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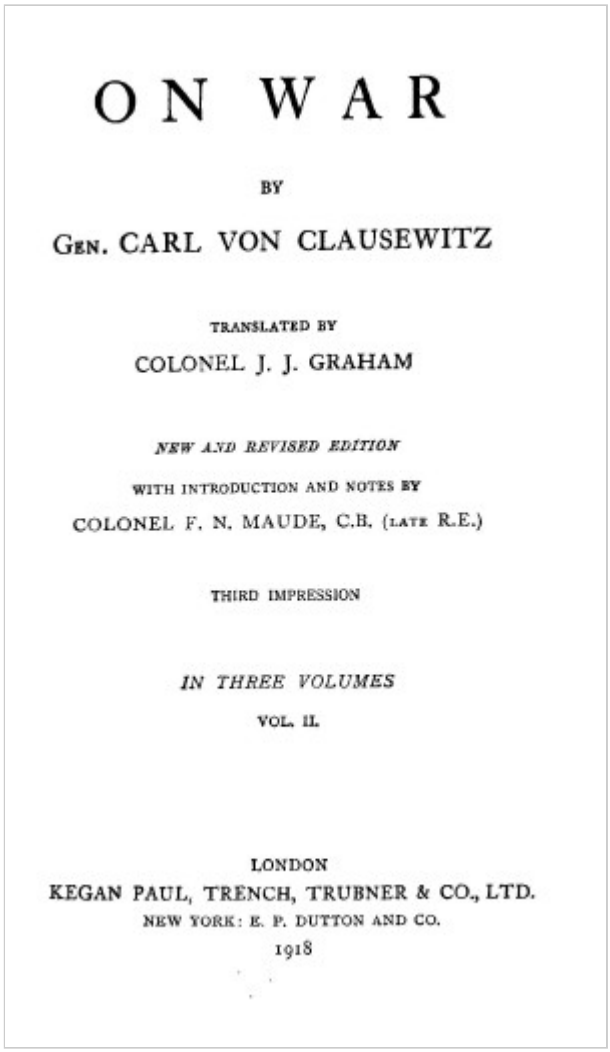
Carl von Clausewitz, ***On War, vol. 2*** [1832]



ON WAR

BY

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TRANSLATED BY

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NEW AND REVISED EDITION

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY

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About This Title:

Vol. 2 of Clausewitz's magnum opus in which he ponders the revolution in military affairs made possible by the "nation at arms" during the French Revolution. He did not live to see the book appear in print but its influence was profound in Prussia and then in the unified German nation state during the course of the 19th century. This edition is noteworthy for appearing during the First World War in England.

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CONTENTS

BOOK V.—MILITARY FORCES

BOOK VI.—DEFENCE

Table Of Contents

[Back to Table of Contents]

BOOK V

MILITARY FORCES

CHAPTER I

GENERAL SCHEME

We shall consider military forces:—

1. As regards their numerical strength and organisation.
2. In their state independent of fighting.
3. In respect of their maintenance; and, lastly,
4. In their general relations to country and ground.

Thus we shall devote this book to the consideration of things appertaining to an Army, which only come under the head of *necessary conditions of fighting,* but do not constitute the fight itself. They stand in more or less close connection with and react upon the fighting, and therefore, in considering the application of the combat they must often appear; but we must first consider each by itself, as a whole, in its essence and peculiarities.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER II

THEATRE OF WAR, ARMY, CAMPAIGN

The nature of the things does not allow of a completely satisfactory definition of these three factors, denoting respectively, space, mass, and time in war; but that we may not sometimes be quite misunderstood, we must try to make somewhat plainer the usual meaning of these terms, to which we shall in most cases adhere.

I.

THEATRE OF WAR.

This term denotes properly such a portion of the space over which War prevails as has its boundaries protected, and thus possesses a kind of independence. This protection may consist in fortresses, or important natural obstacles presented by the country, or even in its being separated by a considerable distance from the rest of the space embraced in the operations.—Such a portion is not a mere piece of the whole, but a small whole complete in itself; and consequently it is more or less in such a condition that changes which take place at other points in the area over which military operations are simultaneously in progress have only an indirect and no direct influence upon it. To give an adequate idea of this, we may suppose that on this portion an advance is made, whilst in another quarter a retreat is taking place, or that upon the one an Army is acting defensively, whilst an offensive is being carried on upon the other. Such a clearly defined idea as this is not capable of universal application; it is here used merely to indicate the line of distinction.

2.

ARMY.

With the assistance of the conception of a Theatre of War, it is very easy to say what an Army is: it is, in point of fact, the mass of troops in the same Theatre of War. But this plainly does not include all that is meant by the term in its common usage. Blücher and Wellington commanded each a separate Army in 1815, although the two were in the same Theatre of War. The chief command is, therefore, another distinguishing sign for the conception of an Army. At the same time this sign is very nearly allied to the preceding, for where things are well organised, there should only exist one supreme command in a Theatre of War, and the Commander-in-Chief in a particular Theatre of War should always have a proportionate degree of independence.

The mere absolute numerical strength of a body of troops is less decisive on the subject than might at first appear. For where several Armies are acting under one

command, and upon one and the same Theatre of War, they are called Armies, not by reason of their strength, but from the relations antecedent to the war (1813, the Silesian Army, the Army of the North, &c.), and although we should divide a great mass of troops intended to remain in the same Theatre into corps, we should never divide them into Armies, at least, such a division would be contrary to what seems to be the meaning which is universally attached to the term. On the other hand, it would certainly be pedantry to apply the term Army to each band of irregular troops acting independently in a remote province: still we must not leave unnoticed that it surprises no one when the Army of the Vendeans in the Revolutionary War is spoken of, and yet it was not much stronger.*

The conceptions of Army and Theatre of War therefore, as a rule, go together, and mutually include each other.

3.

CAMPAIGN.

Although the sum of all military events which happen in all the Theatres of War in one year is often called a *Campaign,* still, however, it is more usual and more exact to understand by the term the events in *one single* Theatre of War. But it is worse still to connect the notion of a Campaign with the period of one year, for Wars no longer divide themselves naturally into Campaigns of a year's duration by fixed and long periods in winter quarters. As, however, the events in a Theatre of War of themselves form certain great chapters—if, for instance, the direct effects of some more or less great catastrophe cease, and new combinations begin to develop themselves—therefore these natural subdivisions must be taken into consideration in order to allot to each year (Campaign) its complete share of events. No one would make the Campaign of 1812 terminate at Memel, where the Armies were on the 1st January, and transfer the further retreat of the French until they recrossed the Elbe to the campaign of 1813, as that further retreat was plainly only a part of the whole retreat from Moscow.

That we cannot give these conceptions any greater degree of distinctness is of no consequence, because they cannot be used as philosophical definitions for the basis of any kind of propositions. They only serve to give a little more clearness and precision to the language we use.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER III

RELATION OF POWER

In the eighth chapter of the third book we have spoker of the value of superior numbers in battles, from which follows as a consequence the superiority of numbers in general in Strategy. So far the importance of the relations of power is established: we shall now add a few more detailed considerations on the subject.

An unbiassed examination of modern military history leads to the conviction that the *superiority in numbers becomes every day more decisive;* the principle of assembling the greatest possible numbers for a decisive battle may therefore be regarded as more important than ever.

Courage and the spirit of an Army have, in all ages, multiplied its physical powers, and will continue to do so equally in future; but we find also that at certain periods in history a superiority in the organisation and equipment of an Army has given a great moral preponderance; we find that at other periods a great superiority in mobility had a like effect; at one time we see a new system of tactics brought to light; at another we see the Art of War developing itself in an effort to make a skilful use of ground on great general principles, and by such means here and there we find one General gaining great advantages over another; but even this tendency has disappeared, and Wars now go on in a simpler and more natural manner.—If, divesting ourselves of any preconceived notions, we look at the experiences of recent campaigns, we must admit that there are but little traces of any of the above influences, either throughout any whole campaign, or in engagements of a decisive character—that is, the great battle, respecting which term are refer to the second chapter of the preceding book.

Armies are in our days so much on a par in regard to arms, equipment, and drill, that there is no very notable difference between the best and the worst in these things. A difference may still be observed, resulting from the superior instruction of the General Staff, but in general it only amounts to this, that one is the inventor and introducer of improved appliances, which the other immediately imitates. Even the subordinate Generals, leaders of Corps and Divisions, in all that comes within the scope of their sphere, have in general everywhere the same ideas and methods, so that, except the talent of the Commander-in-Chief—a thing entirely dependent on chance, and not bearing a constant relation to the standard of education amongst the people and the Army—there is nothing now but habituation to War which can give one Army a decided superiority over another. The nearer we approach to a state of equality in all these things, the more decisive becomes the relation in point of numbers.

The character of modern battles is the result of this state of equality. Take for instance the battle of Borodino, where the first Army in the world, the French, measured its strength with the Russian, which, in many parts of its organisation, and in the education of its special branches, might be considered the furthest behindhand. In the

whole battle there is not one single trace of superior art or intelligence, it is a mere trial of strength between the respective Armies throughout; and as they were nearly equal in that respect, the result could not be otherwise than a gradual turn of the scale in favour of that side where there was the greatest energy on the part of the Commander, and the most experience in War on the part of the troops. We have taken this battle as an illustration, because in it there was an equality in the numbers on each side such as is rarely to be found.

We do not maintain that all battles exactly resemble this, but it shows the dominant tone of most of them.

In a battle in which the forces try their strength on each other in a leisurely and methodical manner, an excess of force on one side must make the result in its favour much more certain. And it is a fact that we may search modern military history in vain for a battle in which an army has beaten another double its own strength, an occurrence by no means uncommon in former times. Buonaparte, the greatest General of modern times, in all his great victorious battles—with one exception, that of Dresden, 1813—had managed to assemble an Army superior in numbers, or at least very little inferior, to that of his opponent, and when it was impossible for him to do so, as at Leipsic, Brienne, Laon, and Belle-Alliance, he was beaten.

The absolute strength is in Strategy generally a given quantity, which the Commander cannot alter. But from this it by no means follows that it is impossible to carry on a War with a decidedly inferior force. War is not always a voluntary act of State policy, and least of all is it so when the forces are very unequal: consequently, any relation of forces is imaginable in War, and it would be a strange theory of War which would wish to give up its office just where it is most wanted.

However desirable theory may consider a proportionate force, still it cannot say that no use can be made of the most disproportionate. No limits can be prescribed in this respect.

The weaker the force the more moderate must be the object it proposes to itself, and the weaker the force the shorter time it will last. In these two directions there is a field for weakness to give way, if we may use this expression. Of the changes which the measure of the force produces in the conduct of War, we can only speak by degrees, as these things present themselves; at present it is sufficient to have indicated the general point of view, but to complete that we shall add one more observation.

The more that an Army involved in an unequal combat falls short of the number of its opponents, the greater must be the tension of its powers, the greater its energy when danger presses. If the reverse takes place, and instead of heroic desperation a spirit of despondency ensues, then certainly there is an end to every Art of War.

