversions which will weaken him, and facilitate access to them.

‘ Suppose, for example, that the general on the defensive should be entrenched upon all the points surrounding his position, in such a way as to be able to resist any enterprises that might be attempted against him, it would be necessary to attempt to turn him by some more distant point, choosing positions which would facilitate the scheme and which by suggesting some different object could not raise the suspicion that the troops there collected were destined solely for the purpose really in view.

‘ It often happens in the mountains that the only passages favourable to our projects are intersected by contracted portions ; in such a case we must avoid letting the enemy know our real object and must therefore undertake some diversion, dividing our army into small parcels. This method, which in any other kind of country would be dangerous, is indispensable in the mountains and constitutes the science of this kind of warfare, provided the general who employs it always has ready resources and means for reuniting his forces (*pour se réunir*) when it becomes necessary ; besides, it is only by marches and counter-marches that we can hope to deceive the enemy and induce him to weaken himself in certain positions in order to strengthen himself in others ; but this is practicable only to a superior force acting on the offensive.

‘ If it is dangerous to multiply detachments in the plains because they weaken the army and also because they may be attacked and forced before the army has been able to march to their assistance, it is advantageous in the mountains to have detachments upon all the passages of which we contemplate making use, provided that the front which they will have to guard is contracted and that their communications with the army cannot be cut, for they serve to secure the tranquillity of the army and to carry on reconnaissance of the enemy right up to his immediate neighbourhood, thereby obtaining notice of all his movements, as well as to stop his supplies. Mountain warfare permits and often requires the employment of small parcels, which is always dangerous in flat countries.’

Bourcet pays great attention to the communications of an army. A general ought never to open a campaign without knowing how his army is to subsist. He will have *dépôts* established at intervals behind it, and will employ sufficient troops to protect them. The longer the communications with the rear the more troops will be required for this purpose. It is therefore of prime importance in a plan of campaign to choose those operations which can be carried on nearest to the frontier rather than those which must be conducted at a distance from it. Thus it is better to operate against Piedmont from Briançon and Queyras to Exilles and Fenestrelle than from Barcelonnette to Demonte and Coni.

There are circumstances in war when we must know

how to abandon one communication in order to maintain the other.

Bourcet's general conclusion is that the offensive has great advantages over the defensive. No one knows better than he the value of a good position and the power it lends to the defender against frontal attack. But he points out :—

‘ 1. That the power which must act offensively will choose a shortened position from which in one or two days' march it can assemble on its right, on its centre, or on its left, and from which it can equally cause anxiety to the enemy without revealing to him by any manœuvre the real object which it has in view.

2. That having distributed its magazines along the whole extent of its position, it will be easy for it to make demonstrations of attack in order the better to conceal its project and to draw the enemy's forces to points distant from the direction of its principal line of attack.

3. That the enemy being equally menaced at all points of his frontier will take the precautions necessary to oppose us at each point . . . which involves the distribution of his troops along the whole extent menaced and consequently weakens each separate position.

4. However much attention the enemy may have given to the preparation of his communications and his orders of march to reinforce the parts attacked, his troops will not arrive there in time if the general of the offensive army has taken care to conceal his

movement and his plan ; for whatever his confidence in the trustiness of his spies or in the reports of deserters, the defender requires time to receive warning, time to give the necessary orders, and time for the march of even the nearest troops to the critical point.

The general on the offensive can always arrange his movements so as to gain on his enemy one or two days' march, or even several hours, which may suffice for the execution of his plan.'

Thus according to Bourcet the offensive ought to surprise and, if possible, to disconcert the enemy. Stratagem and ruse are not to be despised, and rapidity of movement is of the greatest importance, though it ought never to lead to the neglect of proper precautions. If we are marching to approach an enemy we must multiply our columns as much as we can in order to arrive in force.

The theory of Bourcet is identical with the practice of the best French generals of his time, of those who like him had spent their lives with the army and in the field. One of these was the Duc de Broglie, whose campaigns illustrate the French practice of his day and the theories of Bourcet.

In 1758 the French had in Germany a main army under Contades operating from the Rhine, and a smaller army under Soubise operating from the Main. At the close of the campaign this smaller army was under the command of Broglie, who put it into winter quarters between the Main and the Lahn, and made his arrangements in accordance with a memorandum

written by Bourcet and exemplifying his doctrine of the defensive. The front extended from Hanau to Giessen, about twenty-seven miles. Light troops were posted in a cordon in front of this line, and the

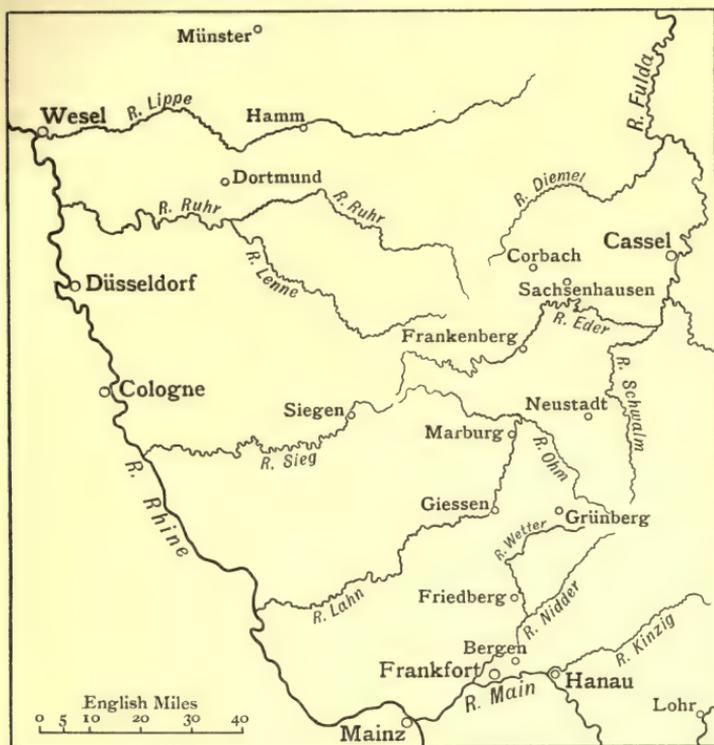


FIG. 5.

regular troops billeted behind it in such a manner that they could be quickly assembled at Friedberg in its centre, where a *dépôt* was established. Near Friedberg Bourcet reconnoitred three positions in one or other of which the army could be collected according as the enemy advanced against its right, its centre, or its left. A fourth position at Bergen was

also selected by Bourcet in case the enemy should advance between the Kinzig and the Nidder. In April the Anglo-Hanoverian army under Ferdinand of Brunswick advanced between these two rivers. Broglie assembled his army in good time in the chosen position at Bergen, a walled town or village on a ridge, from which the ground fell steeply to the right and gently to the left, which was protected by the

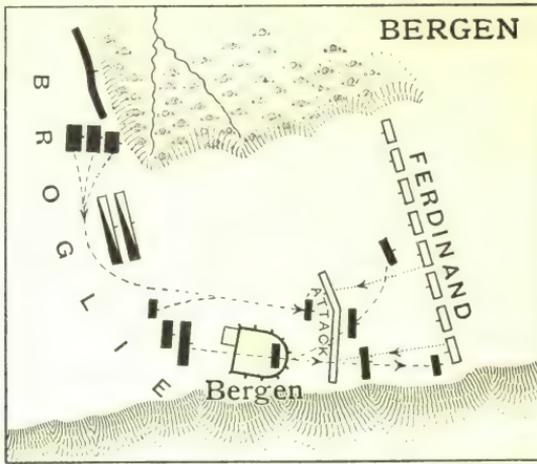


FIG. 6.

wooded ravine of a brook. He put his right behind Bergen, which was occupied by his troops and served him as a redoubt, while he refused his left behind the woods, which were occupied by skirmishers. Ferdinand could not attack the right because the ground was too steep and the troops would have been taken in flank from Bergen, while the ground on the left was too broken for regular attack. He therefore attacked Bergen. But Broglie had numerous reserves kept ready in columns, and these were brought

forward at the critical moment to deliver counter attacks. Ferdinand was defeated.

In the winter of 1759 to 1760 Broglie became commander-in-chief. He had his main army, 101 battalions and 99 squadrons, on the Main, and a minor army, 35 battalions and 38 squadrons, under Saint-Germain on the lower Rhine. Early in 1760 he issued standing orders or regulations for his army during the coming campaign. He laid down that the infantry of the line should be divided into four divisions, each to be commanded throughout the campaign by a lieutenant-general, who would have charge of all that concerned it, to whom its brigadiers and colonels would report and through whom all orders would reach them. Each wing of cavalry was also to form a division and to have a brigade of infantry associated with it. On the march each division was to form a separate column, so that the army would normally march in six columns. Whenever the enemy was approached each lieutenant-general was to form his division into two or more columns, in each of which the platoons were to close up to three paces one behind the other, so that each column would have a depth of not more than 500 paces and could deploy in a few minutes. By these arrangements the army was rendered capable of marching through a difficult country, always retaining the power of forming quickly into the two lines which were the normal order of battle.

The grenadiers and *chasseurs* of each brigade were to be formed into a separate battalion, and in this

way the army was provided with a number of battalions of light troops, employed as outposts or skirmishers. Similarly, strong bodies of light cavalry were formed of brigades of dragoons and hussars.

A letter written from the camp of Corbach<sup>1</sup> on July 14th, 1760, says: 'Try to obtain the instruction for field service of M. Maréchal de Broglie. It is good and all the better because, of all our regulations, it is the only one that is carried out to the letter. You may be assured, from the way in which our army marches under the orders of Maréchal de Broglie, not only that every one without exception is at his post but that the army can always be in order of battle in less than half an hour. Another miracle is that no one knows anything of the general's plans. Sometimes even the general officers directing the columns do not know to what points the staff officers are guiding them, as they are not permitted except in certain cases to open their routes. You may after that believe that only a man is needed to make what you please of the French nation.'

Broglie's chief innovation was his method of moving his army in the theatre of war. He keeps his principal force together, subdividing it as has been explained for ease of movement, but he surrounds it by strong detachments which form a great screen between it and the enemy and occupy, at varying distances from the main body, the principal routes by which the enemy could approach either

<sup>1</sup> Westphalen, *Geschichte der Feldzüge des Herzogs Ferdinand von Braunschweig-Lüneburg*, vol. iv, p. 342.

its front or its flanks. He also throws out similar strong parties to hold or protect in advance important points on the line of march which he is about to take with his army. In the same way in the presence of the enemy he throws forward strong detachments on both wings, so that the enemy must make up his mind either to accept battle at the risk of being enveloped or retire before that can happen.

During the early part of 1760 Broglie had his main army in the winter quarters of the previous year between the Lahn and the Main. There was a detachment of 21 battalions and 26 squadrons under Lusace at Lohr and two under Guerchy (12 battalions and 10 squadrons) and Chabot (9 battalions and 12 squadrons) marching from Cologne by Siegen towards Giessen, while Saint-Germain had 35 battalions and 38 squadrons between Düsseldorf and Wesel.<sup>1</sup>

Ferdinand of Brunswick had a main force of 67 battalions and 78 squadrons, which in May was encamped at Fritzlar, while under him Sporcken had 31 battalions and 34 squadrons between Münster and Hamm.

<sup>1</sup> Sketch 5 gives a general idea of the theatre of Broglie's movements in 1758, 1759, and 1760.

Sketch 7 illustrates the method in which Broglie subdivided his army, giving its positions on concentration, June 23-4, after crossing the Ohm, June 24-5, and before Neustadt, June 28. On these dates Ferdinand's troops are not represented. The other positions from Wildungen to Volkmarsen are those of both armies on July 23, and show how Broglie enveloped Ferdinand's army, pressing back both wings and offering to attack the centre in great force.

In June Broglie began his offensive, ordering the first move to be made by Saint-Germain, who was to assemble at Düsseldorf and to move to Dortmund by June 20th. This was the diversion. Broglie rightly divined that Ferdinand would wish to bar his passage of the Ohm, where there was a strong defensive position. He suddenly assembled his army and the outlying detachments in and around Grünberg by June 23rd, and by a night march reached the Ohm at daybreak on the 24th. Ferdinand had sent an advance-guard to the Ohm, but it fell back before Broglie's whole army, which camped on the night of the 24th beyond the river. Ferdinand, who had advanced from Fritzlar to Allendorf, fell back to a position between Treysa and Ziegenhain, with his front protected by the Schwalm. Broglie followed and encamped at Neustadt, with his front and right flank well covered by detachments. At Neustadt he waited till Chabot had taken Marburg, where bread for the army had to be baked. Then he arranged to move to his left to Corbach, there to be joined by Saint-Germain from Dortmund. This would compel Ferdinand to fall back. On June 29th Broglie sent a strong party to Halsdorf, reinforced a day or two later to 15,000 men. This party on July 3rd sent forward an advance-guard to Frankenberg on the Eder—a defile which must be secured for the passage of the army. On July 6th the whole Halsdorf party moved to Frankenberg and was replaced by a fresh party of some 8,000. On the night of July 7th to 8th the whole army

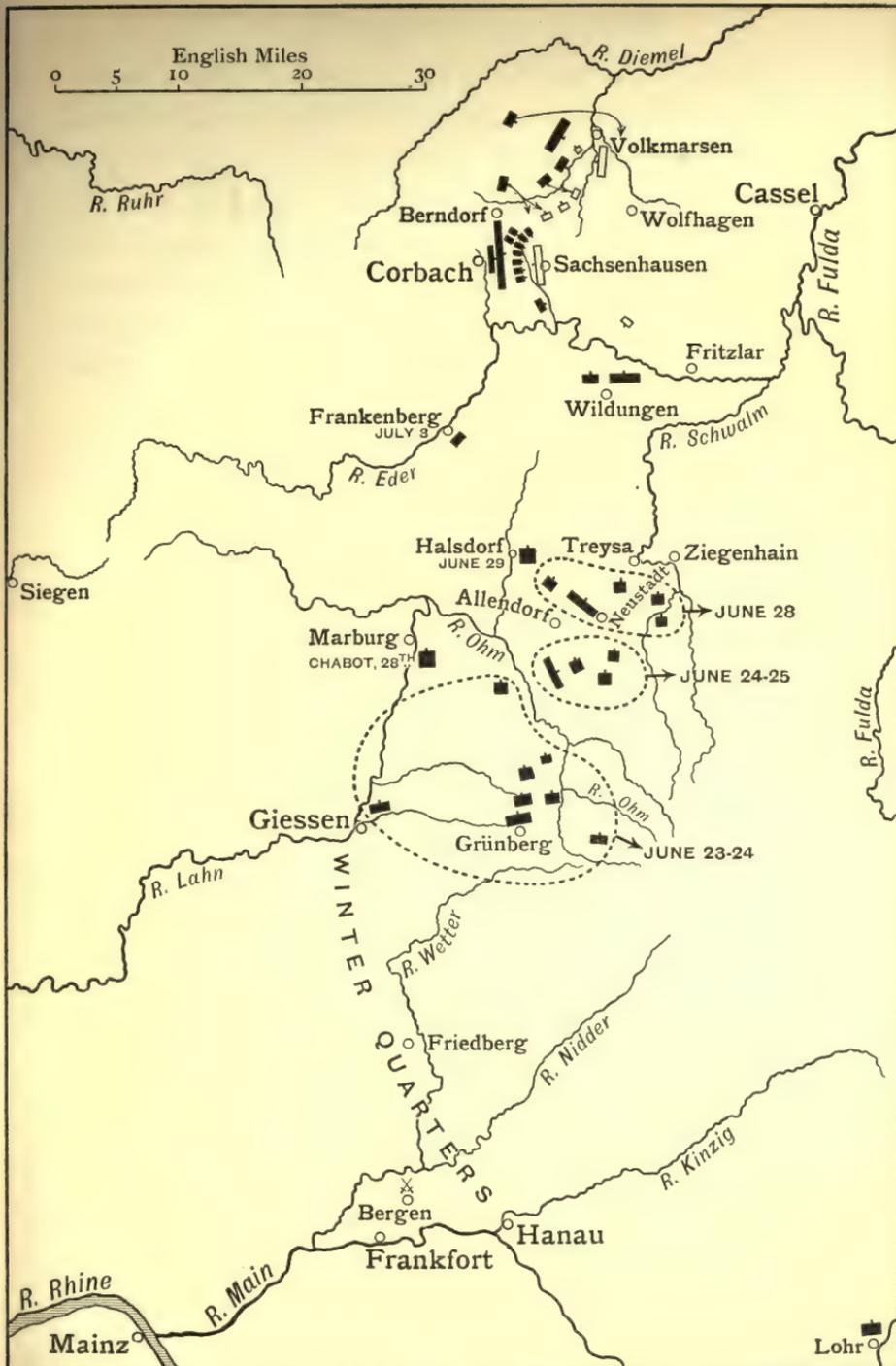


FIG. 7.  
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marched from Neustadt to a camp within a league of Frankenberg (Neustadt to Frankenberg—21 miles) leaving behind three detachments which were to follow next day as rear-guards. During the 8th Ferdinand heard of Broglie's movement and marched off towards Wildungen, whereupon Broglie crossed the Eder and moved towards Corbach. There on the 10th Broglie's advance-guard, which met and

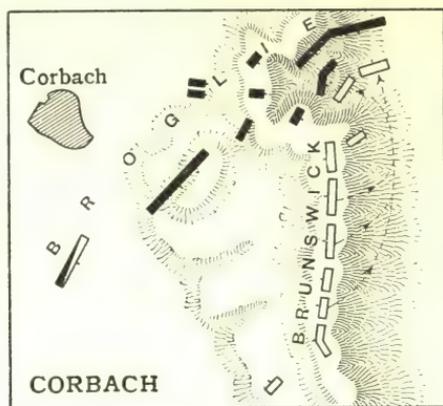


FIG. 8.

united with that of Saint-Germain, came upon Ferdinand's advance-guard under the hereditary Prince of Brunswick, posted on the ridge crowning a slope, its flanks resting on woods, which were, however, not so dense as to prevent the movements of troops. An engagement followed, in which Broglie attacked the enemy's right, neglecting his front, which was kept in check by the presence of French troops not engaged but deployed half a mile away so as to threaten an attack. Brunswick brought troops from his left to reinforce his right,

which was, however, driven back with loss, so that he had to fall back on Sachsenhausen, where Ferdinand had meantime arrived with his main body. On July 11th Broglie brought up the rest of his army and encamped on the ridge from which Brunswick had been driven, while Saint-Germain's force was assembled at Berndorf. The troops were given a day or two's rest, necessary after hard marching in bad weather, and bread was brought up from the ovens at Marburg, which had been taken by Chabot on June 30th. Meantime Ferdinand had fortified his position at Sachsenhausen and brought up Sporcken's force from Westphalia to Volkmarsen on his right. On the 23rd of July Broglie spread out his force so as to overlap both wings of the enemy. Saint-Germain's force, now under Muiy, was to attack Sporcken, who was to be turned on both flanks, while Broglie moved out his main body in ten columns to prevent Ferdinand from reinforcing Sporcken. The plan succeeded. Sporcken was driven in on Wolfhagen, and Ferdinand, afraid of being not only turned but surrounded, fell back in the night towards Cassel.

In these manœuvres, which accord with the precepts of Bourcet, there are many anticipations of the practice of Napoleon : the sudden concentration at Grünberg, by which Ferdinand was forestalled ; the night march to the Ohm, by which his advance-guard was surprised ; and the night march to the Eder, by which he was turned. The various parties covering the army, though spread out, are yet so

placed as to support each other, so that the whole army is always *réunie*. The movement to the Eder to turn Ferdinand and the movement of driving in Sporcken while containing Ferdinand recall Napoleon's maxim *l'art de la guerre indique qu'il faut tourner ou déborder une aile sans séparer l'armée*.

Nothing is more Napoleonic than Bourcet's comment. He thinks that Broglie's operations up to the battle of Corbach were admirable, but that it would then have been better for him, so soon as Saint-Germain had come up from Dortmund, to change his line of communication and draw his supplies from Düsseldorf and Wesel. He could then have passed the Diemel and have driven Ferdinand across the Fulda. But Bourcet admits that this would have been practicable only if sufficient supplies had been accumulated in advance on the Lower Rhine.

There are certain differences between Broglie's proceedings and Napoleon's. In the first place there are pauses, sometimes of several days. These are caused as a rule by the needs of supply, the system of magazines and of bakeries, and by the poor roads over which supplies had to be drawn. Between the Seven Years' War and the Revolution metalled roads were made all over central Europe, and their creation is one of the explanations of Napoleon's rapid marches. The author of the *Prussian Staff History* thinks that Broglie ought to have attacked the position of Sachsenhausen and that he lacked the requisite force of character. What he lacked was

not character, but artillery that could beat down obstacles and open the way for his troops. In 1760 neither the artillery requisite for the purpose nor the art of handling it had been created. But in 1765 Gribeauval recreated the French artillery and thereupon the officers of his school developed sound ideas concerning its use.

Broglie subdivides his regular troops into divisions and throws out great parties of light troops to cover his front and flanks. Napoleon's divisions themselves are so posted that each is a detachment protecting the others and supported by them.

### III

#### GUIBERT AND DU TEIL

A DISTINGUISHED officer in the army of the Duc de Broglie was his Major-General or Chief-of-Staff, the Comte de Guibert, who was accompanied in the field by his son, born in 1743 and sixteen years old at the battle of Bergen in 1759. After the Seven Years' War the young Guibert served in Corsica, where at the age of twenty-four he was decorated with the Cross of Saint-Louis and was then employed in raising and training a Corsican Legion, of which he became colonel in 1772 at the age of twenty-nine. In the same year, 1772, he published anonymously his *Essai général de Tactique*, which at once attracted universal attention and holds a place in the history of the French army like that occupied in the history of French social and political thought by the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, which it resembles in the stimulating power of its ideas. It appeals with almost as much effect to the soldier of to-day as it did to the officers of the *ancien régime*. Napoleon as a young officer studied the *Essai général de Tactique*, of which from time to time he uses characteristic phrases. There can hardly be a better introduction to Napoleon's way of thinking about war than a summary of Guibert's

ideas, which I will give as far as possible in the author's own words.

Guibert examines successively the principles of infantry, cavalry, and artillery, and those of grand tactics, or, as we should say to-day, of the operations of war.

The infantry, armed with flintlock and bayonet, is ready to act either by shock or by fire, either with cold steel or with the bullet. Must the normal formation be for fire or for shock, shallow or deep? It must be shallow, because, while we have to reach the enemy, we must not be destroyed or disordered by the effect of his fire and we must give him reason to dread the effect of our own. Moreover, we seldom have the opportunity to use the steel, but we always make use of the bullet. It is an illusion and a prejudice that the force of a body of troops is increased by augmenting the depth of its formation. A body of troops is never a solid mass without interstices; when it meets the enemy only those in contact with his troops give the shock. We must have no more ranks than can use their arms at the same time and can help to protect the front rank. This protection can be given by the bayonets of a second and a third rank. I will therefore, says Guibert, have three ranks and no more.

The use of a column is to produce a succession of efforts on the same point. We must therefore have columns for the cases where this succession is required and we must be able to change from line into column and from column into line.

When we have a line composed of several battalions we need not require it to be uniform or rigid, perfectly dressed from end to end. It is sufficient that each battalion should be well aligned in itself and that the several battalions should be roughly level with one another. An absolute alignment is not necessary even for the shock of one line upon another, and the crossing of bayonets is so rare that it need not be considered.

The evolutions should be few, simple, easy, and adapted for war ; they should be prompt, because a body of troops while passing from one formation to another is in a condition of disunion and weakness from which it should escape as quickly as possible. Let us therefore get rid of every evolution useless in war as well as of all synonymous evolutions. The evolutions required by infantry are to wheel, to form columns, to form line, and to double the ranks. (By doubling the ranks Guibert meant putting one platoon of three ranks behind another so that the two could stand back to back to resist a cavalry charge.)

Guibert proposed musketry practice against war targets and field firing by battalions. He would permit nothing but independent firing as the most effective, but he would have his men practised in oblique firing, that is, they should be accustomed, while in line, to fire at the enemy on their right front or their left front as well as at the enemy straight before them. If troops were so trained, a battalion might concentrate its fire on some one

point of the enemy's line. His tactical principles in the employment of fire are: to concentrate the heaviest possible fire on the point which we wish to attack or defend; to occupy the salient points which flank or enfilade the post we are attacking; to multiply the fire of these salient points; if we are defending, to compel the enemy to pass under this reinforced fire; if we are attacking, to avoid, or to silence, the fire of the enemy's salients.

'Whenever I had to rely upon fire I should regard it as an essential point to create flanks for myself and to take the enemy in reverse. . . .

'It is on the occupation of points which will enable us to take the enemy in flank or in reverse that depends the success of almost all fights for localities. *C'est de l'occupation des points qui peuvent donner des flancs ou des revers sur l'ennemi que dépend le succès de presque toutes les affaires de poste.* (Prendre des revers sur l'ennemi—to pass your troops behind the prolongation of the enemy's front.)

Guibert is quite sure that it is a mistake to rely upon the charge of heavy dense columns. 'I will tell you', he says, 'the story of almost every attack in column. As the column moves forward and draws near the enemy the officers give the word "close up". The mechanical and sheepish instinct which leads every man to move nearer to his neighbour because he thinks that by doing so he shelters himself from danger, makes the men only too willing to obey the command. The men crowd one another and the ranks get mixed: very soon only the front rank

and the outside files have any freedom of movement. The column has become a tumultuous mass incapable of evolution. If then the head and flanks of the column are struck by an effective fire, and if the mass does not at the first effort overcome the obstacles which it meets, from that moment the officers no longer make themselves heard ; there is no distance left between the companies ; the bewildered soldiers begin firing in the air ; the eddying mass disperses and cannot be rallied until it is at a safe distance from the enemy.'

With this description of Guibert's it may be interesting to compare the account of an attacking column written by Bugeaud after the wars of the Revolution and of the Empire.

'The English generally occupied well-chosen defensive positions, having a certain command, and they showed only a portion of their force. The usual artillery action first took place. Soon, in great haste, without studying the position, without taking time to examine if there were means to make a flank attack, we marched straight on, taking the bull by the horns. About a thousand yards from the English line the men became excited, spoke to one another and hurried their march ; the column began to be a little confused. The English remained quite silent with ordered arms, and from their steadiness appeared to be a long red wall. This steadiness invariably produced an effect on the young soldiers. Very soon we got nearer, shouting "*Vive l'Empereur ! en avant ! à la baïonnette !*" Shakos were raised

on the muzzles of the muskets ; the column began to double, the ranks got into confusion, the agitation produced a tumult ; shots were fired as we advanced. The English line remained still, silent and immovable, with ordered arms, even when we were only three hundred paces distant, and it appeared to ignore the storm about to break. The contrast was striking ; in our inmost thoughts, each felt that the enemy was a long time in firing, and that this fire reserved for so long, would be very unpleasant when it did come. Our ardour cooled. The moral power of steadiness, which nothing shakes (even if it be only in appearance), over disorder which stupefies itself with noise, overcame our minds. At this moment of intense excitement, the English wall shouldered arms ; an indescribable feeling rooted many of our men to the spot ; they began to fire. The enemy's steady concentrated volleys swept our ranks ; decimated, we turned round seeking to recover our equilibrium ; then three deafening cheers broke the silence of our opponents ; at the third they were on us, pushing our disorganized flight.'<sup>1</sup>

Guibert then rejects the idea of the use of massive columns for the charge. But his system of infantry tactics is based on the use of battalion columns, of which he greatly simplified the formation. He would use these columns :

1. In retiring in the presence of cavalry.

(In this case his column would have a front of two platoons—a division, with three paces

<sup>1</sup> Home, *Précis of Modern Tactics*, p. 96.

distance between divisions ; he would have skirmishers in rear and on the flanks ; on the approach of cavalry he would recall the skirmishers, close up and face outwards.)

2. In moving on to the ground where we must deploy for battle.

3. After taking order of battle, as often as we have to move troops from one point or wing to another, or to make changes in our order.

‘ In the tactics of thirty years ago,’ writes Guibert, ‘ and of some armies to-day, the movements for forming a line of battle were so slow and complicated that they took hours. The line had to be formed at a safe distance from the enemy, and once the formation had been taken up it was dangerous to attempt to change it. But with my system it will be safe to take the formation of battle as late and as near to the enemy as possible, and also to change that order after it has been taken, in other words to make counter-mancœuvres.’

The opinions expressed by Guibert on the use of the line and of columns are identical in substance and in spirit with those expressed by Moltke in his famous paper of 1865 on ‘ The Influence of Improved Firearms on the Fight ’. ‘ Never in recent times’, says Moltke, ‘ have column tactics and line tactics been more sharply contrasted than in the battles of the Crimean War.’ After examining the battles of the Alma and Inkermann, he says: ‘ From these experiences we conclude that now, as before, formations in column offer the most suitable means for handling

the troops in action and in attack. If the effect of long-range guns compels an early deployment of masses, it does not prevent an advance in lines of small columns, which often most easily find cover in the ground and from which deployment is quickest. But the troops engaged in the actual fight will always stand in a deployed line, for on the fire of the deployed battalions rests the success of the defence, and only on bringing up this fire to the enemy the possibility of finally giving the decision with the bayonet.'

In 1755 another French officer, Mesnil-Durand, published a volume entitled *Projet d'un ordre français en tactique* ('Project of a French order in Tactics'). It was a revival of the proposals made by Folard in his *Nouvelles Découvertes sur la Guerre*, 1724, and *Polybe*, 1727, for a normal order in heavy compact columns. Mesnil-Durand was one of the admirers of the ancient phalanx, and attached little or no importance to bullets. His column was cumbersome and clumsy; without convenient subdivisions; with no appreciable distances between the companies or platoons; difficult to form and complicated in its movements. But Mesnil-Durand made disciples and gained the support of no less a personage than the Duc de Broglie. There was a long controversy between Mesnil-Durand and Guibert, considered as the champions of the *ordre profond* and the *ordre mince*. It was not, however, as it is sometimes described, a simple dispute between line and column. The question was rather between two sorts of columns,

formed in two different ways. Mesnil-Durand indeed advocated the column and nothing but the column, though Guibert never advocated the line and nothing but the line. Guibert thought the column ill suited to the use of the bullet and to level ground. There he relied on the fire of the deployed line, which in a plain he would use also for the charge without insisting on the perfect dressing of a long line of many battalions. But in the warfare of posts and localities he advocated the use of small columns covered and connected by skirmishers. He would never have a column of more than two battalions, and insisted on the 'divisions' of which the column was formed being separated from one another by distances. Mesnil-Durand, on the other hand, made small account of the bullet, rejected the line and would have nothing in all circumstances but heavy columns, in which the 'divisions' were to be six ranks deep, and there was to be no distance between one 'division' and that which followed it.

The controversy occupied the French army from 1772 to 1788.

In 1778 Mesnil-Durand's columns were tried under the auspices of the Duc de Broglie at the camp of exercise at Vaussieux in Normandy, where the general opinion was that they were too complicated to be of practical use in war. The majority of officers who had seen service came to the conclusion that what was wanted was simplicity of forms, rapidity and precision of evolution, and the power of choice between column and line according to circumstances.

The result of the long controversy was a new drill-book, of which a provisional edition was issued in 1788, followed in August 1791 by a definitive text which remained in use until 1830. In this new drill-book simplicity, precision, and lucidity were combined with variety of forms. It prescribed the mode of formation of a three-deep line as well as of columns with various distances and the modes of changing from column to line and from line to column. The usual way of forming line was from close column by deployment. No regulations for skirmishing were issued because the generals held that regulation would be injurious to the spirit of skirmishing. But the army retained the practice.

The regulations gave no rules for the fight. It was left to the generals to use line or column at their discretion, and in practice the troops were manœuvred in column and when in action were deployed for firing or put into columns for the charge, while skirmishers were always freely used.

The *Règlement* of August 1791 embodied all the tactical forms needed by troops armed with the flintlock. The freedom of choice which it gave enabled French officers to suit their formations to the ground, to the circumstances, and to the enemy's action. Its careful clear explanations made it suitable for the instruction of the new levies which during the revolutionary war formed the bulk of the French army.

The long controversy between the advocates of the column and of the line had left the French army

with an open mind, ready to use either formation as circumstances might require. But the Prussian and Austrian armies in 1792 were still steeped in the traditions of Frederick the Great and accustomed to rely upon a single form, the three-deep line. They were, therefore, prone to look for ground suitable for its use. The French, less wedded to any particular form, acquired the habit of suiting their formations to the ground and therefore of fighting in all sorts of country and of taking advantage of such shelter as the ground afforded.

Guibert's chapters on cavalry are for the most part as applicable to-day as when they were written. He would get rid of the cuirass and of all armour designed to protect the men against bullets. He would retain protection against steel in the shape of a helmet and of steel chains on the shoulders.

Cavalry should never attack infantry ready to receive it, but only infantry shaken, discouraged or disordered. The force of a charge is a product of speed and mass, but the mass which counts is the first rank only. The charge should be delivered at full speed, but that speed should only be reached when near the enemy. The shock chest to chest—*le coup de poitrail*—is a chimaera, for the constitution of horses renders it impossible and the instinct of men and horses prevents it. In a charge one of the two sides either does not reach the enemy or does not wait for him. If the two sides meet, the horses pass in between one another and there is a *mêlée*.

Guibert wants cavalry to be practised in charging, because such exercises are needed 'to form the *coup d'œil* of the officers . . . to accustom them to seize that *à propos* which is so precious and on the knowledge and employment of which almost all cavalry fights depend'.

He dwells on the '*ensemblement de mouvement* ; it is that which produces unanimity of effort ; it is that which combined with speed increases the force of the shock ; in short it is that which impresses the enemy, which upsets him and makes a gap. For cavalry defeats an enemy rather by frightening him and scattering the troops that resist it than by shedding blood.'

On the subject of artillery Guibert says that his views are those which he has formed after conversation and intercourse with artillery officers. His ideas must be taken as representative of that arm.

Batteries must be made strong, he says, independently of the mutual protection which they try to give one another. When strong they produce decisive effects, they make a gap, *elles font trouée*. They prepare the victory.

The same number of pieces dispersed is more likely to irritate the enemy than to destroy him. The object of artillery ought not to be to kill men along the whole of the enemy's front : it ought to be to overthrow and to destroy parts of this front, either at the points where the enemy can most advantageously come to attack us or at those

where he can be attacked with the greatest advantage.

After the first disposition of the artillery in an action has been made, the pieces should manœuvre and change position according to circumstances, either to preserve the power of taking the enemy in flank or in rear, or to concentrate their fire on the decisive points, or even to move forward and keep in touch with the troops to which they are attached.

Artillery ought never to engage artillery except when, the enemy's troops being under cover from its fire, his batteries are exposed and are injuring our troops. If, on the other hand, the positions we occupy are murderous for the enemy we ought to direct all the efforts of our artillery against the enemy's troops and the obstacles which protect them, in order to try to destroy them. We ought not to try to make an impression on the enemy's guns except in so far as that may be necessary to protect our own troops. The troops are the principal object. If they have been destroyed or thrown into confusion their artillery becomes useless. But when the enemy's artillery has been destroyed, nothing has been done, for his troops have still to be beaten.

The principle of co-operation between infantry and artillery is that the guns should protect the troops and the troops should protect the guns.