If with this energy of powers is combined a wise moderation in the object proposed, then there is that play of brilliant actions and prudent forbearance which we admire in the Wars of Frederick the Great.

But the less that this moderation and caution can effect, the more must the tension and energy of the forces become predominant. When the disproportion of forces is so great that no modification of our own object can ensure us safety from a catastrophe, or where the probable continuance of the danger is so great that the greatest economy of our powers can no longer suffice to bring us to our object, then the tension of our powers should be concentrated for one desperate blow; he who is pressed on all sides expecting little help from things which promise none, will place his last and only reliance in the moral ascendency which despair gives to courage, and look upon the greatest daring as the greatest wisdom,—at the same time employ the assistance of subtle stratagem, and if he does not succeed, will find in an honourable downfall the right to rise hereafter.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER IV

RELATION OF THE THREE ARMS

We shall only speak of the three principal arms: Infantry, Cavalry, and Artillery.

We must be excused for making the following analysis which belongs more to tactics, but is necessary to give distinctness to our ideas.

The combat is of two kinds, which are essentially different; the destructive principle of fire, and the hand to hand or personal combat. This latter, again, is either attack or defence. (As we here speak of elements, attack and defence are to be understood in a perfectly absolute sense.) Artillery, obviously, acts only with the destructive principle of fire. Cavalry only with personal combat. Infantry with both.

In close combat the essence of defence consists in standing firm, as if rooted to the ground; the essence of the attack is movement. Cavalry is entirely deficient in the first quality; on the other hand, it possesses the latter in an especial manner. It is therefore only suited for attack. Infantry has especially the property of standing firm, but is not altogether without mobility.

From this division of the elementary forces of War into different arms, we have as a result, the superiority and general utility of Infantry as compared with the other two arms, from its being the only arm which unites in itself all the three elementary forces. A further deduction to be drawn is, that the combination of the three arms leads to a more perfect use of the forces, by affording the means of strengthening at pleasure either the one or the other of the principles which are united in an unalterable manner in Infantry.

The destructive principle of fire in the Wars of the present time is plainly beyond measure the most effective; nevertheless, the close combat, man to man, is just as plainly to be regarded as the real basis of combat. For that reason, therefore, an Army of artillery only would be an absurdity in war, but an Army of cavalry is conceivable, only it would possess very little intensity of force. An Army of infantry alone is not only conceivable but also much the strongest of the three. The three arms, therefore, stand in this order in reference to independent value—Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery.

But this order does not hold good if applied to the relative importance of each arm when they are all three acting in conjunction. As the destructive principle is much more effective than the principle of motion, therefore the complete want of cavalry would weaken an Army less than the total want of artillery.

An Army consisting of infantry and artillery alone, would certainly find itself in a disagreeable position if opposed to an Army composed of all three arms; but if what it lacked in cavalry was compensated for by a proportionate increase of infantry, it would still, by a somewhat different mode of acting, be able to do very well with its

tactical economy. Its outpost service would cause some embarrassment; it would never be able to pursue a beaten enemy with great vivacity, and it must make a retreat with greater hardships and efforts; but these inconveniences would still never be sufficient in themselves to drive it completely out of the field.—On the other hand, such an Army opposed to one composed of infantry and cavalry only would be able to play a very good part, while it is hardly conceivable that the latter could keep the field at all against an Army made up of all three arms.

Of course these reflections on the relative importance of each single arm result only from a consideration of the generality of events in War, where one case compensates another; and therefore it is not our intention to apply the truth thus ascertained to each individual case of a particular combat. A battalion on outpost service or on a retreat may, perhaps, choose to have with it a squadron in preference to a couple of guns. A body of cavalry with horse artillery, sent in rapid pursuit of, or to cut off, a flying enemy wants no infantry, &c., &c.

If we summarise the results of these considerations they amount to this.

1. That infantry is the most independent of the three arms.

2. Artillery is quite wanting in independence.

3. Infantry is the most important in the combination of the three arms.

4. Cavalry can the most easily be dispensed with.

5. A combination of the three arms gives the greatest strength.

Now, if the combination of the three gives the greatest strength, it is natural to inquire what is the best absolute proportion of each, but that is a question which it is almost impossible to answer.

If we could form a comparative estimate of the cost of organising in the first instance, and then provisioning and maintaining each of the three arms, and then again of the relative amount of service rendered by each in War, we should obtain a definite result which would give the best proportion in the abstract. But this is little more than a play of the imagination. The very first term in the comparison is difficult to determine, that is to say, one of the factors, the cost in money, is not difficult to find; but another, the value of men’s lives, is a computation which no one would readily try to solve by figures.

Also the circumstance that each of the three arms chiefly depends on a different element of strength in the state—infantry on the number of the male population, cavalry on the number of horses, artillery on available financial means—introduces into the calculation some heterogeneous conditions, the overruling influence of which may be plainly observed in the great outlines of the history of different people at various periods.

As, however, for other reasons we cannot altogether dispense with some standard of comparison, therefore, in place of the whole of the first term of the comparison we must take only that one of its factors which can be ascertained, namely, the cost in money. Now on this point it is sufficient for our purpose to assume that, in general, a squadron of 150 horsemen, a battalion of infantry 800 strong, a battery of artillery consisting of eight six-pounders, cost nearly the same, both as respects the expense of formation and of maintenance.

With regard to the other member of the comparison, that is, how much service the one arm is capable of rendering as compared with the others, it is much less easy to find any distinct quantity. The thing might perhaps be possible if it depended merely on the destroying principle; but each arm is destined to its own particular use, therefore has its own particular sphere of action, which, again, is not so distinctly defined that it might not be greater or less through modifications only in the mode of conducting the War, without causing any decided disadvantage.

We are often told of what experience teaches on this subject, and it is supposed that military history affords the information necessary for a settlement of the question, but every one must look upon all that as nothing more than a way of talking, which, as it is not derived from anything of a primary and necessary nature, does not deserve attention in an analytical examination.

Now although a fixed ratio as representing the best proportion between the three arms is conceivable, but is an unknown quantity which it is impossible to find, a mere imaginary quantity, still it is possible to appreciate the effects of having a great superiority or a great inferiority in one particular arm as compared with the same arm in the enemy's army.

Artillery increases the destructive principle of fire; it is the most redoubtable of arms, and its want, therefore, diminishes very considerably the intensive force of an Army. On the other hand, it is the least movable, consequently, makes an Army more unwieldy; further, it always requires a force for its support, because it is incapable of close combat; if it is too numerous, so that the troops appointed for its protection are not able to resist the attacks of the enemy at every point, it is often lost, and from that follows a fresh disadvantage, because of the three arms it is the only one which in its principal parts, that is guns and carriages, the enemy can soon use against us.

Cavalry increases the principle of mobility in an Army. If too few in number the brisk flame of the elements of war is thereby weakened, because everything must be done slower (on foot), everything must be organised with more care; the rich harvest of victory, instead of being cut with a scythe, can only be reaped with a sickle.

An excess of cavalry can certainly never be looked upon as a direct diminution of the combatant force, as an organic disproportion, but it may certainly be so indirectly, on account of the difficulty of feeding that arm, and also if we reflect that instead of a surplus of 10,000 horsemen not required we might have 50,000 infantry.

These peculiarities arising from the preponderance of one arm are the more important to the Art of War in its limited sense, as that Art teaches the use of whatever forces are forthcoming; and when forces are placed under the command of a General, the proportion of the three arms is also commonly already settled without his having had much voice in the matter.

If we would form an idea of the character of Warfare modified by the preponderance of one or other of the three arms it is to be done in the following manner:—

An excess of artillery leads to a more defensive and passive character in our measures; our interest will be to seek security in strong positions, great natural obstacles of ground, even in mountain positions, in order that the natural impediments we find in the ground may aid the defence and protection of our numerous artillery, and that the enemy's forces may come themselves and seek their own destruction. The whole War will be carried on in a serious formal minuet step.

On the other hand, a want of artillery will make us prefer the offensive, the active, the mobile principle; marching, fatigue, exertion, become our special weapons, thus the War will become more diversified, more lively, rougher; small change is substituted for great events.

With a very numerous cavalry we seek wide plains, and take to great movements. At a greater distance from the enemy we enjoy more rest and greater conveniences without conferring the same advantages on our adversary. We may venture on bolder measures to outflank him, and on more daring movements generally, as we have command over space. In as far as diversions and invasions are true auxiliary means of War we shall be able to make use of them with greater facility.

A decided want of cavalry diminishes the force of mobility in an Army without increasing its destructive power as an excess of artillery does. Prudence and method become then the leading characteristics of the War. Always to remain near the enemy in order to keep him constantly in view—no rapid, still less hurried movements, everywhere a slow pushing on of well concentrated masses—a preference for the defensive and for broken country, and, when the offensive must be resorted to, the shortest road direct to the centre of force in the enemy's Army—these are the natural tendencies or principles in such cases.

These different forms which Warfare takes according as one or other of the three arms preponderates, seldom have an influence so complete and decided as alone, or chiefly to determine the direction of a whole undertaking. Whether we shall act strategically on the offensive or defensive, the choice of a theatre of War, the determination to fight a great battle, or adopt some other means of destruction, are points which must be determined by other and more essential considerations; at least, if this is not the case, it is much to be feared that we have mistaken minor details for the chief consideration. But although this is so, although the great questions must be decided beforehand, on other grounds, there always remains a certain margin for the influence of the preponderating arm, for in the offensive we can always be prudent and

methodical, in the defensive bold and enterprising, &c., &c., through all the different stages and gradations of the military life.

On the other hand, the nature of a War may have a notable influence on the proportions of the three arms.

First, a national War, kept up by militia and a general levy (Landsturm), must naturally bring into the field a very numerous infantry; for in such Wars there is a greater want of the means of equipment than of men, and as the equipment consequently is confined to what is indisputably necessary, we may easily imagine, that for every battery of eight pieces, not only one, but two or three battalions might be raised.

Second, if a weak state opposed to a powerful one cannot take refuge in a general call of the male population to regular military service, or in a militia system resembling it, then the increase of its artillery is certainly the shortest way of bringing up its weak Army nearer to an equality with that of the enemy, for it saves men, and intensifies the essential principle of military force, that is, the destructive principle. Any way, such a state will mostly be confined to a limited theatre, and therefore this arm will be better suited to it. Frederick the Great adopted this means in the later period of the Seven Years' War.

Third, cavalry is the arm for movement and great decisions; its increase beyond the ordinary proportions is therefore important if the War extends over a great space, if expeditions are to be made in various directions, and great and decisive blows are intended. Buonaparte is an example of this.

That the offensive and defensive do not properly in themselves exercise an influence on the proportion of cavalry will only appear plainly when we come to speak of these two methods of acting in War; in the meantime, we shall only remark that both assailant and defender as a rule traverse the same spaces in war, and may have also, at least in many cases, the same decisive intentions. We remind our readers of the campaign of 1812.