With Guibert's views on the use of artillery should be compared those of the Chevalier du Teil, an artillery officer in the regiment in which Napoleon

was to be a lieutenant. Du Teil published in 1778 an essay *Sur l'usage de l'artillerie nouvelle dans la guerre de campagne, connaissance nécessaire aux officiers destinés à commander toutes les armes.*

The 'new artillery' is the French artillery as remodelled by Gribeauval, who became Inspector-General at the close of the Seven Years' War. Gribeauval shortened the guns and thereby made them lighter and easier to move. He had them better bored and reduced the windage (the space between the ball and the interior of the barrel). By these means he increased the range. He also limited the calibres to three; producing 12-pounders, 8-pounders, and 4-pounders. He put the horses two and two instead of tandem, and so reduced the length of the teams. The extreme range of the 12-pounders was 3,500 metres; but the extreme effective range was 1,100 or 1,200 metres, and the range at which fire was opened from 600 to 800. Two shots could be fired in a minute.

Gribeauval's guns were the best in Europe, and were not replaced in France till 1825. As Du Teil's book must have been read by Napoleon while a lieutenant of artillery, and as it is exceedingly rare, it is worth while translating in full its most important passages, which give in brief compass much of the essence of the French doctrine of his day, not only concerning artillery, but also on important questions of strategy and tactics.

'All the arguments alleged in favour of small armies, which men imagine can successfully oppose

large ones, have not seemed convincing enough to induce any Powers to try the experiment, an experiment which would be the more dangerous as it might lead to the ruin of their States. This excess in the shape of numerous armies, and of the artillery which is proportionate to them, is a natural means indicated by necessity, on pain of being conquered, when the enemy dictates it to us.

‘As all the nations of Europe have constitutions based on similar models, and as none of them has the superiority and ascendancy which in remote ages enabled Rome to triumph over many ignorant and barbarous peoples, none of them can flatter itself that a weaker army will get the better of one more numerous. Besides, can they ignore that a numerous army, being able to subdivide itself, can oppose to the enemy a sufficient part and can use the remainder to harass him, to turn him and to ensure his defeat?’

‘The destiny of fortified places always depends on that of fights; places are only accessories; the system of war has changed and consists in having armies well constituted, mobile and able to manœuvre.’ . . .

‘Suppose we must march towards the enemy to attack him; the artillery and the troops must take advantage of any ground that will cover them and lead them to the enemy; must deploy and march rapidly, because an impetuous advance astonishes and often disconcerts him. When the artillery has reached a good range, i.e. 500 or 450 *toises* (1,000 or

900 yards), it attacks and will soon make an impression upon him because its blows at that range are more sure and more decisive.' . . .

' The entrenchments having been thrown down and the troops fired upon at all the points where they have been discovered, nothing ought to delay the impetuosity of the attack from the moment the enemy has been repulsed. The batteries that can no longer fire against their objectives will direct their fire against the interior of the post to stop reinforcements and will continue it until our troops have entered. Then the artillery, moving along the flanks of the attack, will make fresh dispositions to harass the enemy in his retreat.' . . .

' Whatever be the nature of the entrenchments the position and execution of the artillery are much the same : it must always seek to be in the prolongation of the enemy's line and as far as it can it must cross its fire and take the enemy in reverse.' . . .

' The most advantageous manner of placing the batteries, when it can be done without risk of exposing their flank (*de se faire battre en rouage*), is to take the enemy obliquely, when he is deployed, and to try to gain his flanks, when the troops come to the shock.' . . .

' We must multiply the artillery on the points of attack which ought to decide the victory, relieve the



batteries that have suffered and replace them with others without the enemy being able to perceive it or to get the benefit of an advantage which would redouble his ardour and discourage our troops. The artillery thus supported and multiplied intelligently procures decisive effects.' . . .

'It is in this science of movement, in the rapidity and intelligence in the choice of positions, that the artillery will preserve its advantages over that of the enemy, when it will continually concentrate its fire on the decisive points and will always keep up with the troops.'

'In reconnoitring positions for the batteries the first objective should be the enemy's troops, not his artillery. No notice must be taken of his artillery except when his fire greatly disturbs the troops which we are protecting. It follows as a principle that we ought never to engage in artillery duels, except when it is indispensable for the protection of our troops, but that on the contrary our principal purpose must be, as has been said, to fire on the enemy's troops, when we can destroy them or the obstacles which cover them. To aim only at silencing his guns is a waste of ammunition and leads to the vain attempt to destroy his battery. Even if we succeed in that we should have done little or nothing, since there would still be his troops to overcome.

The chief rules of execution for artillery are to proportion the fire to the importance of the objective, to spare one's ammunition and to preserve it for essential and decisive moments.' . . .

‘ We must concentrate the greatest quantity of fire on the principal points and on the weak spots that are most threatened.’ . . .

‘ We must concentrate the greatest number of troops and a greater quantity of artillery on the points where we wish to force the enemy, while we shall make illusion (*on fera illusion*) on the other points and shall impose upon him by movements and false attacks.’

‘ It is admitted by instructed and experienced officers that any defence based solely upon entrenched positions is absolutely contrary to all grand views, to the true and solid principles of the art of war, and in short that this method has never been that of the great generals.’ . . .

‘ Whatever be the courage of the troops and the intelligence of their commanders it is difficult for them to hold out long in a post, however strong, if the attacks are enveloping, because then being more numerous they have the advantage of flank attacks, and the fire of the guns, being directed from the circumference towards the centre, is more concentrated and has greater effect.’



## IV

### A NEW SYSTEM OF WARFARE

WE have seen Guibert as a reformer of infantry drill and tactics, as an exponent of the best ideas of the cavalry and artillery officers of his time. But he was more than this. He felt that the improvements he was suggesting were bound up with and must lead to a new system of war, and this new system which he divined he explained in his account of grand tactics—that is, of the principal operations of war, of the march, the battle, and the modes of supplying an army.

The Maréchal de Saxe had said, 'the whole secret of drill, the whole secret of war, is in the legs'. The armies of his day were in his opinion neither organized nor trained for marching. The Maréchal de Broglie had attempted to remedy this defect by forming his army into divisions, the composition of each of which remained unchanged throughout the campaign. Each division marched by its own route, and in this way the speed of the movements was increased, the fatigue of the troops diminished, and their discipline improved. Guibert adopts this divisional system, and gives to the advance-guard and to each division its own artillery, keeping a special division of artillery in reserve. By

this plan he considers that a general will be able to postpone making his dispositions until he has seen the ground upon which he will fight, and the dispositions of the enemy. For the subdivision of his army will enable him to form his order of battle with great rapidity, and after it has been formed he can modify it by strengthening or weakening it at any point.

Guibert distinguishes between two meanings of the expression 'order of battle'. It may describe the primitive and fundamental order in which an army is arranged to encamp and to fight, abstraction made of all circumstances of ground and of manœuvre. It may also mean any disposition derived from the primitive order by modifications to suit the particular circumstances. The one is the normal disposition, the other the adaptation of that disposition to actual concrete conditions. The one exists only in camps and in the dreams of tacticians; the other is the one in which battles are fought and in which they are won.

There are two manners, he says, of giving battle to the enemy: the first, in which an army is arranged with a view to fighting at all points of its front; the second, which aims at attacking the enemy in superior force at one or more points only, while deceiving him on the other points and evading such attacks as he might there deliver.

Guibert's idea of the way to operate against the armies of his day is by a war of marches and of movement. He will avoid the war of detail and will make war always *en masse*.

Discussing the functions of an advance-guard he says that, although there are occasions where detached corps may be useful, as a rule this splitting up of armies is to be avoided. 'If we are inferior to the enemy the more reason have we for avoiding splitting up our forces. For if we divide them we shall be reduced everywhere to the defensive, and we shall be uneasy at every point and everywhere exposed to reverses and surprises. . . . It is to be desired that just as the thunderbolt has already struck when we see the lightning, so when the enemy sees the head of the army coming up the whole army should be there.'

He advocates camps of exercise and manœuvres for the purpose of forming general officers. He dwells upon the importance of a good general staff and the utility of staff tours. In this way can be cultivated *la grande tactique, la tactique des mouvements, celle qui fait gagner les combats*. When an army knows how to manœuvre, and has the will to fight, there are few positions which it cannot attack in reverse or cause the enemy to abandon. Positions are good to take up only when we have reason for not attempting to act, or when they are of such a nature as to compel the enemy to choose between attacking them at a disadvantage or failing in his operations.

'What is the essence of a good position? It is a vast development of ground of which the front and the flanks offer advantageous points to the army which is to occupy them and present obstacles difficult to overcome to the enemy who would wish to drive that

army away. But what effect will this position, however good, produce on an enemy who is skilful and able to manœuvre? Can it not be turned, if not from close at hand at any rate from a distance? And then is not the army which holds it obliged to abandon it? It may be formidable in front but is it formidable in rear? And if attacked from the rear may it not lose its advantages? It is rare that nature offers positions with two fronts, in which an army is equally well posted whichever way it faces. Men's current ideas are so much a matter of routine that as they have not yet seen an army attacked from behind they never dream that such a thing could happen. But nothing is more possible.

'Suppose on one side an army surcharged with impedimenta, unskilful at manœuvring—like the armies of to-day—and on the other side an army well constituted, apt in manœuvre, commanded by a general who has thought out all the resources of tactics. The one will seek positions and put all its confidence in them, will move slowly and with difficulty; will be enchained by its methods of subsistence; will think itself lost unless it always has its *dépôts* of supplies exactly behind it. The other will be light and handy, capable of bold movements, of quick and of forced marches. It will be always on the offensive, will hardly ever shut itself up in positions, and will despise those which might be intended to block its way. Will the enemy expect to stop it by a position supposed to be impregnable? It will know how to steal a march on him or even to move

under his eyes against his flank or rear. To execute this movement it will, if need be, carry with it eight days' provisions and dispense with its supply train. What will be done by the enemy, astonished at this new kind of war? Will he wait until an army skilled in movement, in launching itself quickly against the weak part of a disposition, in passing in a moment from the order of march to the order of fight, is ready to attack him in flank or rear? His inaction will be fatal. Will he change position? In that case he will lose the advantages of the ground on which he was counting and will be compelled to accept battle where he can. Perhaps his slow and ponderous movement will give the assailant his chance; he will be embarrassed by his baggage and supply; he will fear to be cut off from his *dépôts* with which he cannot dispense, because he will have contracted the habit of depending upon them. . . .

'I assert, in short, that an army well constituted and well commanded ought never to find before it a position which will stop it or compel it to attack at a disadvantage, unless it be one of those rare positions which, touching the object which it is meant to cover, gives no opportunity of manœuvring against its rear or its flank. Such was the position so cleverly chosen by the Maréchal de Broglie in front of Frankfort, and so gloriously justified by his success in the battle which there took place. [This refers to the battle of Bergen in 1759.] Such are in general the positions which an army can take up at the head of some sole passage which it wishes to defend, or just in front of

or near to a fortress of which the enemy must needs undertake the siege. In all other cases I say positions may be despised. It is easy to compel the enemy to leave them, or, if he is stubborn enough to stay in them, to attack him at an advantage. We have only to move against his flank or his rear ; to attack him on any other side than the front of his position where he has thought out his arrangements for defence and where the ground favours him. I say that a general who in this regard will shake off the prejudices of tradition will embarrass his enemy, will astonish him, will give him no breathing time and will always compel him either to fight or to fall back. But such a general will require an army differently constituted from those of to-day, an army which, having been trained and formed by him, will be prepared for the new kind of operations which he will conduct.'

Guibert saw that the secret of success lay in concentration of effort, the fundamental principle in his view being the necessity of uniting at the principal points, or the parts most threatened, the greatest quantity of fire and of force—*la nécessité de réunir sur les points principaux, sur les parties les plus menacées, la plus grande quantité de feux et de forces*. The general of genius, he says, will not cut his army up into fragments, will have few detachments, few reserves, fewer movements of detail ; he will manœuvre with his whole mass. He will keep his army *serrée, unie, rassemblée, et disposée au combat*.

Speaking of fortresses Guibert says : ' It remains

to be seen whether a general of genius at the head of an army which he will have inured to patience and sobriety, to greatness and strength, would not leave behind him these pretended barriers and carry the war into the interior of States, even to their capitals' (ii. 156).

Guibert concludes his essay with a chapter on the supplies of an army. 'Another truth', he says, 'which we may draw from the study of the wars of Rome, a truth of which the results are in contrast with our present systems of supply, is that the armies lived in and at the expense of the country. "*War must support war,*" said Cato in the Senate, and this maxim of Cato was among the Romans a maxim of State. As soon as an army had set foot in an enemy's country it was for the general who commanded it to enable it to subsist, and that general had most usefully served the Republic who while conducting the most glorious campaign had best supplied his army and at the close of the campaign brought the most money to the public treasury.' . . .

'It is astonishing how much a good military administration can extract from the resources of a country. I speak of a populous and fertile country such as Flanders and the greater part of Germany. I am not exclusive nor excessive in my opinions. I will not say to an army: "Have no supply trains, no magazines, no transport; always live on the country; advance if need be into the deserts of the Ukraine; Providence will feed you." I want an army to have provision wagons, but as few as pos-

sible, proportionate to its force, to the nature of the country in which it is to operate, and to the means required in ordinary operations. If it starts from a river or a frontier, let it have on this base magazines and *dépôts* well situated with a view to their defence and to the plan of operations. But if it is necessary to undertake a bold operation and forced marches the army must be able to discard the precise methods of routine. The enemy, I will assume, takes an unexpected position in which I cannot and will not attack him ; I am sure to dislodge him or to take him in rear if I march towards his flank. According to our actual routine I shall require for this change of direction to form new *dépôts* and new *rayons* of communication. I shall be asked for fifteen days to form these new magazines. What I want to avoid is that my supplies should command me. It is in this case my movement that is the main thing ; all the other combinations are accessory and I must try to make them subordinate to the movement. The enemy must see me marching when he supposes me fettered by the calculation of my supplies ; this new kind of war must astonish him, must nowhere leave him time to breathe, and make him see at his own expense this constant truth that hardly any position is tenable before an army well constituted, sober, patient, and able to manœuvre. The moment of crisis past, my movement having fulfilled its purpose, then the supplies can return to the usual system of order and precision.'

Guibert regrets that the business of supply is not

in the hands of the officers of the army. 'Since the details of subsistence', he says, 'have been taken from the officers, the officers no longer study them. They are in the hands of the bureaux and the bureaux are the born enemies of all that tends to put the details of military administration into military hands.'

Guibert is conscious that the reforms he proposes involve not only an army but a Government very different from those of 1772. Though a nobleman loyal to king and country, he is driven by his insight into the nature of war to desire a thorough-going change in the methods, not only of the military, but of the civil administration. Thus he is the prophet or forerunner both of the Revolution and of Napoleon.

'What can be the result to-day of our wars? The States have neither treasures nor a superfluous population. Their expenditure even in peace is in excess of their revenues. None the less they declare war. They take the field with armies which they can neither recruit nor pay. Victors and vanquished are alike exhausted. The mass of the national debts increases. Credit falls. Money grows scarce. Fleets are at a loss for sailors and armies for soldiers. The ministers on both sides feel that it is time to negotiate. Peace is made. A few colonies or provinces change masters. Often the source of the quarrels is not dried up and each side sits on its shattered remains while it tries to pay its debts and to sharpen its weapons.

'But suppose there should arise in Europe a people

endowed with energy, with genius, with resources, with government; a people which combined the virtues of austerity with a national militia and which added to them a fixed plan of aggrandizement; which never lost sight of this system; which, as it would know how to make war at small cost and subsist on its victories, would not be compelled by calculations of finance to lay down its arms. We should see that people subdue its neighbours and upset our feeble constitutions as the north wind bends the slender reeds' (vol. i. xiii).

Discussing the appointment of generals for personal and party reasons, he says that the Governments of the day 'prefer to entrust their troops to mediocrities incapable of forming them, passive, docile to every one's whims, instead of to the superior man who might gain too much credit, might resist the opinions in vogue, might become the channel of the military favours of the sovereign and in the end the soldier's man—the born general' (ii. 65).

In connexion with his proposal to suppress superfluous baggage trains Guibert says: 'Such a revolution can be brought about only by a change in the spirit and manners that now prevail. But to change the spirit and manners of a nation cannot be the work of a writer, whoever he may be. It can be that only of the sovereign or of a man of genius, into whose hands great misfortunes and the public voice, stronger than cabals, will place for a series of years the helm of the machine' (ii. 38).

Guibert pours his contempt not only on the

generals of his day—he is thinking of the generals appointed by Madame de Pompadour—but also on the statesmen, and bursts out: ‘Among men like these let there arise—there cannot but arise—some vast genius. He will lay hands so to speak on the knowledge of all the community, will create or perfect the political system, put himself at the head of the machine and give the impulse of its movement’ (vol. i. xxiv).

Here was a picture to stimulate the intelligence, the imagination and the ambition of a young officer.

The precepts of Bourcet and the historical examples which he gives of their application constitute together a full initiation into the art of war as it was known to the best minds of the eighteenth century. They may be regarded as its classical exposition. An officer imbued with this body of doctrine would have the best intellectual outfit for the conduct of a war and for the direction of an army with which the eighteenth century could supply him. The experience of Broglie showed that the intellectual qualification of the general would not suffice for success. It required to be supplemented by a disciplined army and by a determined Government.

Thus by the 1st August, 1791, when the tactical discussions in the French army had crystallized into definite regulations for the drill and instruction of the infantry, all the conditions existed for the intellectual training of the new general for whom Guibert was looking. There was a classical theory of war, there

was a new spirit consciously striving to raise generalship to a higher power. The infantry had discovered the forms of evolution best suited for the weapon with which it was armed, for flexibility and mobility of manœuvre. The cavalry officers had reached a true and clear conception of the mission of their arm. The artillery, along with its new guns, had acquired a new view of its powers. Here were ready all the materials which a fresh and vigorous mind, inspired by the will to master them, could not but combine into a new system. But before that could happen there must be, as Guibert had foreseen, a new Government and a new army. The origin of the new Government it is the business of historians of the Revolution to describe. The rise of the new army we must examine in some detail, for an acquaintance with it is essential to the appreciation of Napoleon.