It is commonly believed that, in the middle ages, cavalry was much more numerous in proportion to infantry, and that the difference has been gradually on the decrease ever since. Yet this is a mistake, at least partly. The proportion of cavalry was, according to numbers, on the average perhaps, not much greater; of this we may convince ourselves by tracing, through the history of the middle ages, the detailed statements of the armed forces then employed. Let us only think of the masses of men on foot who composed the armies of the Crusaders, or the masses who followed the Emperors of Germany on their Roman expeditions. It was in reality the importance of the cavalry which was so much greater in those days; it was the stronger arm, composed of the flower of the people, so much so that, although always very much weaker actually in numbers, it was still always looked upon as the chief thing, infantry was little valued, hardly spoken of; hence has arisen the belief that its numbers were few. No doubt it happened oftener than it does now, that in incursions of small importance in France, Germany, and Italy, a small Army was composed entirely of cavalry; as it was the

chief arm, there is nothing inconsistent in that; but these cases decide nothing if we take a general view, as they are greatly outnumbered by cases of greater Armies of the period constituted differently. It was only when the obligations to military service imposed by the feudal laws had ceased, and wars were carried on by soldiers enlisted, hired, and paid—when, therefore, wars depended on money and enlistment, that is, at the time of the Thirty Years' War, and the Wars of Louis XIV.—that this employment of great masses of almost useless infantry was checked, and perhaps in those days they might have fallen into the exclusive use of cavalry, if infantry had not just then risen in importance through the improvements in firearms, by which means it maintained its numerical superiority in proportion to cavalry; at this period, if infantry was weak, the proportion was as one to one, if numerous as three to one.

Since then cavalry has always decreased in importance according as improvements in the use of firearms have advanced. This is intelligible enough in itself, but the improvement we speak of does not relate solely to the weapon itself and the skill in handling it; we advert also to greater ability in using troops armed with this weapon. At the battle of Mollwitz the Prussian Army had brought the fire of their infantry to such a state of perfection, that there has been no improvement since then in that sense. On the other hand, the use of infantry in broken ground and as skirmishers has been introduced more recently, and is to be looked upon as a very great advance in the art of destruction.

Our opinion is, therefore, that the relation of cavalry has not much changed as far as regards numbers, but as regards its importance, there has been a great alteration. This seems to be a contradiction, but is not so in reality. The infantry of the middle ages, although forming the greater proportion of an Army, did not attain to that proportion by its value as compared to cavalry, but because all that could not be appointed to the very costly cavalry were handed over to the infantry; this infantry was, therefore, merely a last resource; and if the number of cavalry had depended merely on the value set on that arm, it could never have been too great. Thus we can understand how cavalry, in spite of its constantly decreasing importance, may still, perhaps, have importance enough to keep its numerical relation at that point which it has hitherto so constantly maintained.

It is a remarkable fact that, at least since the Wars of the Austrian succession, the proportion of cavalry to infantry has changed very little, the variation being constantly between a fourth, a fifth, or a sixth; this seems to indicate that those proportions meet the natural requirements of an Army, and that these numbers give the solution which it is impossible to find in a direct manner. We doubt, however, if this is the case, and we find the principal instances of the employment of a numerous cavalry sufficiently accounted for by other causes.

Austria and Russia are states which have kept up a numerous cavalry, because they retain in their political condition the fragments of a Tartar organisation. Buonaparte for his purposes could never be strong enough in cavalry; when he had made use of the conscription as far as possible, he had no ways of strengthening his Armies, but by increasing the auxiliary arms, as they cost more in money than in men. Besides this, it

stands to reason that in military enterprises of such enormous extent as his, cavalry must have a greater value than in ordinary cases.

Frederick the Great it is well known reckoned carefully every recruit that could be saved to his country; it was his great business to keep up the strength of his Army, as far as possible at the expense of other countries. His reasons for this are easy to conceive, if we remember that his small dominions did not then include Prussia and the Westphalian provinces. Cavalry was kept complete by recruitment more easily than infantry, irrespective of fewer men being required; in addition to which, his system of War was completely founded on the mobility of his Army, and thus it was, that while his infantry diminished in number, his cavalry was always increasing till the end of the Seven Years' War. Still at the end of that War it was hardly more than a fourth of the number of infantry that he had in the field.

At the period referred to there is no want of instances, also of Armies entering the field unusually weak in cavalry, and yet carrying off the victory. The most remarkable is the battle of Gross-görschen. If we only count the French divisions which took part in the battle, Buonaparte was 100,000 strong, of which 5000 were cavalry, 90,000 infantry; the Allies had 70,000, of which 25,000 were cavalry and 40,000 infantry. Thus, in place of the 20,000 cavalry on the side of the Allies in excess of the total of the French cavalry, Buonaparte had only 50,000 additional infantry when he ought to have had 100,000. As he gained the battle with that superiority in infantry, we may ask whether it was at all likely that he would have lost it if the proportions had been 140,000 to 40,000.

Certainly the great advantage of our superiority in cavalry was shown immediately after the battle, for Buonaparte gained hardly any trophies by his victory. The gain of a battle is therefore not everything,—but is it not always the chief thing?

If we put together these considerations, we can hardly believe that the numerical proportion between cavalry and infantry which has existed for the last eighty years is the natural one, founded solely on their absolute value; we are much rather inclined to think, that after many fluctuations, the relative proportions of these arms will change further in the same direction as hitherto, and that the fixed number of cavalry at last will be considerably less.

With respect to artillery, the number of guns has naturally increased since its first invention, and according as it has been made lighter and otherwise improved; still since the time of Frederick the Great, it has also kept very much to the same proportion of two or three guns per 1000 men, we mean at the commencement of a campaign; for during its course artillery does not melt away as fast as infantry, therefore at the end of a campaign the proportion is generally notably greater, perhaps three, four, or five guns per 1000 men. Whether this is the natural proportion, or that the increase of artillery may be carried still further, without prejudice to the whole conduct of War, must be left for experience to decide.

The principal results we obtain from the whole of these considerations, are—

1. That infantry is the chief arm, to which the other two are subordinate.

2. That by the exercise of great skill and energy in command, the want of the two subordinate arms may in some measure be compensated for, provided that we are much stronger in infantry; and the better the infantry the easier this may be done.

3. That it is more difficult to dispense with artillery than with cavalry, because it embodies the chief principle of destruction, and its mode of fighting is more amalgamated with that of infantry.

4. That artillery being the strongest arm, as regards destructive action, and cavalry the weakest in that respect, the question must in general arise, how much artillery can we have without inconvenience, and what is the least proportion of cavalry we require?

Note.—Clausewitz bases his conclusions on the following data: The infantry musket could be fired about three times a minute and its effect was decisive up to 200 yards; its extreme range was about 1200 yards, so that in attacking, troops might begin to suffer loss when within that distance of the enemy. Artillery fire with round shot was still effective at 2000 yards but only became accurate at 1000 yards. With case shot, guns could sweep the ground from 400 yards—and case contained about as many bullets as modern shrapnel of equal calibre—*i.e.* a six-pounder case weighed about 12 lbs., a twelve-pounder case 24 lbs. Guns could be and were often double-shotted, and since at such close quarters, relaying after each shot was unnecessary, they could be fired up to ten rounds a minute. Howitzers formed part of every field battery and fired shell; they were principally used for setting fire to buildings and firing over the heads of advancing troops. Frederick the Great had already proposed to keep up an Army Reserve of forty heavy howitzers for preparing his decisive attacks.

Owing to the deterioration of horse flesh, the consequences of the long wars, the efficiency of cavalry was very low. Except by the British, the charge at a gallop was considered too dangerous to be practised. The Napoleonic cavalry masses once started could no longer be manœuvred or rallied, and generally exhausted their energy in an advance over 1500 yards of ground.

Nowadays the infantry fire is decisive within 500 yards, and bullets actually range up to 5000, whilst the weapon can be fired up to thirty rounds a minute, but without aiming. Field artillery fire is effective at 6000 yards and shrapnel can accomplish at 5000 all that case could do at 500 yards. Quick-firing guns can fire eight rounds in half a minute—this is the normal rate laid down in the French Regulations. Cavalry has developed enormously, owing to the increased care bestowed on breeding and training. A Prussian cavalry division can be manœuvred even at the highest speed, can march fifty miles a day for three days running, and then trot 2000 yards, charge for 1500, rally, reform, and charge again without unduly exhausting its horses. (*See* "Cavalry, Its Past and Future," by Col. Maude (late R.E.)).

The net result on the relations of the three arms is that artillery has increased enormously in power relatively to infantry, because at the longest distances it can still see where its shells burst and correct its ranges—this is practically impossible with

infantry fire. Further, owing to increase of range and power of firing over intervening obstacles, it can concentrate an overwhelming weight of projectiles by surprise on any selected spot in the enemy's line, whereas in Napoleon's day, his case shot attack could only be carried out with certainty when the configuration of the ground was suitable, and surprise at 300 yards was out of the question.

The accuracy of infantry fire depends primarily on the nerves of the men and the visibility of the target, but the modern power of concentration of shell fire renders it practicable to control both factors in a manner impossible formerly.

Cavalry never could charge unshaken infantry with any reasonable hope of success—previous demoralisation by fire, or surprise, or both has always been the prime condition of their success; but since the longer range of weapons renders it possible to employ both means with far greater ease and certainty than formerly, and the power of cavalry to cover distances rapidly has also increased, it is presumable that under competent leaders cavalry will, in Europe at least, achieve far greater results on the battlefield than in the Napoleonic days.—Ed.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER V

ORDER OF BATTLE OF AN ARMY

The order of battle is that division and formation of the different arms into separate parts or sections of the whole Army, and that form of general position or disposition of those parts which is to be the norm throughout the whole campaign or War.

It consists, therefore, in a certain measure, of an arithmetical and a geometrical element, *the division* and the *form of disposition.* The first proceeds from the permanent peace organisation of the Army; adopts as units certain parts, such as battalions, squadrons, and batteries, and with them forms units of a higher order up to the highest of all, the whole Army, according to the requirements of predominating circumstances. In like manner, the form of disposition comes from the elementary tactics, in which the Army is instructed and exercised in time of peace, which must be looked upon as a property in the troops that cannot be essentially modified at the moment War breaks out, the disposition connects these tactics with the conditions which the use of the troops in War and in large masses demands, and thus it settles in a general way the rule or norm in conformity with which the troops are to be drawn up for battle.