## V

### REFORMS

GUIBERT had set before his readers the picture of a new generalship of which the character would reveal itself in the rapidity of its movements, the suddenness of its blows, and the decisiveness of its victories. He had made clear his opinion that this new generalship would have to be associated with a new kind of army, an army not recruited from the dregs of the people, not supplied from ponderous magazines, not administered by corrupt contractors, but a national army, an army representing the people for which it fought, and administered by a Government enjoying the confidence of that people. Such an army he saw was impossible for any of the nations of Europe in his day ; it was not consistent with the constitution of any of them. The France that was to produce it must be a regenerate France ; before the national army could come into being the nation itself must be reconstituted.

An army is a society within a society ; it has its own life in which are formed traditions of which it is tenacious, but the main features of its structure and of its character are derived from the community in and for which it subsists. At the time of the Seven Years' War the constitution of the royal army was

as heterogeneous as that of the France which maintained it. There were, first of all, a number of regiments of household troops doing duty at the palaces, and of French and of Swiss Guards. Of the line regiments some bore the titles of the great noblemen who had originally raised them, others the names of the several provinces of France. Some were managed under the authority of the Minister of War, while in others the companies were farmed by their captains, who were allowed and accustomed to make a profit on the transaction. A quarter of the regiments were composed of foreigners, Germans, Swiss, Scots, Irishmen, and Flemings, and these were governed by the military laws and customs of their own countries. The ranks of the French regiments were filled by voluntary enlistment, that is by the wiles of the recruiting sergeant and the temptations of bounty. The recruits were engaged for eight years on a pay of six or eight *sous* a day, from which deductions were made for provisions and clothing. They were drawn from among the less fortunate of the poorer class, the idlers of the towns, and the unemployed of town and country. The *bourgeoisie* remained outside the army.

Besides the regular army there was a militia, raised among the rural population by ballot, from which, however, there were so many exemptions that it pressed heavily on the poorer classes and was intensely disliked. The militia was only occasionally assembled for training, and though a number of its regiments rendered good service during the Seven



Years' War, it was rarely called up in the period between that war and the Revolution.

The army was officered by the noblemen, who had become the King's servants and dependents. They formed a caste apart. The privilege of the *noblesse* or *gentilshommes* to serve the king as officers carried with it a claim to be maintained out of the royal bounty in the shape of pay or pension. This theory involved an incredible abuse. In 1775, when the total strength of the army was 170,000 men, the number of the officers was no less than 60,000, and they represented a charge of 47,000,000 *livres* (about the equivalent of francs), while the total remaining expenditure on the army did not exceed 44,000,000. Yet of these 60,000 officers not more than 10,000 were doing duty with their regiments, and this at a time when, as there was no permanent organization higher than the regiment, there were hardly any other than regimental duties to perform. The places of high rank and pay were for the most part sinecures, reserved for the great nobles and those who spent their time at court. For some 200 regiments there were more than 1,100 colonels and 1,200 generals, while the regimental officers to whom the work was left were practically excluded from the higher ranks.

Although there were among the officers, especially among the staff officers, a certain number devoted to their profession, of keen intelligence and great experience and knowledge, the majority of the officers lived the life of the society of their time, which was

distinguished from mere frivolity only by the ever cherished ideals of personal courage and personal honour. After the Seven Years' War the Duc de Broglie said one day that the principal cause of the mistakes which he had seen committed was the complete ignorance of the officers, from the sub-lieutenants to the lieutenant-generals, of the duties of their position and of the details of which they ought to be masters. Most of the officers were as extravagant and luxurious, even in the field, as they were ignorant, too ready to satisfy their inordinate wants by plunder, and thus to set to their men an example of indiscipline which, when it was followed, they were unable to repress. Yet in spite of this and other elements of weakness, the army of the Seven Years' War, when commanded by good soldiers, had proved capable of rapid movements, of complicated evolutions, and of prolonged endurance. Its failures were due not so much to the defects of its organization, equipment, and training, as to the lack of unity of command.

In the eighteenth century the French State was the French monarchy, and the King himself the main-spring of the machine. If it was to work the King must give the impulse. But Louis XV was there to enjoy himself, and he handed over the State to those who amused or distracted him—during the Seven Years' War, chiefly to Madame de Pompadour. That lady no doubt would have been glad to promote the welfare of France, but the first necessity of her position was to secure herself, and in her choice of men that was necessarily the paramount considera-

tion. Ministers and generals were appointed, not for their aptitude to administer France or to command armies, but according to their attitude towards the lady at the head of affairs. In six years the armies were commanded in turn by six generals, only one of whom, the Maréchal de Broglie, understood his business, and his success was rewarded, first by the division of his command and then by his dismissal and exile. The first effect of this system was to destroy the discipline of the army, which could have no confidence in commanders, the causes of whose appointment were no secret, and whose incompetence was manifest. Even those officers who knew their business were aware that their career depended not upon success but upon favour. The army became a hotbed of intrigue, and great strength of character was required to enable an officer in any position of responsibility to be guided solely by his sense of duty.

At the close of the Seven Years' War the military defects of the army were well understood, and we shall see what great, and, on the whole, successful efforts were made to improve its organization and training, so that it might become a fit instrument for war. But it was also permeated and imbued with the social malady by which France was paralysed, the cancer of privilege, and it was attached to a monarchy which had lost the power of doing its work of government. These were defects which no military reform could remove, for the military reformers themselves were products of the social system that was diseased. Accordingly, reforms

and reformers were alike overwhelmed in the convulsion produced by the effort of society to reorganize itself on a national basis. Yet the work of the reformers was not thrown away ; it was the seed which in due time grew up into the new army, of which Napoleon was the hero.

The first reformer was Choiseul, who at the close of the Seven Years' War brought back the army to a peace footing. He cut down by nearly one-half the number of officers for whom pay and pension were provided. He compelled the colonels in actual command to spend a part of the year with their regiments attending to military duties. He made arrangements for the instruction of young officers ; he abolished the practice of farming regiments and companies and introduced a regular system of regimental accounts and administration. He transferred the business of recruiting to the Minister of War ; he instituted periodical manœuvres ; he encouraged Gribeauval to undertake the reconstruction of the artillery ; he improved the condition in which the soldiers were lodged, clothed, and fed. But his reforms aroused the opposition of those whose interests were concerned in the abuses which he abolished, who were influential enough to obtain his dismissal.

The second reformer was the Comte de Saint-Germain, who had proved his capacity as a soldier during the Seven Years' War, but had been denied an independent command and had left the army in disgust. In 1775 Louis XVI was induced to appoint him Minister

of War. Saint-Germain set about a complete systematic military reform. He arranged for the gradual abolition of the purchase of commissions; he suppressed a portion of the expensive household troops, and used the money saved to increase the strength of the army, which he nearly doubled without any appreciable increase of cost. He raised a number of regiments of light infantry and of light cavalry. He supported with his whole authority the great reconstruction and reorganization of the artillery, which was under him carried out by Gribeauval. He organized the army in permanent divisions of all arms. He introduced new drill books for the training of the troops, and thereby raised the tactical instruction of the army to a very high level. He remodelled the War Office and made it efficient. He was anxious to improve discipline and at the same time to mitigate the brutal severity of the corporal punishments inflicted on the soldiers. With this object he adopted the system, which had been suggested to him by a committee of general officers, of a regulated number of strokes with the flat of the sword. But in an age which concerned itself with the freedom and dignity of the individual this new practice was thought to be degrading. Men forgot the brutalities for which it was a substitute, and so far from regarding it as an improvement, both soldiers and the public received it with execration. It was jeered at by the privileged classes, who thought that their interests had suffered from the minister's reforms, considered to be too Prussian, and, in spite of his beneficent

work, Saint-Germain was swept from office by the prejudice of the nobility amid the gibes of a public which did not understand the great services he had rendered to the army.

Reaction again reigned supreme over the military administration. In 1781 the courtiers extorted from Ségur, the Minister of War, against his will, a royal decree to the effect that every candidate for a commission must satisfy the court genealogist that he was possessed of sixteen quarters of nobility. The effect of this was to shut the doors of the army in the face of the rising middle class. Moreover, it involved a gross injustice to two classes of officers. There were always a certain number who had risen from the ranks, whose sword was at once their living and their title of nobility, and who were called soldiers of fortune. During the Seven Years' War a number of sons of *bourgeois* had been allowed to purchase commissions, and there were also in the army a number of members of the new official *noblesse*. All of these were insulted by the new decree, which threw a doubt upon the legitimacy of their position.

The army remained a great burden on the finances, and a third and last reform was among those efforts of the monarchy to save itself from bankruptcy which preceded and directly led to the Revolution. In 1787 Loménie de Brienne, called to direct the councils of the King, appointed his brother to be Minister of War and adopted the suggestion, which had long been urged by Guibert, for the formation of an Army Council to assist and support the Secretary of State.

This council was composed of eight general officers, among them Gribeauval, the rest for the most part members of the high nobility. Guibert himself was appointed its secretary and reporter.

The Army Council renewed and extended the reforms of Saint-Germain. When it began its labours the army still numbered 35,000 officers, of whom 23,000 were absentees who never went near the regiments, and whose rank was a mere excuse to enable them to receive pay or pension from the crown. The Army Council fixed the establishment of officers at 9,578. It equalized the regiments and improved the pay and conditions of the non-commissioned officers and men. It introduced a complete divisional reorganization ;<sup>1</sup> it revised the regulations and the drill-books ; in a word, it thoroughly modernized the army, which it left well organized, well instructed, and well adapted for war.

In two branches, however, the Army Council was conservative. Its disciplinary code embodied substantially that of Saint-Germain, which it merely simplified and systematized, and in regard to the appointment and promotion of officers it embodied in a code of rules the practice which it found existing.

<sup>1</sup> France was divided into twenty-one military divisions, each commanded by a lieutenant-general (later called *général de division*), and the troops organized into divisions and brigades. This arrangement was retained during the revolutionary changes except that in 1793, when Savoy and Nice were annexed, two new divisions, comprising these two districts, were added to the existing twenty-one.

The officers at this time belonged to one or other of five classes, as distinct as though they had been five different castes. At the head came the great nobles, a small number enjoying extraordinary privileges; next to them came those other noblemen who, by the very exclusive regulations of 1760, were eligible to be presented to the king. They were required to give proofs of a nobility going back for several centuries, and, in practice, could not be presented unless they were wealthy enough to keep up a certain state. The bulk of the officers belonged to a third class, who could indeed show sixteen quarters of nobility, but who had neither the long-established genealogy nor the fortune requisite to enable them to enter the court circle. This was the normal condition of the country gentry, the class which supplied the army with most of its officers. Below them again were a number of officers who had obtained their commissions before the decree of 1781 requiring sixteen quarters of nobility, and who either belonged to the new *noblesse* or had risen from the ranks as 'soldiers of fortune'. It had long been a grievance with the country gentry who were not presented at court, as well as with the officers of the new *noblesse* and the rankers, that all the high places were reserved for the great nobles and those who had been presented. These alone became colonels, general officers, and marshals of France. For them were reserved the chief commands, the governorships of provinces, and all the posts of dignity and large emolument. The other three classes had to be con-

tent with spending many years as lieutenants or captains and retiring in middle life with a small pension.

These invidious distinctions were maintained in the regulations for promotion issued by the Army Council. It was calculated on their publication that a court nobleman could become a general officer at thirty-nine, while a member of the provincial nobility could not reach that rank before fifty-eight; that in order to qualify for it the court noble would have to be present with the troops during periods amounting in all to eight years and five months, while an officer of any other class would have to attend to his duties during periods which added together amounted to thirty-one years; and that at the moment of reaching general rank the court noble would have received in pay a total sum of 428,000 *livres*, while his less favoured comrade the provincial gentleman, on reaching the same rank, would have received rather less than 100,000. In short, a court noble was to receive four times the pay for less than one-third of the service. Under the new regulations the ranker officer could not rise above the rank of lieutenant or obtain the command of a company.

The work of the Army Council constituted a great reform. It made possible the military efficiency of the army, reorganized in accordance with the necessities of war. But this service was not appreciated in a period of social ferment, when every class of society was considering its relation to the other classes. The *bourgeoisie* and the common people were indignant that the reform had not extended to

the system of discipline and that the Council had retained the unpopular punishment of the flat of the sword. The great nobles were annoyed by the abolition of a number of highly paid posts of dignity but of no utility, sinecures to which they thought themselves entitled. The rest of the nobility and most of the officers found a serious grievance in the Council's regulations for promotion.

The indignation with which the reforms of the Council were received was universal. No one perceived the immense progress that had been made towards efficiency, because every one looked only at the grievance involved for his own class. If the court nobles were furious at the reduction of their special privileges, the provincial gentlemen were annoyed by the advantages still reserved for the court nobles. They believed that the army ought always to be a monopoly of the nobility, but that all the nobility should be on the same footing. The officers who had come from the ranks regarded as an outrage the rule that prevented them from rising higher than lieutenant. The soldiers, and with them the mass of the *bourgeoisie*, were exasperated by the retention of corporal punishment and of the rule requiring sixteen quarters of nobility.

The first ordinances of the Army Council were issued at the time when the King's chief minister, Loménie de Brienne, was in conflict with the *parlement* of Paris. On the 8th May, 1788, came the edicts for the suppression of the *parlements* and the establishment of the *Cour plénière*. The bulk of the

nobility were opposed to the administrative reforms which Loménie de Brienne was attempting to carry out, and this feeling of antagonism to the Government was shared by the officers of the army. In May the new edict was presented to the *parlement* of Brittany at Rennes by the officer commanding the province and registered despite the protests of the members. The populace was in favour of the *parlement*, and the mob attacked the soldiers of the regiment which formed the guard of the commandant. The officers prevented their men from firing on the crowd. The commandant brought to Rennes a fresh regiment, which he hoped he could trust, but all its officers resigned. Three fresh regiments were then brought, but their officers refused to act against the *parlement*. The court thereupon decided to send to Rennes four infantry and two cavalry regiments from the camp at Saint-Omer, but it was found impossible to employ them or even to punish the officers who refused to lead their men against the populace. In the same way at Grenoble the registration of the edicts occasioned disturbances in which the officers would not use their men against the crowd, and took part with the *noblesse* of Dauphiné which protested against the edicts. Thereupon the Maréchal de Vaux was sent with foreign regiments to enforce the views of the Government, but when he assembled his colonels and asked whether they would answer for the obedience of those under their orders they kept silence. When the Maréchal put the question to them one by one,

the junior, first asked, replied that the Maréchal must not rely upon his regiment, beginning with its colonel. The same unwillingness to carry out the orders of the Government against the *parlements* was expressed by officers in various parts of France. At the camp of Saint-Omer the policy of the Government was discussed along with the action of the officers who had refused obedience. The camp was raised and the troops sent home, but they took with them the ideas and opinions which had there been developed.

Thus the officers of the nobility, in their opposition to the attempts at reform, taught their men to submit to insults, and even to attacks from the mob, rather than to act against it. The result was that the troops began to consider the conditions of obedience and the popular leaders to think that they could persuade the army not to act against them. The officers had prepared the way for that weakening of discipline of which they were afterwards themselves to be the victims.

The Government had to admit its defeat, the *Cour plénière* was suspended and the *parlement* reinstated, and it was decided to call the States-General.

Thus on the eve of the Revolution the army was well organized and well trained. Its drill books had been repeatedly revised and represented the best military thought of the day. A series of camps of instruction had rendered the troops proficient in evolutions suited for war. The non-commissioned officers were picked intelligent men, excellent in-

structors. The cavalry was well mounted. The artillery, in consequence of the reconstruction of its *matériel* and of Gribeauval's schools of instruction, was the best in Europe.

But across the structure of this army, as of the society in which it was embedded, ran as it were a geological fault, a line along which the strata were in contact but not in cohesion. On one side of the line were the *bourgeoisie* and the common people with the non-commissioned officers and men of the army, on the other side were the King, the nobles, and the officers. The earthquake of the Revolution broke the structure in two along this line of cleavage, which became a chasm that could neither be bridged nor filled up.

## VI

### THE OFFICERS AND THE NATION

UNDER the *ancien régime* men were penned off according to birth into classes or castes to which were accorded privileges that had ceased to have relation to work done or to services rendered. All classes but one were in revolt against this arrangement, which even in that one class had no sanction appealing to the intelligence, so that the intellectual minority even among the nobles condemned their own privileges. The attempt to make a new synthesis of society had been popularized by Rousseau, whose *Contrat social* gave the keynote in the first words: *L'homme est né libre et partout il est dans les fers.* The popular thought was expressed by the Constituent Assembly in the Declaration of the Rights of Man: 'Men are born and remain free and equal in rights: social distinctions cannot be based upon anything but the common welfare. All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally admissible to all dignities, places, and public employments, according to their capacity, and without other distinctions than those of their virtues and talents.'

The principles thus enunciated could not possibly be acceptable to those whose social existence was founded upon the system of privilege, to the members

of the court and of the nobility and to those officers of the army who owed their commissions to their noble birth and their prospects of promotion to the King's favour. The movement for reform, which all understood to be necessary, became revolution because the abolition of privilege met with irreconcilable opposition from these privileged classes. We are concerned with the effect of the Revolution upon the army. We have seen how in the interval between the Seven Years' War and the meeting of the States-General the army had reformed and improved itself. We have followed the efforts of a number of capable and devoted officers whose work had laid the foundations of an art of fighting adapted to the weapons in use and of a new generalship adapted to the changed conditions, who had reorganized the army, given it a new artillery, a divisional organization and a system of training so much in advance of those in other armies that it required and received no modification until long after the Restoration. Yet the first effect of the Revolution upon the army was to throw everything into confusion, so that the new science and art of war, contained in the teachings of Bourcet, of Du Teil and of Guibert, seems to have been lost, and reappeared only, after seven years of oblivion, with the advent of a new general identified with the new order.

The first and most striking effect of the Revolution was to deprive the army of two-thirds of its officers, including apparently both the reformers and their disciples. In order to understand how that happened

we must follow the course of the Revolution in so far as it affected or was affected by the officers of the army.

At the time of the elections to the States-General there were on the establishment of the army 9,578 officers, of whom 6,633 were noblemen, 1,845 *roturiers*, and 1,100 rankers or 'officers of fortune'. Thus rather more than two-thirds of the officers belonged to the nobility. All of these believed in the doctrine conveyed by the words 'an officer and a gentleman'. To hold the King's commission was in their view a privilege inseparable from noble or, as we should say in England, from gentle birth, the two things being in France equivalent. But, as we have seen, there was among these nobles a division and even a feud. All the principal posts were monopolised by the high *noblesse* and those who had been presented at court. They were the minority. The majority, the country nobles, were left to languish in the lower ranks and bitterly resented the limitations to which they were subject. The other two classes, not belonging to the nobility, forming about a third of the whole number of officers, were able to accept without reserve the doctrines laid down in the Declaration of the Rights of Man. We have to trace the stages by which officers belonging to the nobility were estranged from the rest of their countrymen and induced to separate themselves from the army.

The rules for the election to the States-General made every noble at the same time an elector for

his order and eligible for election. The electoral meetings for the Chamber of Nobles were dominated by the conflict between the minority, composed of the specially privileged class, the *grands seigneurs* with the presented officers, and the majority, the country gentry, who were eager for the abolition of those special privileges, but just as anxious to maintain the monopoly of commissions in the army enjoyed by the nobility as a whole. The minority was, of course, swamped by the majority. The *cahiers* of the *noblesse* express the ideas of the country gentry. They insist upon the sole right of their order to become officers and upon the maintenance of the rule requiring sixteen quarters of nobility. But they agree that only the nation has the right of determining the composition of the army, of voting the expenditure required for its maintenance, and of permanently fixing the military constitution. Some of them suggest that the military oath should be taken to the King and the nation, others that officers and soldiers ought to be sworn never to take arms against their fellow citizens except on the order of the majority of the nation. Thus the country gentry were just as anxious to assert their own rights against the specially privileged nobles as they were to maintain their own privileges against the *bourgeoisie*. In the choice of members the great nobles and the courtiers were discarded, as well as those who had had any connexion with the Army Council. Guibert, the great reformer, presented himself for election at Bourges to the assembled

nobles of Berry. But everything that was unpopular in the ordinances of the Army Council was attributed to him. When he rose to speak he was howled down. 'Neither the number nor the importance of his services', writes M. Duruy, 'nor his celebrity as a tactician and as a writer availed him. Of all his work his fellows could see nothing but the flat of the sword, and he suffered for the mistake of Saint-Germain, who had invented that punishment, of which he himself had tried to correct the misuse. Then a great bitterness, a disgust with life, took hold of him. He took up his pen one last time to vindicate in a few proud pages the Council of which he had been the soul, and then closed his eyes and passed away.'<sup>1</sup>

Of 285 members elected to the Chamber of Nobles 154 were officers. Of these one-third were in sympathy with the popular ideas; the other two-thirds were determined to assert the principle of equality among the nobles, and, as the democratic nature of the movement for reform unfolded itself, became eager to maintain the cause of the monarchy, of the nobility, and of religion against the *bourgeoisie* and the people.

When the Constituent Assembly met, the officers of the army were still divided. The great majority, formed by the provincial gentry, were in sympathy with the assembly, from which they expected the abolition of the special privileges of the court nobles and at the same time the maintenance of

<sup>1</sup> Duruy, *L'Armée royale en 1789*, p. 237.

their own monopoly of commissions. Only from the Assembly could they hope for the reform of the abuses they detested, a reform which they did not conceive to be inconsistent with the privileges to which they themselves were attached, privileges belonging as they thought to a natural order which they never imagined the Assembly would upset. The minority, the officers of the court *noblesse*, thought the movement for reform altogether wrong, to be opposed by any means and at any cost. They thought they could control the army and use it to dissolve the Assembly. It was they who, early in July, encouraged the court to collect near Paris a number of foreign regiments to be employed when the time came for that purpose. They instigated the dismissal of Necker.

Then was seen the result of the disobedience of the officers to the orders of the Government of Loménie de Brienne. Their example had not been lost upon the men, who in their turn had begun to take an interest in the political movement, but who, being of the people, sympathized with the popular cause. As the antagonism between the views of the court and those of the Assembly had become manifest, a large number of the soldiers normally quartered in Paris had been, by means which of course were not consistent with discipline, gained over to the popular side. The news of the dismissal of Necker threw the population of Paris into a paroxysm of alarm.

A municipal government and a citizen militia were

improvised. The populace, angered by the presence rather than by the action of the regiments still in the hands of the military authorities, rushed to the Invalides and took possession of the thousands of muskets which were there in store. Then came the attack on the Bastille and its fall. The King, who had given way in 1788, when the officers had refused to obey the orders of his Government, again gave way. He sanctioned the nomination of Lafayette as commander of what was thenceforth known as the National Guard. The foreign regiments were removed. The Comte d'Artois, who had urged their assembly, and the Duc de Broglie, who had been given the command over them, left the country.

The fall of the Bastille was the signal for the collapse of the old order. Authority was gone. All over France the peasants rose and destroyed the records which embodied the conditions of their dependence. It seemed as though chaos were come again, and everywhere the peaceable citizens armed themselves for the maintenance of order.

Within a few weeks National Guards were formed in every town and parish of France. Four months later the National Guards as patriots began to 'federate'. At a meeting at the Étoile, near Valence, a number of deputies of the National Guards of towns and villages in Dauphiné came together and 'fraternized'; they swore to remain for ever united, to protect the circulation of provisions, and to support the laws made by the Constituent Assembly. The National Guards everywhere fol-

lowed this example, which the Constituent Assembly approved and sanctioned. By June 1790 no less than two and a half million National Guards had been enrolled, and on the 14th of July the National Federation was celebrated at Paris, where 14,000 deputies of the National Guards of France and deputies of every regiment in the army came together on the Champ de Mars and took the oath of fidelity to the Nation, the Law and the King. It was held that by the federation the people reconstituted France. All the provinces, once united by the acts of the King, now of their own free will declared themselves French. '*Soyons Français*' was the cry which gave a new meaning to the word *la patrie*. The National Guard was the army of the new France, of the Nation, as distinguished from the regular army, that of the King.

The first formation of the National Guards and the fall of the Bastille took place on the 13th and 14th of July, 1789. On the 4th of August were swept away the privileges of the nobility, the class to which the officers belonged. Those of them who were associated with the court still hoped to stem the current. They brought about the reactionary demonstration of the 1st of October, the banquet at Versailles, at which the white cockade was revived and the tricolour trampled under foot to the tune of *O Richard, O mon roi*. This provoked a counter demonstration, and when, on October 6th, the King was escorted by the mob from Versailles to Paris, it became evident that the power had passed from

his hands. The court nobles then became irreconcilable. A few of them emigrated ; those who remained in France exchanged their attitude of frank opposition for that system of dissimulation which was eventually to lead to the downfall of the throne.

In October the Constituent Assembly appointed a committee of twelve to prepare a new military constitution. The committee recommended the retention of the system of voluntary enlistment for pay. This was opposed by Dubois-Crancé, who, in his famous speech of December 13th, pleaded for universal short service and a small regular army. In this way he thought that the whole able-bodied male population could be trained as the reserve of the regular army and the defence of the country assured. Voluntary enlistment, he said, always produced an army composed of men without home or occupation, as ready to attack as to defend the cause of liberty. Moreover, an army raised by voluntary enlistment required the support of a militia, and the difficulty in case of war was to amalgamate the two. In his opinion every citizen ought to be a soldier and every soldier a citizen. He spoke in vain ; the committee's project, supported by the Minister of War (La Tour du Pin), was adopted by the Assembly.

The fundamental decree of the new military constitution, February 28th, 1790, laid down that every citizen was admissible to every military employment and every military rank. The purchase of commissions was completely abolished, and it was

enacted that officers should not merely take the oath of fidelity to the nation, the law, and the King, but should also swear to obey the constitution. The decree received the royal sanction, and was followed (May 28th) by a royal proclamation authorizing the tricolor and abolishing the white cockade.

These measures opened the eyes of the officers and men to the true nature of what was taking place. The law that every citizen was eligible to become an officer made an end of the monopoly of the nobility. It healed the breach between the presented nobles and the country gentry. The new oath proved that the army was henceforth to be the nation's rather than the King's. This could hardly be agreeable to the King's faithful servants the officers. But the King was accepting everything, and it was difficult for an officer, whatever his devotion, to be *plus royaliste que le roi*. The men, on the other hand, and the non-commissioned officers saw the beginning of a new era, and conceived new hopes—they felt themselves part of the nation and saw that the nation was on their side. Neither the officers nor the men could hide their feelings. The officers took no pains to conceal their contempt for the new order, or disorder, their attachment to the monarchy and to its emblem, the white cockade, their indifference to the idea of *la patrie*. The soldiers, for the first time, began to think themselves citizens; their bearing changed; it seemed to the officers that they had become insubordinate. The

men knew that the officers hated the new order, and suspected, what was the fact, that on a word from the King they would revolt against it. The understanding between the two classes, which constitutes discipline, was undermined. The men seemed to have imagined that the new system which they saw accepted for the nation, in which authority had passed to the representatives of the people, was to be copied in every regiment. They proceeded to adopt it. The regiment Royal la Marine, on the march out from Marseilles, cashiered its officers, giving them twenty-four hours' notice, but at the same time composed a eulogy on their conduct and recommended them to the interest of the nation. The regiment of Béthune, which had been punished for some offence by being moved from one garrison to another, seized its colours and the military chest and marched back to its former garrison without its officers. There were many such revolts against the officers, sometimes accompanied by violence, and on the 4th of June the Minister of War invited the Assembly to take measures for the restoration of discipline. But the Assembly had lost its faith in discipline, and was afraid of putting into the King's hands an instrument for its own destruction. It passed to the order of the day.

On the 19th of June the abolition of hereditary nobility gave a new blow to the feelings of the officers. On the 14th of July came the great celebration of the Federation, at which the King presided, to the grief of the officers, who profoundly resented the spectacle

of innumerable National Guards, the undisciplined representatives of a state of things with which they had no sympathy.

Soon after the Federation appeared a manifesto from the Prince of Condé, who had left the country with the Count of Artois in July 1789, and now professed to speak in the name of the whole of the nobility. 'I defend', he said, 'the cause of all the princes and of all the gentlemen. They will unite under the glorious standard which I, at their head, shall unfurl. I shall come, in spite of the horror which a descendant of Saint Louis must feel at the idea of dipping his sword in French blood, I shall come at the head of the nobility of all nations and, followed by all subjects faithful to their King who will unite under my flag, I shall attempt to deliver this unhappy monarch.'

The Federation inoculated the regiments, all of which had sent representatives to it, with the popular doctrine and taught them the force of association. They began to form committees which concerned themselves with the regimental administration, and in particular with the accounts, which too often had been carelessly managed by the officers. There was consequently everywhere a good deal of friction between the officers and their men. The Assembly attempted to remedy this by a decree of the 6th of August which dissolved all associations that had been formed in the regiments and ordered that inspecting officers, in the presence of delegates from all ranks, should check off the regimental accounts for

the past six years and satisfy all complaints concerning the financial administration. This led to terrible disorder. The men considered that the regimental fund, out of which they had to be paid, equipped, and clothed, was regimental property, and therefore theirs. The inspection of the accounts showed these funds to have been mismanaged, and in many cases there were large deficits unexplained. In a number of regiments the officers subscribed the money to make good the deficits.

There was an inquiry of this kind at Nancy. The men of three regiments arrested two of the officers sent to revise the accounts. There were negotiations for their release followed by misunderstandings, whereupon Bouillé, the general commanding at Metz, marched to Nancy with 4,000 infantry and cavalry. The regiments in revolt agreed to do what Bouillé demanded, but some of his troops fired without orders, and the mutineers thought themselves betrayed. Most of them went back to barracks with their officers, but 300 men of one Swiss regiment, assisted by a mob, fought a pitched battle against Bouillé, were defeated, and surrendered, after which they were tried by court martial of the other Swiss regiments present and twenty-one of them sentenced to death and forty-one to the galleys. The Assembly drew up a proclamation to the army telling the soldiers that it was exerting itself for their welfare, but that no complaints could be heard and no concessions made until order had been restored. The first act of the regiments must be to submit to the law. A vote of

thanks to Bouillé was passed. Thereupon there was a general return to subordination.

The Assembly felt that though it had given the soldiers the rights of citizens, had increased their pay and abolished degrading punishments, including the use of the flat of the sword, it had not fulfilled its promise of giving them *la carrière ouverte aux talents*. Accordingly (on September 23rd) was passed a decree regulating the appointment and promotion of officers. Promotion in the regiment was to go by seniority; above the regiment, partly by seniority and partly by the King's selection. Commissions were in future to be given by competitive examination. Of every four vacancies in a regiment for the rank of sub-lieutenant three were to be filled by examination, the fourth by men who had risen from the ranks to be non-commissioned officers. These were to be appointed alternately by seniority and by an election in which all the officers were to vote. This made an end of the monopoly of the nobility. In December 1790 a conspiracy of officers was discovered at Lyons, having for its object to organize a march upon Paris for the suppression of the Constituent Assembly. It had been instigated by the emigrant princes at Turin, and on its discovery a number of officers were arrested and a decree passed that all public officials receiving pay or pension from the State, but absent from the kingdom, must take the civic oath within a month on pain of forfeiting their rank, place, pay, and pension. The King had no difficulty in signing this decree.

On the 1st of January, 1791, were issued the new regulations for the army. The old names of the regiments were exchanged for numbers. All useless and merely ornamental posts were suppressed, the number of general officers reduced from 216 to 34, and the total number of officers to 9,406.

In the course of 1791 the royalist officers began to discuss the propriety of their taking the oath prescribed for them. At the same time the patriot clubs, especially the Jacobins, discussed the question whether the officers, who were doubting the propriety of the oath, could be regarded as loyal. There were troubles on the subject of the attendance of soldiers at clubs, which had at first been allowed and then forbidden. On the 29th of April it was decreed that the officers and soldiers were free, when not doing military duty, to attend, without arms and like all other citizens, the meetings of societies assembling peaceably in the towns where they were in garrison. The result was disastrous for discipline, because the Jacobins set to work to detach the men from the officers. They denounced the *incivisme* of any officer who punished his men, and they accused the officers of conspiring with the reactionaries or with the *émigrés*.

The subject of the attitude of the officers was brought up before the Assembly, where the proposal was made to discharge them all, for it was thought that they were all opposed to the new order and could not be trusted. The alternative proposal was to prescribe a new oath which should bind

the officers to the constitution. Both proposals were examined by the combined standing committees, which recommended that no officers should be discharged, that the regiments should be withdrawn from the garrison towns and assembled in camps on the frontiers, and that every officer should be required to sign an oath binding himself on his honour to submit to the new constitution decreed by the Assembly and accepted by the King.

At the club of the Jacobins Robespierre said: 'You have destroyed the nobility, and the nobility remains at the centre of your army. It is by armies that Governments have everywhere reduced men to subjection, and you are putting your army under aristocratic chiefs. I say with frankness, perhaps even with bluntness: Whosoever does not advise the discharge of the officers is a traitor.'

The *constitutionnels* held that a carefully worded oath would cause the resignation of those officers who could not honestly accept it, and that those who took it would be trustworthy.

After a hot discussion, prolonged for several days, the motion for the discharge of the officers was rejected and that for the imposition of the new oath carried. It was also decided to move the troops to camps of instruction, to raise to a war footing the regiments destined to protect the frontiers, and immediately to institute in each department a free conscription of volunteers from the National Guards. These decrees were signed by the King on the 15th of June. The royalist officers

who were members of the Assembly held a meeting to discuss what advice they should give to their comrades. They determined to advise them to take the new oath in order to be able to remain at their posts for the support of the monarchy.

On the 21st of June the Assembly was informed of the King's flight from Paris. Next day it modified the words of the oath, which were now to run as follows: 'I swear to employ the arms entrusted to my hands for the defence of the country and to maintain the constitution decreed by the National Assembly against all its enemies within and without, to die rather than to suffer the invasion of French territory by foreign troops, and to obey only orders given in consequence of the decrees of the National Assembly.' Commissaries from the Assembly were sent off at once to administer the oath to the officers and the troops.

The decree which imposed the new oath recognized the right of the officers to decline it, for, though it laid down that the refusal to take it would be equivalent to resignation, it allowed any officer thus retiring a pension amounting to a quarter of his pay. Bouillé and all the officers who had been parties to the King's attempt at escape had left the country immediately on its failure. No less than fifteen hundred others refused to take the new oath, and most of them also left the country and joined the army which the princes were forming. They do not seem to have been conscious of the treasonable character of their action in joining the intending

invaders of their country. The true nature of the step which they were taking was veiled from their eyes by the specious distinction which they drew between France and the Government in power. This distinction was expressed in one of Condé's proclamations. 'It is not against my country', he said, 'that I shall turn my arms. The factious always wish to identify themselves with it, but the rest of the French and all Europe are not deceived.'<sup>1</sup> The course of events was to prove that Condé and the royalist officers completely misunderstood the faith and the feelings of the rest of the French. Of those royalist officers who took the oath a large number were insincere, and remained at their posts only in the hope of being useful to the royalist cause. They were ready when annoyed by subsequent acts of the Assembly to repudiate or to revoke it.