This has been invariably the case when great Armies have taken the field, and there have been times when this form was considered as the most essential part of the battle.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the improvements in the firearms of infantry occasioned a great increase of that arm, and allowed of its being deployed in long thin lines, the order of battle was thereby simplified, but, at the same time it became more difficult and more artificial in the carrying out, and as no other way of disposing of cavalry at the commencement of a battle was known but that of posting them on the wings, where they were out of the fire and had room to move, therefore in the order of battle the Army always became a closed inseparable whole. If such an Army was divided in the middle, it was like an earthworm cut in two: the wings had still life and the power of motion, but they had lost their natural functions. The Army lay, therefore, in a manner under a spell of unity, and whenever any parts of it had to be placed in a separate position, a small consequent organisation and disorganisation became necessary. The marches which the whole Army had to make were a condition in which, to a certain extent, it found itself out of rule. If the enemy was at hand, the march had to be arranged in the most artificial manner, and in order that one line or one wing might be always at the prescribed distance from the other, the troops had to scramble over everything: marches had also constantly to be stolen from the enemy, and this perpetual theft only escaped severe punishment through the circumstance that the enemy lay under the same spell.

Hence, when, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, it was discovered that cavalry would serve just as well to protect a wing if it stood in rear of the Army as if it were placed on the prolongation of the line, and that, besides this, it might be applied to other purposes than merely fighting a duel with the enemy's cavalry, a great step in advance was made, because now the Army in its principal extension or front, which is always the breadth of its order of battle (position), consisted entirely of homogeneous members, so that it could be formed of any number of parts at pleasure, each part like another and like the whole. In this way it ceased to be one single piece and became an articulated whole, consequently pliable and manageable: the parts might be separated from the whole and then joined on again without difficulty, the order of battle always remained the same.—Thus arose the Corps consisting of all arms, that is, such an organisation became possible, for the want of it had been felt long before.

That all this relates to the combat is very natural. The battle was formerly the whole War, and will always continue to be the principal part of it; but, the order of battle belongs generally more to tactics than strategy, and it is only introduced here to show how tactics in organising the whole into smaller wholes made preparations for strategy.

The greater Armies become, the more they are distributed over wide spaces and the more diversified the action and reaction of the different parts amongst themselves, the wider becomes the field of strategy, and, therefore, then the order of battle, in the sense of our definition, must also come into a kind of reciprocal action with strategy, which manifests itself chiefly at the extreme points where tactics and strategy meet, that is, at those moments where the general distribution of the combatant forces passes into the special dispositions for the combat.

We now turn to those three points, the *division, combination of arms,* and *order of battle* (*disposition*) in a strategic point of view.

1.

DIVISION.

In Strategy we must never ask what is to be the strength of a Division or a Corps, but how many Corps or Divisions an army should have. There is nothing more unmanageable than an Army divided into three parts, except it be one divided into only two, in which case the chief command must be almost neutralised.

To fix the strength of great and small Corps, either on the grounds of elementary tactics or on higher grounds, leaves an incredibly wide field for arbitrary judgment, and heaven knows what strange modes of reasoning have sported in this wide field. On the other hand, the necessity of forming an independent whole (army) into a certain number of parts is a thing as obvious as it is positive, and this idea furnishes real strategic motives for determining the number of the greater divisions of an Army, consequently their strength, whilst the strength of the smaller divisions, such as companies, battalions, &c., is left to be determined by tactics.

We can hardly imagine the smallest independent body in which there are not at least three parts to be distinguished, that one part may be thrown out in advance, and another part be left in rear; that four is still more convenient follows of itself, if we keep in view that the middle part, being the principal division, ought to be stronger than either of the others; in this way, we may proceed to make out eight, which appears to us to be the most suitable number for an army if we take one part for an advance guard as a constant necessity, three for the main body, that is a right wing, centre, and left wing, two divisions for reserve, and one to detach to the right, one to the left. Without pedantically ascribing a great importance to these numbers and figures, we certainly believe that they represent the most usual and frequently recurring strategic disposition, and on that account one that is convenient.

Certainly it seems that the supreme direction of an Army (and the direction of every whole) must be greatly facilitated if there are only three or four subordinates to command, but the Commander-in-Chief must pay dearly for this convenience in a twofold manner. In the first place, an order loses in rapidity, force, and exactness if the gradation ladder down which it has to descend is long, and this must be the case if there are Corps-Commanders between the Division Leaders and the Chief; secondly, the Chief loses generally in his own proper power and efficiency the wider the spheres of action of his immediate subordinates become. A General commanding 100,000 men in eight Divisions exercises a power which is greater in intensity than if the 100,000 men were divided into only three Corps. There are many reasons for this, but the most important is that each Commander looks upon himself as having a kind of proprietary right in his own Corps, and always opposes the withdrawal from him of any portion of it for a longer or shorter time. A little experience of War will make this evident to any one.

But on the other hand the number of parts must not be too great, otherwise disorder will ensue. It is difficult enough to manage eight Divisions from one Head Quarter, and the number should never be allowed to exceed ten. But in a Division in which the means of circulating orders are much less, the smaller normal number four, or at most five, may be regarded as the more suitable.

If these factors, five and ten, will not answer, that is, if the brigades are too strong, then *corps d'armée* must be introduced; but we must remember that by so doing, a new power is created, which at once very much lowers all other factors.

But now, what is too strong a Brigade? The custom is to make them from 2000 to 5000 men strong, and there appear to be two reasons for making the latter number the limit; the first is that a Brigade is supposed to be a subdivision which can be commanded by one man directly, that is, through the compass of his voice; the second is that any larger body of infantry should not be left without artillery, and through this first combination of arms a special division of itself is formed.

We do not wish to involve ourselves in these tactical subtilties, neither shall we enter upon the disputed point, where and in what proportions the combination of all three arms should take place, whether with Divisions of 8000 to 12,000 men, or with Corps which are 20,000 to 30,000 men strong. The most decided opponent of these

combinations will scarcely take exception at the mere assertion, that nothing but this combination of the three arms can make a Division independent, and that therefore, for such as are intended to be frequently detached separately, it is at least very desirable.

An Army of 200,000 men in ten Divisions, the Divisions composed of five Brigades each, would give Brigades 4000 strong. We see here no disproportion. Certainly this Army might also be divided into five Corps, the Corps into four Divisions, and the Division into four Brigades, which makes the brigade 2500 men strong; but the first distribution, looked at in the abstract, appears to us preferable, for besides that, in the other, there is one more gradation of rank, five parts are too few to make an Army manageable; four Divisions, in like manner, are too few for a Corps, and 2500 men is a weak Brigade, of which, in this manner, there are eighty, whereas the first formation has only fifty, and is therefore simpler. All these advantages are given up merely for the sake of having only to send orders to half as many generals. Of course the distribution into Corps is still more unsuitable for smaller Armies.

This is the abstract view of the case. The particular case may present good reasons for deciding otherwise. Likewise, we must admit that, although eight or ten Divisions may be directed when united in a level country, in widely extended mountain positions the thing might perhaps be impossible. A great river which divides an Army into halves, makes a Commander for each half indispensable; in short, there are a hundred local and particular objects of the most decisive character, before which all rules must give way.

But still, experience teaches us, that these abstract grounds come most frequently into use and are seldomer overruled by others than we should perhaps suppose.

We wish further to explain clearly the scope of the foregoing considerations by a simple outline, for which purpose we now place the different points of most importance next to each other.

As we mean by the term numbers, or parts of a whole, only those which are made by the primary, therefore the immediate division, we say,

1. If a whole has too few members it is unwieldy.

2. If the parts of a whole body are too large, the power of the superior will is thereby weakened.

3. With every additional step through which an order has to pass, it is weakened in two ways: in one way by the loss of force, which it suffers in its passage through an additional step; in another way by the longer time in its transmission.

The tendency of all this is to show that the number of co-ordinate divisions should be as great, and the gradational steps as few as possible; and the only limitation to this conclusion is, that in Armies no more than from eight to ten, and in subordinate Corps no more than from four or at most six, subdivisions can be conveniently directed.

2.

COMBINATION OF ARMS.

For Strategy the combination of the three arms in the order of battle is only important in regard to those parts of the Army which, according to the usual order of things, are likely to be frequently employed in a detached position, where they may be obliged to engage in an independent combat. Now it is in the nature of things, that the members of the first class, and for the most part only these, are destined for detached positions, because, as we shall see elsewhere, detached positions are most generally adopted upon the supposition and the necessity of a body independent in itself.

In a strict sense Strategy would therefore only require a permanent combination of arms in Army Corps, or where these do not exist, in Divisions, leaving it to circumstances to determine when a provisional combination of the three arms shall be made in subdivisions of an inferior order.

But it is easy to see that, when Corps are of considerable size, such as 30,000 or 40,000 men, they can seldom find themselves in a situation to take up a completely connected position in mass. With Corps of such strength, a combination of the arms in the Divisions is therefore necessary. No one who has had any experience in War, will treat lightly the delay which occurs when pressing messages have to be sent to some other perhaps distant point before cavalry can be brought to the support of infantry—to say nothing of the confusion which takes place.

The details of the combination of the three arms, how far it should extend, how low down it should be carried, what proportions should be observed, the strength of the reserves of each to be set apart—these are all purely tactical considerations.

3.

THE DISPOSITION.

The determination as to the relations in space, according to which the parts of an Army amongst themselves are to be drawn up in order of battle, is likewise completely a tactical subject, referring solely to the battle. No doubt there is also a strategic disposition of the parts; but it depends almost entirely on determinations and requirements of the moment, and what there is in it of the rational, does not come within the meaning of the term “order of battle.” We shall therefore treat of it in the following chapter under the head of *Disposition of an Army.*

The order of battle of an Army is therefore the organisation and disposition of it in mass ready prepared for battle. Its parts are united in such a manner that both the tactical and strategical requirements of the moment can be easily satisfied by the employment of single parts drawn from the general mass. When such momentary exigency has passed over, these parts resume their original place, and thus the order of battle becomes the first step to, and principal foundation of, that wholesome

methodicism which, like the beat of a pendulum, regulates the work in War, and of which we have already spoken in the fourth chapter of the Second Book.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER VI

GENERAL DISPOSITION OF AN ARMY

Between the moment of the first assembling of military forces, and that of the solution arrived at maturity when Strategy has brought the army to the decisive point, and each particular part has had its position and rôle pointed out by tactics, there is in most cases a long interval; it is the same between one decisive catastrophe and another.

Formerly these intervals in a certain measure did not belong to War at all. Take for example the manner in which Luxemburg encamped and marched. We single out this General because he is celebrated for his camps and marches, and therefore may be considered a representative General of his period, and from the *Histoire de la Flandre militaire,* we know more about him than about other Generals of the time.