In September 1791 Louis XVI accepted the Constitution and took the oath prescribed for him. The Assembly again revised the military oath, to which the King's name was now restored, so that it ran: 'I swear to be faithful to the nation, the law, and the King, to maintain the constitution of the kingdom with all my power, and to carry out, and to cause to be carried out, the military laws and all their dispositions.' Before the end of the year (1791) another two thousand officers had crossed the frontier. At this period the conduct of the soldiers was in every respect good; so that the emigration of these officers cannot be attributed to insubordina-

<sup>1</sup> Hartmann, p. 303.

tion on the part of their men. Their action could be explained only by their belief that the King's wishes were more truly expressed by the princes abroad than by the King's example. In other words, they understood the King to be insincere, and their conduct could not but suggest to their countrymen that this was the case.

The emigration of the officers steadily continued during the early months of 1792. On the 20th of April came the declaration of war with Austria. After that there could be no doubt whatever that for an officer to leave his post and to join the army of the princes was desertion to the enemy. Yet the emigration of the officers continued. Between the middle of April and the middle of July 598 officers resigned their commissions or left their posts. They were no doubt embittered by the increased hostility of the popular party towards the court, of which one of the explanations was the action of their comrades and of the *émigré* princes. This hostility was especially manifested in the demonstration in the Tuileries on the 20th of June, when the mob passed through the palace and insulted the King and Queen.

On the 10th of August came the attack on the King's palace, his abandonment of its defence, his retirement to the Assembly, and his suspension. On the 16th Lafayette with his staff and a number of officers crossed the frontier, and a number of others were suspended by the commissaries of the National Assembly. On the 3rd of September a new oath was imposed of fidelity to the nation and not to the King,

and there followed in quick succession the September massacres, the battle of Valmy, the meeting of the Convention, and the proclamation of the Republic.

There was now no place left in the army for royalist officers. A number of noblemen remained at their posts, some for love of their country, and others perhaps induced by the prospects of promotion and of a brilliant career. But they were exposed to the difficulties, the hardships, and the injustice arising from the suspicions which the conduct of their departed comrades could not but inspire in their men and in the rest of their fellow citizens. Miracles of prudence were required to bring them safely through the next two years, during which the devotees of the Revolution left no means untried to drive them out of the army. On the 28th of September the Minister of War (Servan) ordered the suspension of any officers whose acts or words indicated sentiments inconsistent with equality and liberty. In October another Minister of War (Pache) sent commissaries to the army with power to dismiss or suspend officers.

In 1793 the execution of the King, the insurrection in the Vendée, and the treason of Dumouriez raised to the highest pitch the violence of the passions with which the officers of the old royal army were regarded. From this time on, popular speakers, clubs, and the assemblies of the sections at Paris waged a merciless and unrelenting war against the former nobles, especially against those of them who were still officers in the army. Resolution after resolution was proposed for the expulsion of them all. But this ex-

treme measure was never taken. Though power quickly passed from party to party, from those who were less to those who were more violent, there were always in every Government a few men of sufficient good sense and courage to attempt, with more or less success, to mitigate the severity of the measures taken and the ferocity of their execution. When it is remembered that in 1792 and the first half of 1793 no less than 593 generals were nominated and superseded, some idea can be formed of the temper of the French nation at this time. The revolutionary Ministers of War, Pache and Bouchotte, whose terms of office together filled the greater part of the period between the meeting of the Convention and the fall of Robespierre (September 1793 to July 1794), made themselves the agents of the Jacobins in the effort to drive out all the gentlemen from the army. They sent agents of their own with the mission to work upon the soldiers in order to detach them from the officers. They spent public money in circulating the most violent revolutionary newspapers among the private soldiers.

But by this time the armies were on the frontier fighting the enemy. Those noblemen who had remained at their posts were doing their duty ; dangers and privations shared in common brought officers and men together again, and in these conditions the bitterness of party strife died away. Men like Davout, Desaix, Dommartin, and Bonaparte made no difficulty in letting go the outward signs of membership of a once privileged class, when they

could rely on their own powers of leadership in presence of the enemy to bring them a distinction which the whole nation could appreciate. In December 1793 Bonaparte, promoted to be general, had to send in a record of his services. He wrote himself down as 'not noble'.

With the fall of Robespierre (July 27, 1794) the worst was over. In November the Committee of Public Safety cancelled the suspension of the former nobles, and in December the Convention restored them to their duties.

The defection of the royalist officers was a contributory cause of the bitterness and savagery which culminated in the Terror. It was an attempt to disarm the nation in presence of the enemy. It was a dangerous blow. In 1789 the army had 9,500 officers, of whom 6,600, two-thirds of the whole number, were noblemen. By the end of 1794, 5,500 nobles, more than half of the whole number of officers, had gone. This wholesale desertion, by its very danger, brought about its own cure. It compelled the Revolutionary Government to enforce, and the army to accept, the principle of selection and promotion by merit. It gave the young men their chance. It made possible the rise of that galaxy of generals which, while its members were in the first flush of manhood, led the armies of France to victory. How those armies came into being must be the subject of another lecture.

The history of the officers of the army during the Revolution is summarized by Hartmann in a passage

worth quoting: 'The Revolution', he writes, 'had done its work in the army as everywhere else. In the army too it had introduced the equality of rights and the equality of duties; it had substituted for the cult of royalty that of *la patrie*. But this formula of the new times had found ardent adversaries among the privileged classes of the times that were gone. Nine-tenths of the noble officers had been in coalition to reject it. Irreconcilable royalists, they had never ceased, even during the struggles carried on against the court in 1788, to feel an unbounded devotion for the monarch and the monarchy, while the *bourgeoisie* on every occasion had shown itself disposed to let its resentment reach as far as the throne and the dynasty; at the same time the officers meant to remain noblemen, to form a separate order in the State, and to preserve their prerogatives, while the *bourgeoisie* had declared for a general levelling, for civil equality, and for the access of its members to all ranks. During the events which followed the assembly of the States-General this indissoluble adherence to their caste principles and to monarchical prejudices outweighed with the officers every other feeling. In conflict from that time on with the nation, which responded to their opposition with every sort of vexation, disobeyed by their soldiers, not as military chiefs but because of their hostility to the new order of things, they were led, almost all of them, to eliminate themselves as the logical conclusion of the absolute incompatibility of their ideas with those which had

triumphed over the *ancien régime*. At first full of trust in the National Assembly, to which they were prodigal of expressions of respect and gratitude, even after the taking of the Bastille, even after the days of October 1789, they broke away from it when the fundamental decree of February 28, 1790, on the constitution of the army, deprived them of the monopoly of military rank; they definitely became its enemies when, on June 19 in the same year, it abolished hereditary nobility; finally they abandoned its flag to array themselves under that of the princes beyond the frontiers, when after the flight to Varennes the very existence of the monarchy seemed to be threatened. Some left at once, refusing to take an oath from which the King's name was omitted; others waited until Louis XVI had accepted the constitution to abandon him in their turn; others did not desert until after the declaration of war, as though they had wished to postpone their abandonment of France until she was in danger. While thus doing everything that the patriots could most desire, the royalist officers supplied them with the strongest of arguments apt to carry away the mass of the people, that of treason; in that way they hastened the march of the Revolution; they provoked its worst excesses; they overthrew the throne and pushed the royal family towards the scaffold.

'They themselves found on foreign soil nothing but causes of bitterness and discouragement. While their comrades who had remained faithful to their country gained distinction by defending it against

the invasion, they marched from disillusion to disillusion. After having demanded with so much force, at the moment of the operations of the Army Council and in their electoral *cahiers*, equality with the high *noblesse*, they found in the army of the princes that they were separated from it by a greater gulf than ever. . . . Finally, and above all, their dominant idea in abandoning their commands had been that their departure would be sure to bring about the disorganization of the regiments, the indiscipline of the soldiers, military riots, and, as a consequence, the defeat of the national troops. They were not long without discovering how far they had been wrong in their calculation. First of all Valmy, and afterwards Jemappes, showed them that the French army could conquer without them, and, better still, against them.'

## VII

### REGULARS, VOLUNTEERS, CONSCRIPTS

THE discussions of the Constituent Assembly in the first half of June 1791 on the subject of the trustworthiness of the officers of the army were carried on under the influence of the apprehension of a possible war. The Declaration of Pilnitz, by which the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia committed themselves hypothetically to interfere in the affairs of France, had been signed on the 2nd of April, and in France royalists and republicans well knew that the Count of Artois, the King's brother, was exerting himself to bring about an invasion of the country. No wonder that the National Assembly considered its means of defence. We have seen that anxiety about the attitude of the officers of the regular army had led the Assembly, not indeed to discharge them, as the representatives of the Jacobins desired, but to impose upon them the oath of June 11, which it was thought would be declined by those who would not defend the Constitution, for whose retirement on equitable terms provision was made, while it was hoped that those who took the oath could thereafter be trusted. It was felt, at the same time, that some provision ought to be made to increase the defensive forces beyond the limits of the

regular army, of which the reorganization had been completed by the beginning of 1791.

The old militia, sometimes called the Provincial Regiments, had been abolished on June 1, 1790, and in March and April, 1791, decrees had been passed which instituted in place of the militia a body of 100,000 auxiliary soldiers who might be called out in case of emergency to reinforce the line regiments, and were meantime to receive three *sous* a day. These auxiliaries, however, had not yet been raised, and a new plan was suggested and adopted by the Assembly. It was decreed that there should be immediately a free enrolment of volunteers from the National Guards up to a limit of five per cent of the whole number. They were not to assemble nor to name their officers until the needs of the State should require these measures. When called upon for service they should be paid by the State. All this was decided by June 13.

On June 21, on the news that the King had disappeared, the National Assembly, wishing to provide in the circumstances that had arisen for the security of the State, without and within, and for the maintenance of the Constitution, decreed that the National Guard of the kingdom should be placed in activity, the frontier departments providing the number of National Guards which their situation required and their population permitted; the other departments should furnish two or three thousand men each. All citizens able to bear arms, and wishing to do so for the defence of the State and

the maintenance of the Constitution, were immediately to enroll themselves in their municipalities. They were to be formed into battalions each of ten companies of fifty men. All the members of the company were to nominate their officers and non-commissioned officers, and the staff was to be nominated by the whole battalion. From the day of assembly each National Guard in one of these companies was to receive fifteen *sous* a day, and the officers, according to their rank, from three to seven times that amount. Regulations were to be issued for the organization and discipline of these companies.

This decree created the National Volunteers.

A series of further decrees fixed the numbers to be raised in the several departments, and during the remainder of the year 1791 successive decrees regulated the command, organization, and discipline of this force.

By August 17 the total number to be raised had been fixed at 158 battalions with an effective strength of 97,000 men. After a battalion had been enrolled and its officers elected, it was to be clothed and equipped by the department, the cost being covered, apparently, by stoppages of pay, and after being inspected was to pass under the orders of the general officer commanding the district.

In September the Minister of War reported that more than 60 battalions were ready, but that there were difficulties in clothing and equipping the others, and that the supply of arms was insufficient for the whole number.

The first regulations laid down that the officers and non-commissioned officers of the companies must be chosen from those who had previously served in the National Guard or in the line. The two lieutenant-colonels were to be elected, and one of them must be a captain who had commanded a company of regulars. The adjutant and sergeant-major were to be appointed by the general officer from among those serving in the line.

To understand the significance of the volunteer system created in 1791, we must try to put ourselves in the frame of mind of the Constituent Assembly, or rather of the majority of its members, who were inspired by the principles of 1789 and by the two leading ideas of liberty and equality. We have seen that they were, not without reason, suspicious of the regular army after the attempt which had been made to use it as the weapon of reaction and when many of its officers were joining the enemies of the country. These were the feelings which caused the Assembly to decide that the Volunteer National Guards should elect their officers. There was a certain mistrust of the Ministry of War, which had still many associations with the *ancien régime*, and the centralization of the administration gave the Ministry a good deal of influence. The Assembly therefore wished to decentralize the administration of the volunteers and to take it as far as possible out of the hands of the Ministry of War. The idea of decentralization was, in itself, good and sound, and as the Assembly had divided the territory of France into departments and

made a new logical system of local self-government, it was very natural that the raising and organization of the citizen army should be entrusted to the departmental authorities.

But however intelligible we may find the appointment of officers by the election of the men and the equipment of the battalions by the departments, nothing but the inexperience of the Assembly and its mistrust of the institution of a standing army could have concealed from it the truth that neither of these measures could be conducive to the end in view, if that end was to raise a military force that would be effective against an enemy in the field.

A body of volunteers entirely ignorant of everything military will elect for its officers its most popular members, or those most eager to put themselves forward; it cannot possibly elect those best qualified to be leaders in the field, for it cannot possibly distinguish them. Moreover, the fact of election was not likely to promote prompt and unquestioning obedience. In those cases, which in 1791 were fairly numerous, where officers were chosen who had served in the line or in the militia this difficulty was to some extent overcome. But the militia had not been embodied for many years and the experience of its officers was merely nominal. The appointment from the line of one lieutenant-colonel and the adjutant was an excellent measure and gave some guarantee of confidence.

The departmental authorities were without any experience of military administration and had no funds of their own out of which to equip the volun-

teers. The wonder is not that many months were required before all the 158 battalions were ready, but that in September, after only three months, as many as sixty should have been actually on their way to join the army.

It was thought that to move the battalions towards the frontier would be the best means of accustoming them to the military life and of preparing them for the field. Their instruction, so far as drill and actual military training were concerned, made rapid progress. The infantry drill-book of the 1st of August, 1791, was admirably clear and precise, far better than anything of its kind then existing in Europe, and according to this text-book the training was conducted.

But drill is only a portion of the military life. It was the practice in France, as in other countries, that troops on the march should be billeted among the inhabitants, and a battalion moving from one place to another was given a route and certain allowances, and was entitled to quarters and provisions according to specific laws and regulations. In any circumstances it is something of a hardship for the inhabitants of a village to receive into their houses and feed a number of soldiers. This business requires officers familiar with the law and regulations, local authorities able to co-operate with them, and troops accustomed to the operation. Let us try to imagine it undertaken by troops for the most part ignorant of the procedure and officers devoid of experience.

A column of 700 men enters a large village which

has been warned to expect it. A quartermaster has been sent on in advance to arrange lodgings. He has been received by the mayor, and with the assistance of one or two sergeants has been round the village and visited forty houses, in which he has found accommodation for groups of from three to twenty men. He has chalked up on each door the number of men, and written out a table, which he hands to the commanding officer on the arrival of the column. The village will in this way accommodate 400 men; the remaining 300 must be sent to the next village a mile away, whither a quartermaster is also dispatched. When the battalion arrives, the men, tired and hungry, must be divided into the necessary groups and each group taken to its billet, after the whole body has been warned of the place of assembly. The men then begin to settle in their quarters and to clean themselves, their arms, and accoutrements. Each party sends out one of its number to receive from the appointed officer at the appointed place the rations due.

It is easy to see that proceedings of this sort, if they are to be carried out with proper order, quietly, and without confusion, involve the familiarity of every one with his particular functions and with some normal way of carrying them out. But suppose that only the colonel and his adjutant have any practical knowledge of the business. They will in ten minutes be besieged by non-commissioned officers and men asking for instructions and will find it impossible to answer all the applicants for information. Suppose

further that owing to ignorance or neglect the bread and meat are not forthcoming, or that the ready money to be given instead exists only in the form of bank-notes, which cannot immediately be changed ; that it has been raining and the men are wet through ; that the inhabitants, having lately had to accommodate a number of regulars, think themselves badly used in having these raw troops also quartered on them.

It is evident that, even though all the volunteers were animated with the best good-will in the world, there could easily be a great deal of confusion ; that a great many men might find themselves without dinner and unable to get dry and warm. As soon as there is confusion, everybody wants to get things straight ; the more zealous the men, provided they are new to the business, the more eager they are to restore order. They all try at once, each in his own way, which immediately leads to friction. The men feel that the officers do not know their business ; the result is insubordination. How can there be subordination without orders, and how can there be clear orders from officers who have yet to learn their work ?

Wherever the volunteers went there was trouble. From every point came complaints of disorder and insubordination. The general officers reported that the volunteers showed infinite good-will, but that it was difficult to establish order among them, and they suggested that an army for war would be formed very much quicker if the volunteers could be embodied in

the existing regiments of the line, where there would be competent officers to attend to them and experienced comrades to initiate them. But this was a measure of which the Constituent Assembly was afraid. The regular army was the King's force, the volunteers were the nation's, and to strengthen one at the expense of the other might lead to the overthrow of the nation. The Assembly did its best to improve and complete the organization, and the Military Committee prepared a code of regulations, which was passed as a decree December 28, 1791. At that time the Minister of War, Narbonne, was away on a tour of inspection, inquiring into the condition of the volunteers. In his absence the Assembly inserted in the code two clauses which, when he came to know of them, gave him the greatest anxiety. In the first place it was enacted that every volunteer should be at liberty to retire at the end of each campaign, after two months' notice to his captain, and that a campaign should be considered to be ended on every 1st of December. This meant, of course, that the nation's army would disband itself at the end of each year, and that all the trouble of raising and training it would then have to begin again. The other clause was that all the line officers serving with the volunteers, except the lieutenant-colonels, must return to their line regiments on the 1st of April next. This was evidently to take away from the volunteers their one chance of acquiring efficiency and discipline.

Narbonne, on his return, protested. 'Will not the

Assembly', he asked, 'find upon more closely examining the matter that it is for those who have long learned in practice the difficult art of war, to lead and command the others. The command ought not to be given either for the satisfaction of individuals or for that of any body of troops. The true courage of a patriot is that which calls for and demands experience to guide it.' Narbonne reported that the regular army was 51,000 short of its establishment, and that it was impossible to fill the ranks because all the men fit and anxious to serve were joining the volunteers. He spoke in vain. The prejudices of the Assembly could not be overcome.

So far from allowing the volunteers to be incorporated with and fused into the line regiments, the Assembly decreed, on the 24th of January, that none of the different armies of the line might at any time or under any pretext recruit itself among the volunteer battalions of National Guards. But on the 18th of March, 1792, the Assembly made one concession; it decided that those line officers and non-commissioned officers who were actually serving with the volunteers in the capacity of adjutant or sergeant-major might remain with their volunteer battalions until the end of the year.

It was these first volunteers, those raised and organized in 1791, more especially the first sixty battalions, which had been ready in September, that in 1792, by the reinforcement which they constituted to the regular army, made possible the defeat of the first invasion. To the regular army, in the

first instance, and to the volunteers of 1791 in the second place, were due the check administered to the Prussians at Valmy, the victory of Dumouriez at Jemappes, and the first conquest of Belgium.

The war, you will remember, was declared on the 20th of April 1792, and began with a series of panics on the Belgian frontier and with numerous desertions of officers of the line. In May the Assembly called for 74,000 new volunteers, of whom about 30,000 were to strengthen battalions already raised in 1791 and about 44,000 to form new battalions known as those of 1792. These new battalions, like the old ones, elected their officers, but were not allowed to choose them from the line, which emigration and desertion had already deprived of too many officers. The volunteers of 1791 had had from six to nine months' training before the war; those of 1792, of which the formation only began in June, could not possibly have received effective training by September, in time for the campaign of that year, even if they had had competent officers and non-commissioned officers. They were without proper instructors, and were moved to the front before there had been time to get them into shape; they were thus foredoomed to failure. The reports upon them from generals, from officials of all kinds, and from the districts through which they passed, resemble so many cries of despair.

In July the country was declared in danger, and there was a further call for volunteers from the National Guards, who were to assemble in each

canton and to choose among themselves the number required to complete the contingent of the canton called for by the Government. This was the beginning of a process of compulsory enrolment known at the time as 'requisition', of which we shall shortly hear more. The generals, one after another, especially Kellermann, wrote repeatedly to the National Assembly begging that they might be allowed to incorporate the volunteers with the line regiments. The Assembly would not hear of it. The desertion of line officers had convinced the patriots that the officers of the line could not be trusted, and that it was essential to keep the volunteers as far as possible to themselves. The hopes of the patriots were sustained by the retreat of the Prussians after Valmy and raised by the victory of Jemappes in November 1792, but at the same time the volunteers of 1791 began to send in their notices of resignation or retirement at the end of the campaign, that is, on December 1st, and when that time came they began to go home in great numbers.

At the beginning of February 1793 war was declared against England and Holland, and during the month of February the Convention had to consider the means of carrying it on. Dubois-Crancé, as reporter of the Military Committee, reported that the 196 line battalions were 34,000 men short, that the total strength of the volunteers was 229,000, but that the numbers had greatly diminished since the 1st of December. It was

necessary to fill up the ranks by raising 300,000 men, of whom one-third must be sent to the line, the rest to the volunteers ; it would, however, be impossible to obtain recruits for the line if the volunteers were maintained as a separate force. He therefore proposed to join into one body, to be called a demi-brigade, a battalion of the line and two of the volunteers, and he urged that the only way in which the necessary men could be raised was by conscription in the departments, with permission for the men chosen to provide substitutes. Two decrees were passed, one of them abolishing all differences of pay and of *régime* between the line and the volunteers, but retaining the rule that the volunteers should not be bound for more than one campaign and maintaining the separation of the battalions until further legislation ; the second, that all citizens from eighteen to forty, being unmarried or widowers without children, should be in permanent requisition until the levy of 300,000 was complete, and that, if voluntary enrolment in any commune should fail to produce the number of men required, the commune must fill up the number in its own way as decided by a majority of votes. Thus in February two new principles were adopted ; the amalgamation of the volunteers and the line was agreed to in principle, but its execution postponed, and conscription or compulsory service was permitted to the communes at their discretion.

While the new levies were being made the campaign opened with disaster. On the 18th of March

Dumouriez was defeated at Neerwinden and on the 3rd of April went over to the enemy. Thereupon was formed the Committee of Public Safety, which took into its hands the government of the country and the conduct of the war. The disasters continued ; in July came the surrenders of Mainz, of Condé, and of Valenciennes.

In August a number of the representatives in mission with the armies attempted to strengthen the generals by calling for a *levée en masse* of the population of the frontier districts. But the attempt was a failure. Here and there a number of peasants without arms collected at the places of assembly, but they found themselves helpless and useless, and dispersed again.

On the 16th of August the Convention decreed that the French people in its entirety should rise to a sense of its liberty, but this decree seems to have remained a rhetorical flourish.

It was followed on the 23rd of August by a decree putting all Frenchmen in permanent requisition for the service of the armies until the moment when the enemy should have been chased from the territory of the Republic. Unmarried citizens or widowers without children, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, were to be the first to march. No substitutes were allowed. A few days later the mode of execution of this decree was regulated ; the men were to be formed into companies and these into battalions bearing the name no longer of the department but of the district. There were

to be 543 such battalions ; they were to be placed at the disposal of the Minister of War and distributed among the eleven armies in the field.

These measures, which of course took time in execution and did not instantly produce troops, were an expression of the national determination not to be beaten. The situation required determination, for there was not only war on every frontier, but insurrections in three parts of France. The requisition began to produce the men and the determination of the Government began to get the upper hand of the insurrections. In September came the victory of Hondschoote and in October that of Wattignies. A counter-revolution at Lyons had begun in May. The Vendée had been in insurrection since the spring ; in August Toulon received an Anglo-Spanish garrison and its harbour was occupied by the Allied fleet. The resolution of the Revolutionary Government, expressed in the permanent requisition, enabled it to cope successfully with all these troubles. At the end of September Lyons was captured, in December the peasant army of La Vendée was defeated at Le Mans and the Allied fleet driven out of Toulon.

Meantime the Convention and the Committee of Public Safety introduced order into the mass of the military forces. In August the Convention approved of regulations for the amalgamation of the line and the volunteers, though the execution of the measure was deferred until the campaign should be over. In November it was ordered that the new levies raised by requisition should

be incorporated into the battalions already existing, and in January 1794 the amalgamation of both sets of troops was ordered to be carried out without delay.

We may now review the measures taken between 1791 and 1794 to increase the numbers of the forces in the field and may try to ascertain their effect and to see what were the ultimate strength and composition of the army. In the summer of 1791 the army had about 155,000 men, and calls were made for 97,000 volunteers. At the end of the year 1791 something like that number of volunteers was in arms, and the total strength of the forces was about 245,000 men. In 1792 there were two calls for volunteers, the first in May and the second in July, when the country was proclaimed in danger and when fifty thousand recruits for the regular army were also called for. Yet on the 1st of December, 1793, the number of men present with the armies amounted only to 112,878 regulars and 43,752 volunteers. Thus of something like 200,000 volunteers who had been raised less than 50,000 were still serving at the end of 1792. By February 1793 the total forces present in the field had risen to 204,000, which may be due to the arrival of the 50,000 recruits for the line.

In February 1793 the first great effort was made, when 300,000 men were called for by requisition. This measure seems to have been effective, for the strength present had risen by July to 483,000 and by August to 528,000. In August came the second requisition without exemptions, which seems

to have produced troops more slowly than the levy of February, for in December the strength present was 554,000, an increase of only 26,000, though in January 1794 the numbers had risen to 633,000 and in April to 732,000. During 1794 the numbers increased but slowly, the total in September being 749,000. Thus it seems that the requisition of February 1793 produced at the very least the 300,000 men called for, while that of August, in the course of a year and a half, increased the forces only by 117,000 men. All these levies appear to have been full of patriotism, devoted to France, and eager to fight for her; for a long time all of them were without discipline.

The volunteers of 1791 were well instructed because they had a proportion of experienced officers and nine months of peace in which to be trained. It was their ignorance of field service and of the conditions of billeting, and the imperfection of the system by which they were supplied and equipped, which made it difficult for them to avoid disorder.

The volunteers of 1792 were without competent officers and non-commissioned officers. There was no time to instruct them properly, and no arrangements for their suitable equipment and supply. They were all filled with the new ideas of liberty and equality. Authorized to elect their officers, they had no means of choosing those who were competent, and were little prepared either to obey them or to grasp the necessity for obedience to men whom they had no reason to suppose to be their superiors.

The same difficulties recurred with the levies of 1793, and in that year all the patriots were brim full of suspicion of the loyalty of the regular officers. Discipline began to establish itself in the presence of the enemy and under the influence of the deputies sent by the Convention, by the Committee of Public Safety, and by the Ministry of War. These deputies were partly concerned with ensuring the loyalty of the line, by getting rid of the officers whose fidelity was suspected. Those sent by Bouchotte, the Jacobin Minister of War, were specially instructed to work on the soldiers of the regular army in order to withdraw them from the influence of their officers assumed to be disloyal. But when the deputies of the Convention had lived a little time with the troops and saw that victory was necessary and that obedience was indispensable, they introduced into the army a new and before unheard-of severity. They set up the guillotine to enforce obedience, and obedience was established. The Convention was determined to be obeyed. Generals were cashiered and even guillotined upon the slightest suspicion. We have already noted that in a year and a half—in 1792 and the first half of 1793—no less than 593 generals were cashiered. The criterion by which a general was judged was not his military skill but his adhesion to the ideas and the doctrines of those in power. Before the end of 1793 the army had been completely purged. No generals and no officers remained who could not be trusted; the army implicitly obeyed the orders of the Govern-

ment, and the men obeyed the orders of the officers. The jealousy which had long kept the line and the volunteers apart disappeared by degrees as they fought side by side, and by 1794 the distinction had been forgotten; they were all fellow citizens and they were all alike soldiers.

At the beginning of 1794, after the amalgamation had been carried out, the army had acquired unity and homogeneity. The old royal regular army was merged in the new levies, of which it formed a very small part; the difference between volunteers and conscripts had passed away; all were living a common life in which the old social distinctions had been forgotten. In the process of forming the demi-brigades it had been necessary to amalgamate battalions in which the numbers of men had shrunk though the officers remained. There had to be a selection of the officers to be retained, and those who thus became supernumerary had to be discharged or to return to the ranks. Those who were kept were those who had not been found wanting. Accordingly in the new army the officers did not represent a social class; they were the result of the right kind of selection, that of the battlefield, the march, and the camp.

Thus France had at last obtained the army she required, which had been formed under the stress of the necessities of war and in conflict with the enemy. It differed from all the other armies of Europe in that it had got rid of those institutions which were purely conventional and had

only a historical but no longer a practical justification. It was, therefore, better fitted for war than any of them, and, when it came under the leadership of a young general, imbued with its own spirit, who could exercise the command unhampered by the intrigues, the jealousies, and the insubordination which had ruined the army of the *ancien régime*, it was well qualified to defeat in turn those other armies, all of which clung to the ideas, methods, and institutions inherited from a dead past.

## APPENDIX

### EXTRACTS FROM BOURCET

Bourcet's *Principes de la Guerre de Montagnes* is so difficult of access—I know of only one copy in the United Kingdom—that I think a certain number of passages extracted from it, giving in his own words the author's principal doctrines, will be of interest to students of eighteenth-century warfare and of the genesis of Napoleon's system. I give each set of extracts under the general heading of the book from which they are taken, and I have numbered the paragraphs for my own convenience.

#### FROM BOOK I. DE LA CONNAISSANCE DU PAYS

1. Les parties dans les vallées où les chaînes de montagnes se rapprochent davantage et resserrent brusquement l'ouverture desdites vallées doivent d'autant mieux être observées dans les connaissances qu'on prend d'un pays, qu'ils s'en trouvent quelques-unes où il serait impossible d'attaquer de front les troupes qui y seraient postées. P. 17.

2. Ces parties resserrées faisant le plus souvent l'objet principal de la défensive doivent donc obliger le général à chercher tous les moyens possibles de les tourner, ou à donner le change à son ennemi par des diversions qui l'y affaiblissent et qui en rendent l'accès plus facile. . .

Ainsi dans une circonstance où il se trouverait retranché sur toutes les parties des environs de sa position de façon à y résister aux entreprises qu'on pourrait tenter contre lui, il faudrait chercher à le tourner par des parties plus éloignées, en prenant les positions qui en facilitent le moyen et qui, présentant quelque autre objet, ne puissent pas faire soupçonner que les troupes qui s'y trouvent soient uniquement destinées au but qu'on se propose de remplir. P. 18.

3. Il arrive souvent dans les montagnes que les seuls débouchés favorables aux projets qu'on a formés se trouvent coupés de quelques parties resserrées ; c'est dans ce cas qu'il

faut éviter de donner connaissance à son ennemi du véritable objet qu'on a en se déterminant à quelque diversion, et en réduisant l'armée en petits paquets ; mais cette méthode, qui dans tout autre pays serait dangereuse, devient indispensable dans les montagnes et fait la science de cette espèce de guerre, lorsque le général qui s'en sert a des ressources et des moyens toujours préparés pour se réunir quand il est nécessaire ; d'ailleurs ce n'est que dans des marches et contremarches qu'on peut espérer faire prendre le change à son ennemi et le décider à se dégarnir sur certaines positions pour se renforcer sur d'autres, mais cela ne peut s'exécuter que lorsqu'on se trouve supérieur et qu'on fait par conséquent une guerre offensive. P. 18.

#### FROM BOOK II. DES POSITIONS D'ARMÉES

4. S'il est dangereux de multiplier les détachements dans les pays de plaines parce qu'ils affaiblissent l'armée et que d'ailleurs ils peuvent être attaqués et forcés avant que l'armée ait pu marcher à leur secours, il est avantageux dans les montagnes d'en avoir sur tous les débouchés dont on projette de faire usage, pourvu que le front qu'ils auront à garder se trouve resserré et que leur communication avec l'armée ne puisse pas être coupée, car ils servent à assurer la tranquillité de ladite armée et à pouvoir reconnaître l'ennemi de plus près, pour être averti de tous ses mouvements, ainsi qu'à faire arrêter les subsistances. La guerre de montagnes permet et exige souvent qu'on fasse usage des petits paquets, ce qui est toujours dangereux dans les pays plats. P. 36.

#### FROM BOOK III. MARCHE DES ARMÉES

##### LIEU D'ASSEMBLÉE

5. La première attention sera de déterminer la position où, suivant le plan de campagne, il convient d'assembler l'armée.

On observera que, si les opérations embrassent une certaine étendue de terrain, il convient de faire rassembler l'armée en trois positions . . . et qu'il ne doit y avoir qu'une marche de la position du centre à celle de la droite ou à celle de la gauche, et par conséquent que toute l'étendue des trois positions ne doit occuper que l'espace de sept à huit lieues au plus, qu'elle soit à peu près également éloignée des deux

extrémités de l'étendue sur laquelle on aura à opérer, afin d'avoir occasion de faire des diversions : cette méthode cachera à l'ennemi le véritable point qu'on aura déterminé pour son débouché dans le projet de campagne, et menacera les points de l'étendue sur laquelle on aura dessein à opérer, puisque l'armée se trouverait à portée d'y marcher et d'y arriver presque en même temps. P. 61.

PRÉCAUTIONS INDISPENSABLES POUR ASSURER LES  
MARCHES

6. Il est indispensable, si la marche se fait dans les montagnes, que les sommets qui séparent les débouchés soient occupés par les troupes de l'armée qui marche, et qu'on s'assure de toutes les hauteurs qui dominent les droites et les gauches de l'intervalle dans lequel on veut se mettre en mouvement, et si c'est dans un pays de plaines, qu'on s'assure des droites et des gauches à quelque distance de la direction de marche. P. 64.

7. Si ces parties resserrées sont bordées de part et d'autre par des rochers escarpés ou penchants inaccessibles, on ne trouvera aucun moyen de se servir du débouché qu'en dépostant d'avance les troupes qui occuperaient les positions de droite et de gauche . . . Pour arriver sur les hauteurs qui dominent ces positions, il serait nécessaire de diriger les troupes sur les derrières de l'ennemi . . .

Si au contraire un des côtés de la partie resserrée est terminé par des penchants accessibles quoique extrêmement rapides, on doit déterminer son passage sur lesdits penchants avant de s'engager dans le défilé. P. 78.

FROM BOOK IV. DES PLANS DE CAMPAGNE  
ET DES PROJETS DE GUERRE

DU PROJET GÉNÉRAL D'OFFENSIVE

8. De quelque façon qu'on envisage une frontière, elle sera toujours assez étendue pour être subdivisée au moins en deux parties, l'une plus favorable aux objets qu'on aura en vue et l'autre presque toujours susceptible de quelque diversion. Il sera donc nécessaire que le projet de campagne embrasse les deux parties, et comme il doit avoir plusieurs branches, on doit établir l'examen des opérations sur les plus ou moins grands obstacles qu'on aura à vaincre, sur les inconvénients ou avantages qui résulteraient de leurs succès

dans chaque branche, et après s'être fait les objections les plus plausibles, se déterminer pour la partie qui pourra conduire à de plus grands avantages, en employant les diversions et tout ce qui pourra le mieux faire prendre le change à son ennemi et lui faire imaginer qu'on s'est décidé pour quelque autre partie ; comme aussi, en supposant que toutes les diversions, contremarches ou autres ruses dont on pourrait se servir pour cacher son véritable objet ne puissent réussir, il faut être préparé à profiter d'une seconde et d'une troisième branche du projet, sans donner le temps à son ennemi d'y réfléchir ; et ce sera l'examen des opérations relatives à chaque branche qui déterminera les lieux pour l'assemblée des troupes de l'armée, qui doivent, tant qu'on pourra, se trouver telles qu'il y ait toujours un corps de troupes placé de façon à pouvoir renforcer le corps d'armée principal ou celui destiné à des diversions ; car si les pays de montagnes ont l'inconvénient de réduire toute l'étendue de la frontière à quelques passages déterminés pour l'exécution des projets, ils ont l'avantage de permettre la division des troupes de l'armée en plusieurs corps sur différentes positions, et de les y voir postées de façon à n'avoir rien à craindre des entreprises de l'ennemi le plus actif par leur bonté et les obstacles que la constitution des pays présentera. P. 88.