The camp was regularly pitched with its rear close to a river, or morass, or a deep valley, which in the present day would be considered madness. The direction in which the enemy lay had so little to do with determining the front of the Army, that cases are very common in which the rear was towards the enemy and the front towards their own country. This now unheard of mode of proceeding is perfectly unintelligible, unless we suppose that in the choice of camps the convenience of the troops was the chief, indeed almost the only consideration, and therefore look upon the state of being in camp as a state outside of the action of War, a kind of withdrawal behind the scenes, where one is quite at ease. The practice of always resting the rear upon some obstacle may be reckoned the only measure of security which was then taken, of course, in the sense of the mode of conducting War in that day, for such a measure was quite inconsistent with the possibility of being compelled to fight in that position. But there was little reason for apprehension on that score, because the battles generally depended on a kind of mutual understanding, like a duel, in which the parties repair to a convenient rendezvous. As Armies, partly on account of their numerous cavalry, which in the decline of its splendour was still regarded, particularly by the French, as the principal arm, partly on account of the unwieldy organisation of their order of battle, could not fight in every description of country, an Army in a close broken country was as it were under the protection of a neutral territory, and as it could itself make but little use of broken ground, therefore, it was deemed preferable to go to meet an enemy seeking battle. We know, indeed, that Luxemburg's battles at Fleurus, Stienkirk, and Neerwinden, were conceived in a different spirit; but this spirit had only just then under this great General freed itself from the old method, and it had not yet reacted on the method of encampment. Alterations in the Art of War originate always in matters of a decisive nature, and then lead by degrees to modifications in other things. The expression *il va à la guerre,* used in reference to a partisan setting out to watch the enemy, shows how little the state of an Army in camp was considered to be a state of real Warfare.

It was not much otherwise with the marches, for the artillery then separated itself completely from the rest of the Army, in order to take advantage of better and more secure roads, and the cavalry on the wings generally took the right alternately, that each might have in turn its share of the honour of marching on the right.

At present (that is, chiefly since the Silesian Wars) the situation out of battle is so thoroughly influenced by its connection with battle that the two states are in intimate correlation, and the one can no longer be completely imagined without the other. Formerly in a campaign the battle was the real weapon, the situation at other times only the handle—the former the steel blade, the other the wooden haft glued to it, the whole therefore composed of heterogeneous parts,—now the battle is the edge, the situation out of the battle the back of the blade, the whole to be looked upon as metal completely welded together, in which it is impossible any longer to distinguish where the steel ends and the iron begins.

This state in War outside of the battle is now partly regulated by the organisation and regulations with which the Army comes prepared from a state of peace, partly by the tactical and strategic arrangements of the moment. The three situations in which an Army may be placed are in quarters, on a march, or in camp. All three belong as much to tactics as to strategy, and these two branches, bordering on each other here in many ways, often seem to, or actually do, incorporate themselves with each other, so that many dispositions may be looked upon at the same time as both tactical and strategic.

We shall treat of these three situations of an Army outside of the combat in a general way, before any special objects come into connection with them; but we must, first of all, consider the general disposition of the forces, because that is a superior and more comprehensive measure, determining as respects camps, cantonments, and marches.

If we look at the disposition of the forces in a general way, that is, leaving out of sight any special object, we can only imagine it as a unit, that is, as a whole, intended to fight all together, for any deviation from this simplest form would imply a special object. Thus arises, therefore, the conception of an Army, let it be small or large.

Further, when there is an absence of any special end, there only remains as the sole object the preservation of the Army itself, which of course includes its security. That the Army shall be able to exist without inconvenience, and that it shall be able to concentrate without difficulty for the purpose of fighting, are, therefore, the two requisite conditions. From these result, as desirable, the following points more immediately applying to subjects concerning the existence and security of the Army.

1. Facility of subsistence.
2. Facility of providing shelter for the troops.
3. Security of the rear.
4. An open country in front.
5. The position itself in a broken country.
6. Strategic points d’appui.
7. A suitable distribution of the troops.

Our elucidation of these several points is as follows:—

The first two lead us to seek out cultivated districts, and great towns and roads. They determine measures in general rather than in particular.

In the chapter on lines of communication will be found what we mean by security of the rear. The first and most important point in this respect is that the centre of the position should be at a right angle with the principal line of retreat adjoining the position.

Respecting the fourth point, an Army certainly cannot look over an expanse of country in its front as it overlooks the space directly before it when in a tactical position for battle. But the strategic eyes are the advance guard, scouts and patrols sent forward, spies, &c., &c., and the service will naturally be easier for these in an open than in an intersected country. The fifth point is merely the reverse of the fourth.

Strategical points d'appui differ from tactical in these two respects, that the Army need not be in immediate contact with them, and that, on the other hand, they must be of greater extent. The cause of this is that, according to the nature of the thing, the relations to time and space in which Strategy moves are generally on a greater scale than those of tactics. If, therefore, an Army posts itself a few miles from the sea coast or the banks of a great river, it leans strategically on these obstacles, for the enemy cannot make use of such a space as this to effect a strategic turning movement. Within its narrow limits he cannot adventure on marches miles in length, occupying days and weeks. On the other hand, in Strategy, a lake of several miles in circumference is hardly to be looked upon as an obstacle; in its proceedings, a few miles to the right or left are not of much consequence. Fortresses will become strategic points d'appui, according as they are large, and afford a wide sphere of action for offensive combinations.

The disposition of the Army in separate masses may be done with a view either to special objects and requirements, or to those of a general nature; here we can only speak of the latter.

The first general necessity is to push forward the advance guard and the other troops required to watch the enemy.

The second is that, with very large Armies, the reserves are usually placed several miles in rear, and consequently occupy a separate position.

Lastly, the covering of both wings of an Army usually requires a separate disposition of particular corps.

By this covering it is not at all meant that a portion of the Army is to be detached to defend the space round its wings, in order to prevent the enemy from approaching these weak points, as they are called: who would then defend the wings of these flanking corps? This kind of idea, which is so common, is complete nonsense. The wings of an Army are in themselves not weak points for this reason, that the enemy also has wings, and cannot menace ours without placing his own in jeopardy. It is

only if circumstances are unequal, if the enemy's Army is larger than ours, if his lines of communication are more secure (see Lines of Communication), it is only then that the wings become weak parts; but of these special cases we are not now speaking, therefore, neither of a case in which a flanking corps is appointed in connection with other combinations to defend effectually the space on our wings, for that no longer belongs to the category of general dispositions.

But although the wings are not particularly weak parts still they are particularly important, because here, on account of flanking movements the defence is not so simple as in front, measures are more complicated and require more time and preparation. For this reason it is necessary in the majority of cases to protect the wings specially against unforeseen enterprises on the part of the enemy, and this is done by placing stronger masses on the wings than would be required for mere purposes of observation. To press these masses seriously, even if they oppose no very formidable resistance, more time is required, and the stronger they are the more the enemy must develop his forces and his intentions, and by that means the object of the measure is attained; what is to be done further depends on the particular plans of the moment. We may therefore regard bodies placed on the wings as lateral advance guards, intended to retard the advance of the enemy through the space beyond our wings and give us time to make dispositions to counteract his movement.

If these corps are to fall back on the main body and the latter is not to make a backward movement at the same time, then it follows of itself that they must not be in the same line with the front of the main body, but thrown out somewhat forwards, because when a retreat is to be made, even without being preceded by a serious engagement, they should not retreat directly on the side of the position.

From these reasons of a subjective nature, as they relate to the inner organisation of an Army, there arises a natural system of disposition, composed of four or five parts according as the reserve remains with the main body or not.

As the subsistence and shelter of the troops partly decide the choice of a position in general, so also they contribute to a disposition in separate sections. The attention which they demand comes into consideration along with the other considerations above mentioned; and we seek to satisfy the one without prejudice to the other. In most cases, by the division of an Army into five separate Corps, the difficulties of subsistence and quartering will be overcome, and no great alteration will afterwards be required on their account.

We have still to cast a glance at the distances at which these separated Corps may be allowed to be placed, if we are to retain in view the advantage of mutual support, and, therefore, of concentrating for battle. On this subject we remind our readers of what is said in the chapters on the duration and decision of the combat, according to which no absolute distance, but only the most general, as it were, average rules can be given, because absolute and relative strength of arms and country have a great influence.

The distance of the advance guard is the easiest to fix, as in retreating it falls back on the main body of the Army, and, therefore, may be at all events at a distance of a long

day's march without incurring the risk of being obliged to fight an independent battle. But it should not be sent further in advance than the security of the Army requires, because the further it has to fall back the more it suffers.

Respecting detachments on the flanks, as we have already said, the combat of an ordinary Division of 8000 to 10,000 men usually lasts for several hours, even for half a day before it is decided; on that account, therefore, there need be no hesitation in placing such a Division at a distance of some leagues or five to ten miles, and for the same reason, Corps of three or four Divisions may be detached a day's march or a distance of fifteen to twenty miles.

From this natural and general disposition of the main body, in four or five Divisions at particular distances, a certain method has arisen of dividing an Army in a mechanical manner whenever there are no strong special reasons against this ordinary method.

But although we assume that each of these distinct parts of an Army shall be competent to undertake an independent combat, and it may be obliged to engage in one, it does not therefore by any means follow that the real object of fractioning an Army is that the parts should fight separately; the necessity for this distribution of the Army is mostly only a condition of existence imposed by time. If the enemy approaches our position to try the fate of a general action, the strategic period is over, everything concentrates itself into the one moment of the battle, and therewith terminates and vanishes the object of the distribution of the Army. As soon as the battle commences, considerations about quarters and subsistence are suspended; the observation of the enemy before our front and on our flanks has fulfilled the purpose of checking his advance by a partial resistance, and now all resolves itself into the one great unit—the great battle. The best criterion of skill in the disposition of an Army lies in the proof that the distribution has been considered merely as a condition, as a necessary evil, but that united action in battle has been considered the object of the disposition.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER VII

ADVANCE GUARD AND OUTPOSTS

These two bodies belong to that class of subjects into which both the tactical and strategic threads run simultaneously. On the one hand we must reckon them amongst those provisions which give form to the battle and ensure the execution of tactical plans; on the other hand, they frequently lead to independent combats, and on account of their position, more or less distant from the main body, they are to be regarded as links in the strategic chain, and it is this very feature which obliges us to supplement the preceding chapter by devoting a few moments to their consideration.

Every body of troops, when not completely in readiness for battle, requires an advance guard to learn the approach of the enemy, and to gain further particulars respecting his force before he comes in sight, for the range of vision, as a rule, does not go much beyond the range of firearms. But what sort of man would he be who could not see farther than his arms can reach! The outposts are the eyes of the army, as we have already said. The want of them, however, is not always equally great; it has its degrees. The strength of Armies and the extent of ground they cover, time, place, contingencies, the method of making War, even chance, are all points which have an influence in the matter; and, therefore, we cannot wonder that military history, instead of furnishing any definite and simple outlines of the method of using advance guards and outposts, only presents the subject in a kind of chaos of examples of the most diversified nature.

Sometimes we see the security of an Army entrusted to a Corps regularly appointed to the duty of advance guard; at another time a long line of separate outposts; sometimes both these arrangements co-exist, sometimes neither one nor the other; at one time there is only one advance guard in common for the whole of the advancing columns; at another time, each column has its own advance guard. We shall endeavour to get a clear idea of what the subject really is, and then see whether we can arrive at some principles capable of application.

If the troops are on the march, a detachment of more or less strength forms its van or advance guard, and in case of the movement of the Army being reversed, this same detachment will form the rearguard. If the troops are in cantonments or camp, an extended line of weak posts, forms the vanguard, *the outposts.* It is essentially in the nature of things, that, when the Army is halted, a greater extent of space can and must be watched than when the Army is in motion, and therefore in the one case the conception of a chain of posts, in the other that of a concentrated body arises of itself.