#### DU PROJET GÉNÉRAL DE DÉFENSIVE

9. Si on les rassemble sur une position il faut :

1. Qu'elle se trouve à peu près au centre de l'étendue qu'on voudra défendre . . .

2. Que la position ait une libre communication avec ses derrières.

3. Que la position présente un front difficile à gravir et que les droites et les gauches appuient à des escarpements, à des rivières d'un volume d'eau assez considérable et trop rapides pour être guéées, à des marais, bois et autres obstacles qui ne puissent permettre aux troupes d'offensive de les tourner ni de les attaquer de front sans un désavantage trop grand pour qu'on ose l'entreprendre.

4. Que les pays contigus à cette même position soient défendus par quelques places de guerre . . .

Enfin que les troupes trouvent à portée l'eau et le bois.

La réunion des troupes dans une position de cette espèce donnera le moyen au général de faire une défensive active

toujours préférable à la simple, au lieu que la division des troupes en plusieurs corps n'empêchera pas l'armée d'offensive de percer par quelque endroit et de séparer lesdits corps de façon à ne pouvoir se joindre que difficilement. P. 91.

(Compare : La défensive se divise en défensive simple et en défensive active ; la première ne s'attache qu'à la défense des passages déterminés où peu de troupes puissent résister à l'effort d'un grand nombre, et la seconde, en choisissant une position avantageuse, en impose à une armée d'offensive qui veut opérer sur la droite ou sur la gauche, ce qui exige qu'elle soit postée de façon à pouvoir agir elle-même offensivement sur quelque partie des derrières de cette armée ; la défensive active a plusieurs avantages sur la défensive simple et exige aussi plusieurs précautions de la part de l'officier général qui en est chargé. P. 124.)

10. Il est donc beaucoup plus difficile d'établir un projet de défensive qu'un projet d'offensive, parce qu'on ne pourra jamais démêler exactement les vues d'un général d'offensive, que ses mouvements seuls pourront indiquer, et que, par suite de l'avantage qu'il trouvera en déroband une ou plusieurs marches au général de défensive, ce dernier sera nécessairement bien souvent dans le cas de ne pouvoir profiter des moyens de défensive que pourrait lui offrir la disposition de la frontière et de se trouver primé dans des positions essentielles, ce qui formera toujours le plus grand inconvénient dans tous ses projets, quelque supposition qu'il eût pu faire. P. 92.

#### PRÉCAUTIONS À PRENDRE POUR LE PROJET D'OFFENSIVE

11. La frontière divisée comme on l'a dit, en deux parties ou en plusieurs, et les projets devant avoir plusieurs branches, il faut autant qu'on le peut, disposer l'assemblée de l'armée de façon qu'elle puisse répondre aux différentes branches que le projet embrassera, afin de laisser ignorer la principale et par conséquent les premières directions du mouvement des troupes. P. 95.

#### DISPOSITIONS À PRENDRE DANS UN PROJET D'OFFENSIVE

12. Si le projet embrasse l'objet de déposer l'ennemi de quelque position principale, ce sera le cas de le former en plusieurs branches et d'assembler son armée ou son corps de troupes particulier dans quelque endroit qui puisse, autant que la circonstance du pays le permettra, se trouver au centre

des débouchés correspondant aux différentes branches du projet, afin de donner également de la jalousie à son ennemi et déterminer des mouvements qui puissent lui faire prendre le change, en débouchant par la droite ou par la gauche pour le tourner ou le forcer à une retraite ou le mettre dans le cas de se trouver compromis dans ladite position ; ce qui suppose une supériorité plus grande en infanterie et la plus exacte connaissance du pays. P. 100.

## FROM BOOK V. OBJET GÉNÉRAL D'UNE ARMÉE EN CAMPAGNE

### DES COMMUNICATIONS

13. Il y a des circonstances à la guerre où il faut savoir abandonner une de ses communications pour soutenir l'autre. P. 110.

## DES DIFFÉRENTES ESPÈCES DE GUERRE

### DE LA GUERRE OFFENSIVE

14. On doit admettre pour principe incontestable dans les montagnes que la puissance qui agit offensivement n'a que la corde à parcourir tandis que celle qui est forcée à se défendre a toute l'étendue de l'arc, et si M. de Feuquières a dit que le roi de Sardaigne était dans une position à n'avoir jamais que la corde à parcourir, tandis que la France aurait l'arc, ce fameux officier n'a entendu, dans cet exposé, que le cas où cette première puissance se trouverait en état d'entreprendre contre la France ; car, de quelque façon qu'on puisse envisager la position de la plaine de Piémont, il sera toujours vrai de dire que les frontières du Dauphiné sont disposées de façon à y pouvoir prendre une position très raccourcie et qui donnerait autant d'inquiétude au roi de Sardaigne que si on occupait successivement chaque partie qui correspond à ses limites, comme il sera facile d'apercevoir que cette puissance est en état, par une position centrale, de donner de la jalousie sur tous les points de la frontière de France qui correspond à ses États. P. 125.

### AVANTAGES DE L'OFFENSIVE SUR LA DÉFENSIVE

15. Il suffira de rappeler ce qui a été dit et d'en tirer les conséquences naturelles, qui sont :

1. Que la puissance qui doit agir offensivement choisira une position raccourcie d'où elle puisse, en un

ou deux jours de marche, se rassembler à la droite ou au centre ou à la gauche et d'où elle puisse également donner de l'inquiétude à son ennemi, sans lui faire voir par aucune manœuvre le véritable objet qu'elle peut avoir en vue.

2. Qu'ayant distribué ses magasins . . . sur toute l'étendue de sa position, il lui sera facile de faire souvent des fausses démonstrations d'attaque pour mieux cacher son projet et attirer les forces de son ennemi sur des points éloignés de la direction de son débouché principal.

3. Que son ennemi, étant également menacé dans tous les points de sa frontière, prendra les précautions nécessaires pour s'opposer partout . . . ce qui importe nécessairement la distribution de ses troupes dans toute l'étendue menacée et affaiblit par conséquent chaque position.

4. Quelque attention que puisse avoir l'ennemi de préparer ses communications et ses ordres de marche pour renforcer les parties attaquées, ses troupes n'arriveront pas à temps si le général de l'armée d'offensive a pris soin de cacher son mouvement et son projet ; car, quelque confiance qu'on puisse avoir dans la fidélité des espions ou dans le rapport des déserteurs, il faut le temps d'être averti, celui de donner les ordres nécessaires et celui de la marche des troupes même les plus voisines pour arriver au point critique.

Le général d'offensive pourra toujours combiner ses mouvements de façon à gagner sur son ennemi un ou deux jours de marche, ou seulement plusieurs heures qui pourront suffire à l'exécution de son projet. P. 127.

16. Il ne peut jamais entrer dans un projet de campagne de s'avancer dans un pays ennemi en laissant derrière soi des places fortifiées . . . à moins que le général ne pût s'assurer en marchant en avant l'avantage d'ôter tout moyen à son ennemi de secourir ses places. P. 129.

S'il est de la bonne politique d'un général de ne pas laisser des places de guerre derrière lui sans les assujettir, on doit penser qu'il y laissera encore moins un corps de dix à vingt mille hommes. P. 14.

17. Pour être bien convaincu de l'avantage d'une offensive sur la défensive, il faut se représenter une frontière dans les montagnes, divisée en un nombre de vallées formant une espèce d'éventail ouvert, comme effectivement cela se rencontre toujours, car la même montagne renferme dans une

lieue d'étendue au plus les détours de plusieurs rivières ou torrents, dont les confluent s'éloignent considérablement les uns des autres et dont le cours est figuré par des lames de l'éventail.

Cette comparaison admise, on verra d'abord que l'armée supérieure se portera près de la tête dudit éventail, d'où il lui sera libre de marcher dans la direction de telle lame qui lui conviendra, et ensuite que l'armée de défensive sera forcée d'abandonner quelques lames à sa droite ou à sa gauche, ou de s'affaiblir considérablement si elle veut garder tous les débouchés.

Si elle abandonne quelques débouchés à sa droite ou à sa gauche, l'armée supérieure y percera ; si au contraire elle s'étend pour garder toute l'étendue de sa frontière suivant l'arc que forme l'éventail dans les parties un peu éloignées de sa tête, comme on doit le supposer, il n'y aura pas grande difficulté à forcer un ou deux points de cette étendue par l'effort total d'une armée supérieure et de séparer par conséquent l'armée inférieure en deux ou trois corps qui n'auraient plus de communications entre eux. Donc de quelque façon que puisse se poster un général en défensive dans les montagnes, il n'empêchera jamais une armée supérieure de percer et ne pourra éviter les détachements de son ennemi. P. 130.

#### DE LA DÉFENSIVE ACTIVE

18. Il est donc dangereux d'étendre sa défense sur toute une frontière, et il y aurait beaucoup plus d'avantage à se tenir réuni dans une seule position où l'on ne pût être entamé et d'où on pût toujours se communiquer avec une partie de ses derrières, quand même on devrait abandonner les débouchés principaux, d'autant mieux qu'ayant préparé les munitions et parfaitement reconnu sa frontière, on se trouvera toujours en état de faire ce qu'on appelle la *navette*, c'est-à-dire se porter à la gauche quand on jugera ne plus pouvoir se soutenir à la droite et réciproquement sur la droite quand l'ennemi s'y portera en force. Que si l'ennemi se divise, on pourra combiner ses mouvements pour tomber sur le corps le plus faible et faire cette opération que permettra la disposition de l'armée supérieure, soit sur ses communications, soit sur ses flancs, dans les propres États du souverain ennemi. P. 136.

## NOTE

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and especially

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for the opportunity of reading which I am indebted to the kindness of Colonel Colin.

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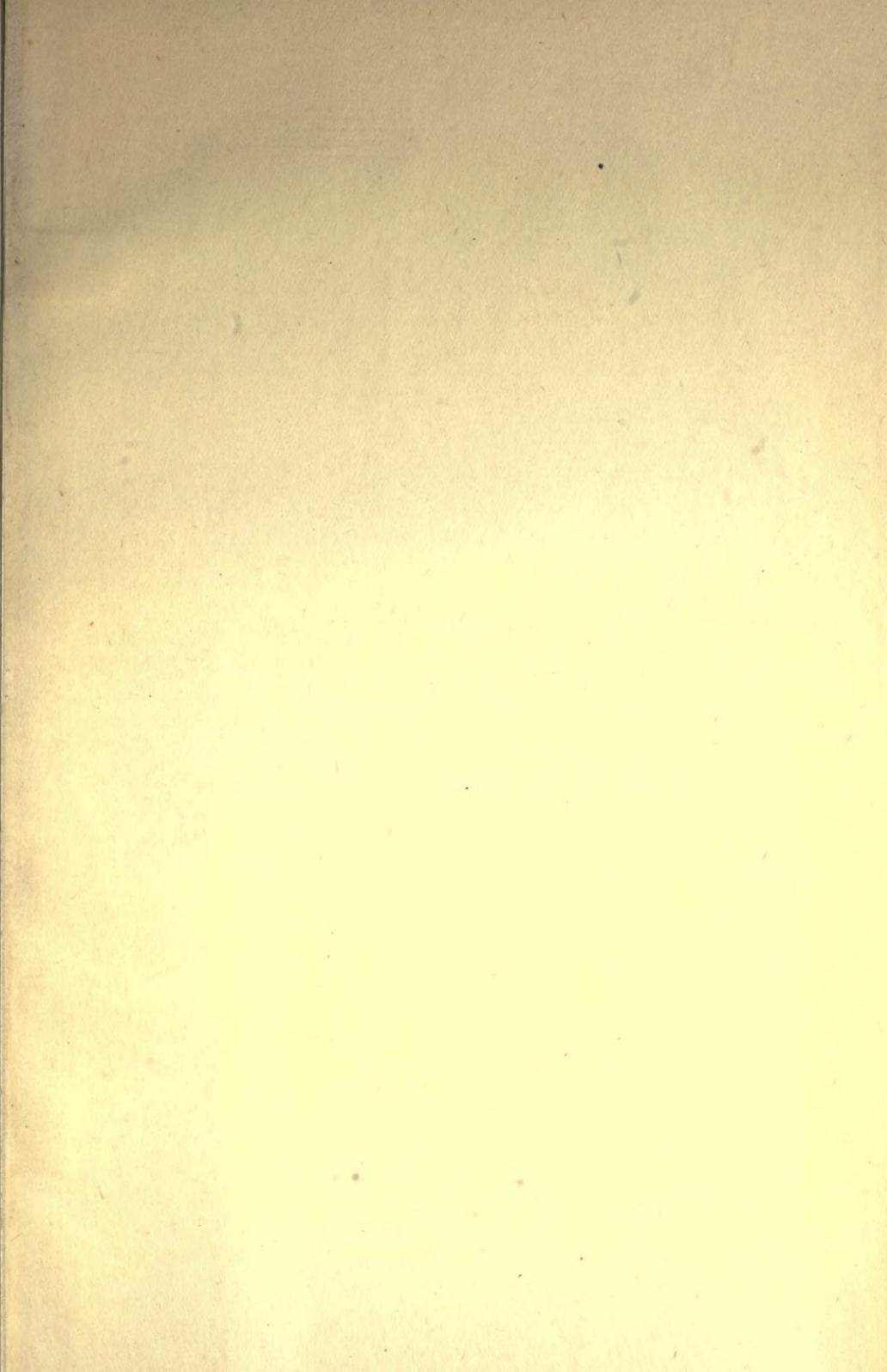
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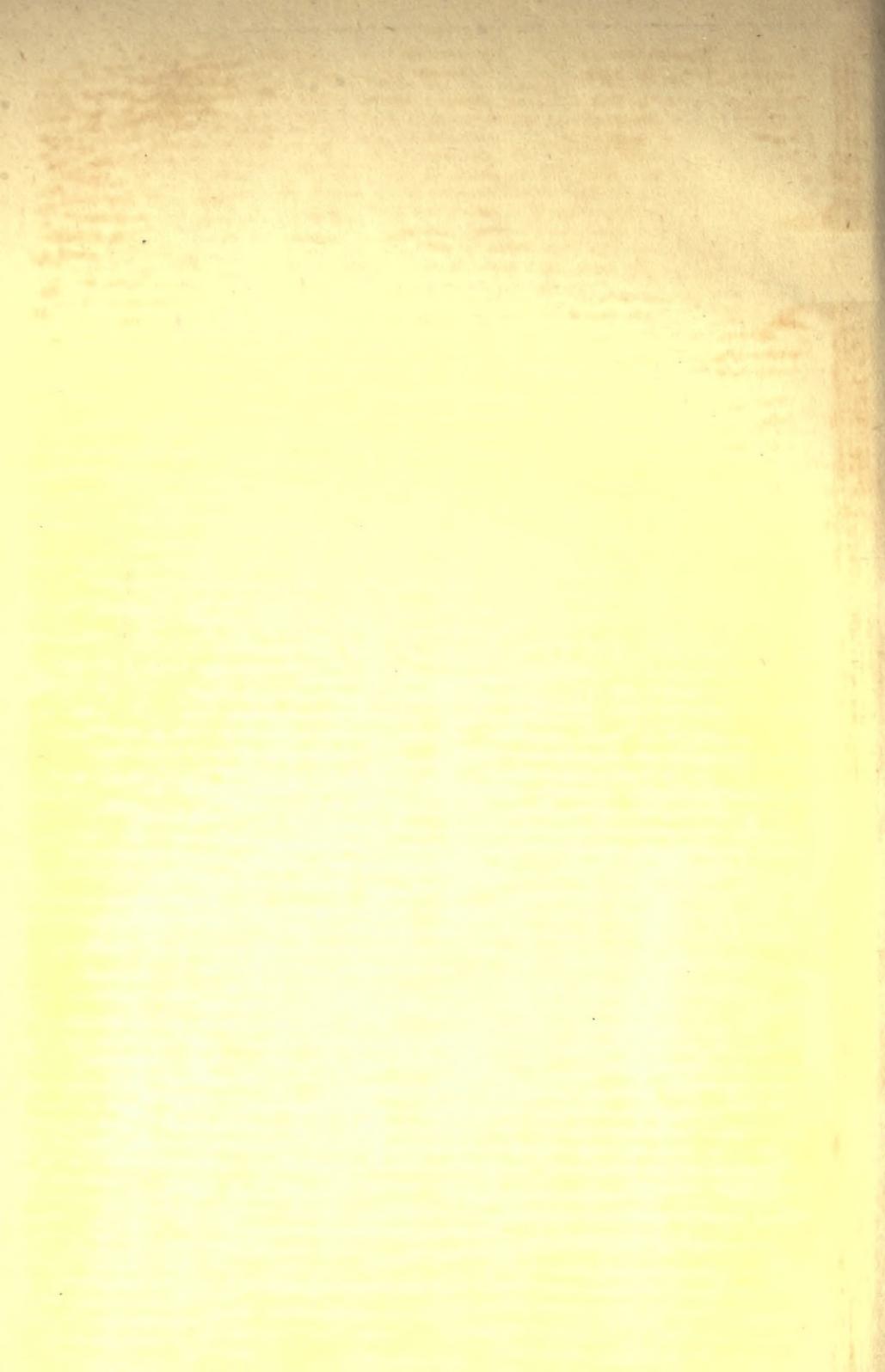
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