The actual strength of an advance guard, as well as of outposts, ranges from a considerable Corps, composed of an organisation of all three arms, to a regiment of hussars, and from a strongly entrenched defensive line, occupied by portions of troops from each arm of the service, to mere outlying pickets, and their supports detached

from the main camp. The services assigned to such vanguards range also from those of mere observation to an offer of opposition or resistance to the enemy, and this opposition may not only be to give the main body of the Army the time which it requires to prepare for battle, but also to make the enemy develop his plans, and intentions, which consequently makes the observation far more important.

According as more or less time is required to be gained, according as the opposition to be offered is calculated upon and intended to meet the special measures of the enemy, so accordingly must the strength of the advance guard and outposts be proportioned.

Frederick the Great, a General above all others ever ready for battle, and who almost directed his Army in battle by word of command, never required strong outposts. We see him therefore constantly encamping close under the eyes of the enemy, without any great apparatus of outposts, relying for his security, at one place on a hussar regiment, at another on a light battalion, or perhaps on the pickets, and supports furnished from the camp. On the march, a few thousand horse, generally furnished by the cavalry on the flanks of the first line, formed his advance guard, and at the end of the march rejoined the main body. He very seldom had any corps permanently employed as advance guard.

When it is the intention of a small Army, by using the whole weight of its mass with great vigour and activity, to make the enemy feel the effect of its superior discipline and the greater resolution of its Commander, then almost every thing must be done *sous la barbe de l'ennemi,* in the same way as Frederick the Great did when opposed to Daun. A system of holding back from the enemy, and a very formal, and extensive system of outposts would neutralise all the advantages of the above kind of superiority. The circumstance that an error of another kind, and the carrying out Frederick's system too far, may lead to a battle of Hochkirch, is no argument against this method of acting; we should rather say, that as there was only one battle of Hochkirch in all the Silesian War, we ought to recognise in this system a proof of the King's consummate ability.

Napoleon, however, who commanded an Army not deficient in discipline and firmness, and who did not want for resolution himself, never moved without a strong advance guard. There are two reasons for this.

The first is to be found in the alteration in tactics. A whole Army is no longer led into battle as one body by mere word of command, to settle the affair like a great duel by more or less skill and bravery; the combatants on each side now range their forces more to suit the peculiarities of the ground and circumstances, so that the order of battle, and consequently the battle itself, is a whole made up of many parts, from which there follows, that the simple determination to fight becomes a regularly formed plan, and the word of command a more or less long preparatory arrangement. For this time and data are required.

The second cause lies in the great size of modern Armies. Frederick brought thirty or forty thousand men into battle; Napoleon from one to two hundred thousand.

We have selected these examples because every one will admit that two such Generals would never have adopted any systematic mode of proceeding without some good reason. Upon the whole, there has been a general improvement in the use of advance guards and outposts in modern Wars; not that every one acted as Frederick, even in the Silesian Wars, for at that time the Austrians had a system of strong outposts, and frequently sent forward a corps as advance guard, for which they had sufficient reason from the situation in which they were placed. In the same way we find differences enough in the mode of carrying on war in more modern times. Even the French Marshals Macdonald in Silesia, Oudinot and Ney in the Mark (Brandenburg), advanced with armies of sixty or seventy thousand men, without our reading of their having had any advance guard.* —We have hitherto been discussing advance guards and outposts in relation to their numerical strength; but there is another difference which we must settle. It is that, when an Army advances or retires on a certain breadth of ground, it may have a van and rear guard in common for all the columns which are marching side by side, or each column may have one for itself. In order to form a clear idea on this subject, we must look at it in this way.

The fundamental conception of an advance guard, when a Corps is so specially designated, is that its mission is the security of the main body or centre of the Army. If this main body is marching upon several contiguous roads so close together that they can also easily serve for the advance guard, and therefore be covered by it, then the flank columns naturally require no special covering.

But those Corps which are moving at great distances, in reality as detached Corps, must provide their own vanguards. The same applies also to any of those Corps which belong to the central mass, and owing to the direction that the roads may happen to take, are too far from the centre column. Therefore there will be as many advance guards as there are columns virtually separated from each other; if each of these advance guards is much weaker than one general one would be, then they fall more into the class of other tactical dispositions, and there is no advance guard in the strategic tableau. But if the main body or centre has a much larger Corps for its advance guard, then that Corps will appear as the advance guard of the whole, and will be so in many respects.

But what can be the reason for giving the centre a vanguard so much stronger than the wings? The following three reasons.

1. Because the mass of troops composing the centre is usually much more considerable.

2. Because plainly the central point of a strip of country along which the front of an army is extended must always be the most important point, as all the combinations of the campaign relate mostly to it, and therefore the field of battle is also usually nearer to it than to the wings.

3. Because, although a Corps thrown forward in front of the centre does not directly protect the wings as a real vanguard, it still contributes greatly to their security indirectly. For instance, the enemy cannot in ordinary cases pass by such a Corps

within a certain distance in order to effect any enterprise of importance against one of the wings, because he has to fear an attack in flank and rear. Even if this check which a Corps thrown forward in the centre imposes on the enemy is not sufficient to constitute complete security for the wings, it is at all events sufficient to relieve the flanks from all apprehension in a great many cases.

The vanguard of the centre, if much stronger than that of a wing, that is to say, if it consists of a special Corps as advance guard, has then not merely the mission of a vanguard intended to protect the troops in its rear from sudden surprise; it also operates in more general strategic relations as an Army Corps thrown forward in advance.

The following are the purposes for which such a body may be used, and therefore those which determine its duties in practice.

1. To ensure a stouter resistance, and make the enemy advance with more caution; consequently to do the duties of a vanguard on a greater scale, whenever our arrangements are such as to require time before they can be carried into effect.

2. If the central mass of the army is very large, to be able to keep this unwieldy body at some distance from the enemy, while we still remain close to him with a more movable body of troops.

3. That we may have a corps of observation close to the enemy, if there are any other reasons which require us to keep the principal mass of the Army at a considerable distance.

The idea that weaker look-out posts, mere bodies of partisan, might answer just as well for this observation is set aside at once if we reflect how easily a weak detachments might be dispersed, and how very limited also are its means of observation as compared with those of a considerable force.

4. In the pursuit of the enemy. A single corps as advance guard, with the greater part of the cavalry attached to it, can move quicker, arriving later at its bivouac, and moving earlier in the morning than the whole mass.

5. Lastly, on a retreat, as rearguard, to be used in defending the principal natural obstacles of ground. In this respect also the centre is exceedingly important. At first sight it certainly appears as if such a rearguard would be constantly in danger of having its flanks turned. But we must remember that, even if the enemy succeeds in overlapping the flanks to some extent, he has still to march the whole way from there to the centre before he can seriously threaten the central mass, which gives time to the rearguard of the centre to prolong its resistance, and remain in rear somewhat longer. On the other hand, the situation becomes at once critical if the centre falls back quicker than the wings; there is immediately an appearance as if the line had been broken through, and even the very idea or appearance of that is to be dreaded. At no time is there a greater necessity for concentration and holding together, and at no time is this more sensibly felt by every one than on a retreat. The intention always is, that

the wings in case of extremity should close upon the centre; and if, on account of subsistence and roads, the retreat has to be made on a considerable width (of country), still the movement generally ends by a concentration on the centre. If we add to these considerations also this one, that the enemy usually advances with his principal force in the centre and with the greatest energy against the centre, we must perceive that the rearguard of the centre is of special importance.

Accordingly, therefore, a special Corps should always be thrown forward as an advance guard in every case where one of the above relations occurs. These relations almost fall to the ground if the centre is not stronger than the wings, as, for example, Macdonald when he advanced against Blücher, in Silesia, in 1813, and the latter, when he made his movement towards the Elbe. Both of them had three Corps, which usually moved in three columns by different roads, the heads of the columns in line. On this account no mention is made of their having had advance guards.

But this disposition in three columns of equal strength is one which is by no means to be recommended, partly on that account, and also because the division of a whole Army into three parts makes it very unmanageable, as stated in the fifth chapter of the third book.

When the whole is formed into a centre with two wings separate from it, which we have represented in the preceding chapter as the most natural formation as long as there is no particular object for any other, the Corps forming the advance guard, according to the simplest notion of the case, will have its place in front of the centre, and therefore before the line which forms the front of the wings; but as the first object of Corps thrown out on the flanks is to perform the same office for the sides as the advance guard for the front, it will very often happen that these Corps will be in line with the advance guard, or even still further thrown forward, according to circumstances.

With respect to the strength of an advance guard we have little to say, as now very properly it is the general custom to detail for that duty one or more component parts of the Army of the first class, reinforced by part of the cavalry: so that it consists of a Corps, if the army is formed in Corps; of a Division, if the organisation is in Divisions.

It is easy to perceive that in this respect also the great number of higher members or divisions is an advantage.

How far the advance guard should be pushed to the front must entirely depend on circumstances; there are cases in which it may be more than a day’s march in advance, and others in which it should be immediately before the front of the Army. If we find that in most cases between five and fifteen miles is the distance chosen, that shows certainly that circumstances have usually pointed out this distance as the best; but we cannot make of it a rule by which we are to be always guided.

In the foregoing observations we have lost sight altogether of *outposts,* and therefore we must now return to them again.

In saying, at the commencement, that the relations between outposts and stationary troops is similar to that between advance guards and troops in motion, our object was to refer the conceptions back to their origin, and keep them distinct in future; but it is clear that if we confine ourselves strictly to the words we should get little more than a pedantic distinction.

If an Army on the march halts at night to resume the march next morning, the advance guard must naturally do the same, and always organise the outpost duty, required both for its own security and that of the main body, without on that account being changed from an advance guard into a line of outposts. To satisfy the notion of that transformation, the advance guard would have to be completely broken up into a chain of small posts, having either only a very small force, or none at all in a form approaching to a mass. In other words, the idea of a line of outposts must predominate over that of a concentrated Corps.

The shorter the time of rest of the Army, the less complete does the covering of the Army require to be, for the enemy has hardly time to learn from day to day what is covered and what is not. The longer the halt is to be the more complete must be the observation and covering of all points of approach. As a rule, therefore, when the halt is long, the vanguard becomes always more and more extended into a line of posts. Whether the change becomes complete, or whether the idea of a concentrated Corps shall continue uppermost, depends chiefly on two circumstances. The first is the proximity of the contending Armies, the second is the nature of the country.

If the Armies are very close in comparison to the width of their front, then it will often be impossible to post a vanguard between them, and the Armies are obliged to place their dependence on a chain of outposts.

A concentrated Corps, as it covers the approaches to the Army less directly, generally requires more time and space to act efficiently; and therefore, if the Army covers a great extent of front, as in cantonments, and a Corps standing in mass is to cover all the avenues of approach, it is necessary that it should be at a considerable distance from the enemy; on this account winter quarters, for instance, are generally covered by a cordon of posts.

The second circumstance is the nature of the country; where, for example, any formidable obstacle of ground affords the means of forming a strong line of posts with but few troops, we should not neglect to take advantage of it.

Lastly, in winter quarters, the rigour of the season may also be a reason for breaking up the advance guard into a line of posts, because it is easier to find shelter for it in that way.

The use of a reinforced line of outposts was brought to great perfection by the Anglo-Dutch Army, during the campaign of 1794 and 1795, in the Netherlands, when the line of defence was formed by Brigades composed of all arms, in single posts, and supported by a reserve. Scharnhorst, who was with that Army, introduced this system into the Prussian Army on the Passarge in 1807. Elsewhere in modern times, it has

been little adopted, chiefly because the Wars have been too rich in movement. But even when there has been occasion for its use it has been neglected, as for instance, by Murat, at Tarutino. A wider extension of his defensive line would have spared him the loss of thirty pieces of artillery in a combat of outposts.

It cannot be disputed that in certain circumstances, great advantages may be derived from this system. We propose to return to the subject on another occasion.

Note.—The importance of this chapter lies in this that it reveals the fact that Clausewitz had never clearly grasped the essential feature of Napoleon's strategic method. Napoleon used his strong "Avant garde générale" not merely for observation and to delay the enemy, but by a vigorous offensive to "fix" him by paralysing his independent will power. Whilst he thus held his enemy's attention the remainder of his army manœuvred to deliver the great decisive blow. Jena, Friedland, Lútzen are the chief examples. Of this method he left no distinct description in his later strategical writings, neither does it appear that his Marshals ever really grasped his idea. It has only been during the last fifteen years that it has been rediscovered by the careful investigations of the French General Staff. Moltke seems never to have understood its importance, hence the numerous critical situations that arose in August 1870, notably at Vionville. (*See* Bonnal's "Manœuvre de St. Prival," and Foch's "Manœuvre pour a bataille."—Ed.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER VIII

MODE OF ACTION OF ADVANCED CORPS

We have just seen how the security of the Army is expected, from the effect which an advance guard and flank corps produce on an advancing enemy. Such bodies are always to be considered as very weak whenever we imagine them in conflict with the main body of the enemy, and therefore a peculiar mode of using them is required, that they may fulfil the purpose for which they are intended, without incurring the risk of the serious loss which is to be feared from this disproportion in strength.

The object of a detachment of this description, is to observe the enemy, and to delay his progress.

For the first of these purposes a smaller body would never be sufficient, partly because it would be more easily driven back, partly because its means of observation—that is its eyes—could not reach as far.

But the observation must be carried to a high point; the enemy must be made to develop his whole strength before such a Corps, and thereby reveal to a certain extent, not only his force, but also his plans.

For this its mere presence would be sufficient, and it would only be necessary to wait and see the measures by which the enemy seeks to drive it back, and then commence its retreat at once.

But further, it must also delay the advance of the enemy, and that implies actual resistance.

Now how can we conceive this waiting until the last moment, as well as this resistance, without such a body being in constant danger of serious loss? Chiefly in this way, that the enemy himself is preceded by an advance guard, and therefore does not advance at once with all the outflanking and overpowering weight of his whole force. Now, if this advance guard is also from the commencement superior to our advanced corps, as we may naturally suppose it is intended it should be, and if the enemy's main body is also nearer to his advance guard than we are to ours, and if that main body, being already on the march, will soon be on the spot to support the attack of his advance guard with all his strength; still this first act, in which our advanced corps has to contend with the enemy's advance guard, that is with a force not much exceeding its own, ensures at once a certain gain of time, and thus allows of our watching the adversary's movements for some time without endangering our own retreat.

But even a certain amount of resistance which such a force can offer in a suitable position is not attended with such disadvantage as we might anticipate in other cases through the disproportion in the strength of the forces engaged. The chief danger in a

contest with a superior enemy consists always in the possibility of being turned and placed in a critical situation by the enemy enveloping our position; but in the case to which our attention is now directed, a risk of this description is very much less, owing to the advancing enemy never knowing exactly how near at hand support from the main body of his opponent's Army itself may be, which may place his advanced column between two fires. The consequence is, that the enemy in advancing keeps the heads of his single columns as nearly as possible in line, and only begins very cautiously to attempt to turn one or other wing after he has sufficiently reconnoitred our position. While the enemy is thus feeling about and moving guardedly, the Corps we have thrown forward has time to fall back before it is in any serious danger.

As for the length of the resistance which such a Corps should offer against the attack in front, or against the commencement of any turning movement, that depends chiefly on the nature of the ground and the proximity of the enemy's supports. If this resistance is continued beyond its natural measure, either from want of judgment or from a sacrifice being necessary in order to give the main body the time it requires, the consequence must always be a very considerable loss.

It is only in rare instances, and more especially when some local obstacle is favourable, that the resistance actually made in such a combat can be of importance, and the duration of the little battle of such a Corps would in itself be hardly sufficient to gain the time required; that time is really gained in a threefold manner, which lies in the nature of the thing, viz.:

1. By the more cautious, and consequently slower advance of the enemy.

2. By the duration of the actual resistance offered.

3. By the retreat itself.

This retreat must be made as slowly as is consistent with safety. If the country affords good positions they should be made use of, as that obliges the enemy to organise fresh attacks and plans for turning movements, and by that means more time is gained. Perhaps in a new position a real combat even may again be fought.

We see that the opposition to the enemy's progress by actual fighting and the retreat are completely combined with one another, and that the shortness of the duration of the fights must be made up for by their frequent repetition.

This is the kind of resistance which an advanced force should offer. The degree of effect depends chiefly on the strength of the Corps, and the configuration of the country; next on the length of the road which the Corps has to march over, and the support which it receives.

A small body, even when the forces on both sides are equal, can never make as long a stand as a considerable Corps; for the larger the masses the more time they require to complete their action, of whatever kind it may be. In a mountainous country the mere marching is of itself slower, the resistance in the different positions longer, and attended with less danger, and at every step favourable positions may be found.

As the distance to which a detachment is pushed forward increases so will the length of its retreat, and therefore also the absolute gain of time by its resistance; but as such a body by its position has less power of resistance in itself, and is less easily reinforced, its retreat must be made more rapidly in proportion as it is nearer the main body, and has a shorter distance to traverse.

The support and means of rallying afforded to an advanced Corps must naturally have an influence on the duration of the resistance, as all the time that prudence requires for the security of the retreat is so much taken from the resistance, and therefore diminishes its amount.

There is a marked difference in the time gained by the resistance of an advance guard when the enemy makes his first appearance after midday; in such a case the length of the night is so much additional time gained, as the advance is seldom continued throughout the night. Thus it was that, in 1815, on the short distance from Charleroi to Ligny, not more than ten miles, the first Prussian Corps under General Ziethen, about 30,000 strong, against Buonaparte at the head of 120,000 men, was enabled to gain twenty-four hours for the Prussian Army then engaged in concentrating. The first attack was made on General Ziethen about nine o'clock on the morning of 15th June, and the battle of Ligny did not commence until about two on the afternoon of 16th. General Ziethen suffered, it is true, very considerable loss, amounting to five or six thousand men killed, wounded, or prisoners.

If we refer to experience the following are the results, which may serve as a basis in any calculations of this kind.

A Division of ten or twelve thousand men, with a proportion of cavalry, a day's march of fifteen to twenty miles in advance in an ordinary country, not particularly strong, will be able to detain the enemy (including time occupied in the retreat) about half as long again as he would otherwise require to march over the same ground, but if the Division is only five miles in advance, then the enemy ought to be detained about twice or three times as long as he otherwise would be on the march.

Therefore supposing the distance to be a march of twenty miles, for which usually ten hours are required, then from the moment that the enemy appears in force in front of the advanced body, we may reckon upon fifteen hours before he is in a condition to attack our main Army. On the other hand, if the advance guard is posted only five miles in advance, then the time which will elapse before our Army can be attacked will be more than three or four hours, and may very easily come up to double that, for the enemy still requires just as much time to mature his first measures against our advance guard, and the resistance offered by that guard in its original position will be greater than it would be in a position further forward.

The consequence is, that in the first of these supposed cases the enemy cannot easily make an attack on our main body on the same day that he presses back the advanced Corps, and this exactly coincides with the results of experience. Even in the second case the enemy must succeed in driving our advance guard from its ground in the first half of the day to have the requisite time for a general action.

As the night comes to our help in the first of these supposed cases, we see how much time may be gained by an advance guard thrown further forward.

With reference to troops placed on the sides or flanks, the object of which we have before explained, the mode of action is in most cases more or less connected with circumstances which belong to the province of immediate application. The simplest way is to look upon them as advance guards placed on the sides, which being at the same time thrown out somewhat in advance, retreat in an oblique direction upon the Army.

As these bodies are not immediately in the front of the Army, and cannot be so easily supported as a regular advance guard, they would, therefore, be exposed to greater danger if it was not that the enemy's offensive power in most cases is somewhat less at the outer extremities of his line, and in the worst cases such detachments have sufficient room to give way without exposing the Army so directly to danger as a flying advance guard might do by its rapid retreat.

The most usual and best means of supporting an advanced Corps is by a considerable body of cavalry, for which reason, when necessary from the distance at which the Corps is advanced, the reserve cavalry is posted between the main body and the advanced Corps.

The conclusion to be drawn from the preceding reflections is, that an advanced Corps effects more by its presence than by its efforts, less by the combats in which it engages than by the possibility of those in which it might engage: that it should never attempt to stop the enemy's movements, but only serve like a pendulum to moderate and regulate them, so that they may be made matter of calculation.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER IX

CAMPS

We are now considering the three situations of an Army outside of the combat only strategically, that is, so far as they are conditioned by place, time, and the number of the effective force. All those subjects which relate to the internal arrangement of the combat and the transition into the state of combat belong to tactics.

The disposition in camps, by which we mean every disposition of an Army except in quarters, whether it be in tents, huts, or bivouac, is strategically completely identical with the combat which is contingent upon such disposition. Tactically, it is not so always, for we can, for many reasons, choose a site for encamping which is not precisely identical with the proposed field of battle. Having already said all that is necessary on the disposition of an Army, that is, on the position of the different parts, we have only to make some observations on camps in connection with their history.

In former times, that is, before Armies grew once more to considerable dimensions, before Wars became of greater duration, and their partial acts were brought into connection with a whole or general plan, and up to the time of the War of the French Revolution, Armies always used tents. This was their normal state. With the commencement of the mild season of the year they left their quarters, and did not again take them up until winter set in. Winter quarters at that time must be looked upon to a certain extent as a state of no War, for in them the forces were neutralised, the whole clock-work stopped. Quarters to refresh an Army which preceded the real winter quarters, and other temporary cantonments, for a short time within contracted limits were transitional and exceptional conditions.

This is not the place to inquire how such a periodical voluntary neutralisation of power was consistent with the object and nature of War; we shall come to that subject hereafter. Enough that it was so.

Since the Wars of the French Revolution, Armies have completely done away with the tents on account of the encumbrance they cause. It is found better for an army of 100,000 men to have, in place of 6000 tent horses, 5000 additional cavalry, or a couple of hundred extra guns, and in great and rapid operations a load of tents is an obvious hindrance to mobility.

But this change is attended with two drawbacks, viz., an increase of casualties in the force, and greater wasting of the country.

However slight the protection afforded by a roof of common tent cloth,—it cannot be denied that it is great relief to the troops. For a single day the difference is small, because a tent is little protection against wind and cold, and does not completely

exclude wet; but this small difference, if repeated two or three hundred times in a year, becomes important. A greater loss through sickness is the natural result.

How the devastation of the country is increased through the want of tents for the troops requires no explanation.

One would suppose that on account of these two reactionary influences the doing away with tents must have diminished again the energy of War in another way, viz., that troops must remain longer in quarters, and from want of the requisites for encampment must forego many positions which would have been possible had tents been forthcoming.

This would indeed have been the case had there not been, in the same epoch of time, an enormous revolution in War generally, which swallowed up in itself all these smaller subordinate influences.

The elementary fire of War has become so overpowering, its energy so extraordinary, that these regular periods of rest have disappeared, and every power presses forward with persistent energy towards the great decision, which will be treated of more fully in the ninth book. Under these circumstances, therefore, any question about effects on an Army from the discontinuance of the use of tents in the field is quite thrown into the shade. Troops now occupy huts, or bivouac under the canopy of heaven, without regard to season of the year, weather, or locality, according as the general plan and object of the campaign require.

Whether War will in the future continue to maintain, under all circumstances and at all times, this energy, is a question we shall consider hereafter; where this energy is wanting, the want of tents is calculated to exercise some influence on the conduct of War; but that this reaction will ever be strong enough to bring back the use of tents is very doubtful, because now that much wider limits have been opened for the elements of War it will never return within its old narrow bounds, except occasionally for a certain time and under certain circumstances, only to break out again with the overpowering force of its nature. Permanent arrangements for an Army must, therefore, be based only upon that nature.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER X

MARCHES

Marches are a mere passage from one position to another under two primary conditions.

The first, is the due care of the troops, so that no forces shall be squandered uselessly when they might be usefully employed; the second, is precision in the movements, so that they may fit exactly. If we marched 100,000 men in one single column, that is, upon *one* road without intervals of time, the rear of the column would never arrive at the proposed destination on the same day with the head of the column; we must either advance at an unusually slow pace, or the mass would, like a thread of water, disperse itself in drops; and this dispersion, together with the excessive exertion laid upon those in rear owing to the length of the column, would soon throw everything into confusion.

If from this extreme we take the opposite direction, we find that the smaller the mass of troops in one column the greater the ease and precision with which the march can be performed. The result of this is the need of a *division* quite irrespective of that division of an Army in separate parts which belongs to its position; therefore, although the division into columns of march originates in the strategic disposition in general, it does not do so in every particular case. A great mass which is to be concentrated at any one point must necessarily be divided for the march. But even if a disposition of the Army in separate parts causes a march in separate divisions, sometimes the conditions of the primitive disposition, sometimes those of the march, are paramount. For instance, if the disposition of the troops is one made merely for rest, one in which a battle is not expected, then the conditions of the march predominate, and these conditions are chiefly the choice of good, well-frequented roads. Keeping in view this difference, we choose a road in the one case on account of the quarters and camping ground, in the other we take the quarters and camps such as they are, on account of the road. When a battle is expected, and everything depends on our reaching a particular point with a mass of troops, then we should think nothing of getting to that point by even the worst by-roads, if necessary; if, on the other hand, we are still on the journey to the theatre of War, then the nearest great roads are selected for the columns, and we look out for the best quarters and camps that can be got near them.

Whether the march is of the one kind or the other, if there is even a possibility of a combat, it is an invariable rule in the modern Art of War to organise the columns so that the mass of troops composing each column is fit of itself to engage in an independent combat. This condition is satisfied by the combination of the three arms, by an organised subdivision of the whole, and by the appointment of a competent Commander. Marches, therefore, have been the chief cause of the new order of battle, and they profit most by it.

When in the middle of the eighteenth century, especially in the theatre of War in which Frederick II. was engaged, Generals began to look upon movement as a principle belonging to fighting, and to think of gaining the victory by the effect of unexpected movements, the want of an organised order of battle caused the most complicated and laborious evolutions on a march. In carrying out a movement near the enemy, an Army ought to be always ready to fight; but at that time they were never ready to fight unless the whole Army was collectively present, because nothing less than the Army constituted a complete whole. In a march to a flank, the second line, in order to be always at the regulated distance, that is about a mile from the first, had to march up hill and down dale, which demanded immense exertion, as well as a great stock of local knowledge; for where can one find two good roads running parallel at a distance of a mile from each other? The cavalry on the wings had to encounter the same difficulties when the march was direct to the front. There was further difficulty with the artillery, which required a road for itself, protected by infantry; for the lines of infantry required to be continuous lines, and the artillery increased the length of their already long trailing columns still more, and threw all their regulated distances into disorder. It is only necessary to read the dispositions for marches in Tempelhof's "History of the Seven Years' War," to be satisfied of all these incidents and of the restraints thus imposed on the action of War.

But since then the modern Art of War has subdivided Armies on a regular principle, so that each of the principal parts forms in itself a complete whole, of small proportions, but capable of acting in battle precisely like the great whole, except in one respect, which is, that the duration of its action must be shorter. The consequence of this change is, that even when it is intended that the whole force should take part in a battle, it is no longer necessary to have the columns so close to each other that they may unite before the commencement of the combat; it is sufficient now if the concentration takes place in the course of the action.

The smaller a body of troops the more easily it can be moved, and therefore the less it requires that subdivision which is not a result of the separate disposition, but of the unwieldiness of the mass. A small body, therefore, can march upon one road, and if it is to advance on several lines it easily finds roads near each other which are as good as it requires. The greater the mass the greater becomes the necessity for subdividing, the greater becomes the number of columns, and the want of made roads, or even great high roads, consequently also the distance of the columns from each other. Now the danger of this subdivision is—arithmetically expressed—in an inverse ratio to the necessity for it. The smaller the parts are, the more readily must they be able to render assistance to each other; the larger they are, the longer they can be left to depend on themselves. If we only call to mind what has been said in the preceding book on this subject, and also consider that in cultivated countries at a few miles distance from the main road there are always other tolerably good roads running in a parallel direction, it is easy to see that, in regulating a march, there are no great difficulties which make rapidity and precision in the advance incompatible with the proper concentration of force.—In a mountainous country parallel roads are both scarce, and the difficulties of communication between them great; but the defensive powers of a single column are very much greater.

In order to make this idea clearer let us look at it for a moment in a concrete form.

A Division of 8000 men, with its artillery and other carriages, takes up, as we know by experience in ordinary cases, a space of about three miles; if, therefore, two Divisions march one after the other on the same road, the second arrives one hour after the first; but now, as said in the sixth chapter of the fourth book, a Division of this strength is quite capable of maintaining a combat for several hours, even against a superior force, and, therefore, supposing the worst, that is, supposing the first had to commence a fight instantaneously, still the second Division would not arrive too late to support it. Further, within three miles right and left of the road on which we march, in the cultivated countries of central Europe there are, generally, lateral roads which can be used for a march, so that there is no necessity to go across country, as was so often done in the Seven Years' War.

Again, it is known by experience that the head of a column composed of four Divisions and a reserve of cavalry, even on indifferent roads, generally gets over a march of fifteen miles in eight hours; now, if we reckon for each Division three miles in depth, and the same for the reserve cavalry and artillery, then the whole march will last thirteen hours. This is no great length of time, and yet in this case forty thousand men would have marched over the same road. But with such a mass as this we can make use of lateral roads, which are to be found at a greater distance, and therefore easily shorten the march. If the mass of troops marching on the same road is still greater than above supposed, then it is a case in which the arrival of the whole on the same day is no longer indispensable, for such masses never give battle now the moment they meet, usually not until the next day.

We have introduced these concrete cases, not as exhausting considerations of this kind, but to make ourselves more intelligible, and by means of this glance at the results of experience to show that in the present mode of conducting War the organisation of marches no longer offers such great difficulties; that the most rapid marches, executed with the greatest precision, no longer require either that peculiar skill or that exact knowledge of the country which was needed for Frederick's rapid and exact marches in the Seven Years' War. Through the existing organisation of Armies, they go on now almost of themselves, at least without any great preparatory plans. In times past, battles were conducted by mere word of command, but marches required a regular plan, now the order of battle requires the latter, and for a march the word of command almost suffices.

As is well known, all marches are either perpendicular [to the front] or parallel. The latter, also called flank marches, alter the geometrical position of the Divisions; those parts which, in position, were in line, will follow one another, and *vice versâ.* Now, although the line of march may be at any angle with the front, still the order of the march must decidedly be of one or other of these classes.

This geometrical alteration could only be completely carried out by tactics, and by it only through the file-march as it is called, which, with great masses, is impossible. Far less is it possible for Strategy to do it. The parts which changed their geometrical relation in the old order of battle were only the centre and wings; in the new they are

the divisions of the first rank—Corps, Divisions, or even Brigades, according to the organisation of the Army. Now, the consequences above deduced from the new order of battle have an influence here also, for as it is no longer so necessary, as formerly, that the whole Army should be assembled before action commences, therefore the greater care is taken that those troops which march together form one whole (a unit). If two Divisions were so placed that one formed the reserve to the other, and that they were to advance against the enemy upon two roads, no one would think of sending a portion of each Division by each of the roads, but a road would at once be assigned to each Division; they would therefore march side by side, and each General of Division would be left to provide a reserve for himself in case of a combat. Unity of command is much more important than the original geometrical relation; if the Divisions reach their new position without a combat, they can resume their previous relations. Much less if two Divisions, standing together, are to make a *parallel* (flank) march upon two roads should we think of placing the second line or reserve of each Division on the rear road; instead of that, we should allot to each of the Divisions one of the roads, and therefore during the march consider one Division as forming the reserve to the other. If an Army in four Divisions, of which three form the front line and the fourth the reserve, is to march against the enemy in that order, then it is natural to assign a road to each of the Divisions in front, and cause the reserve to follow the centre. If there are not three roads at a suitable distance apart, then we need not hesitate at once to march upon two roads, as no serious inconvenience can arise from so doing.

It is the same in the opposite case, the flank march.

Another point is the march off of columns from the right flank or left. In parallel marches (marches to a flank) the thing is plain in itself. No one would march off from the right to make a movement to the left flank. In a march to the front or rear, the order of march should properly be chosen according to the direction of the lines of roads in respect to the future line of deployment. This may also be done frequently in tactics, as its spaces are smaller, and therefore a survey of the geometrical relations can be more easily taken. In Strategy it is quite impossible, and therefore although we have seen here and there a certain analogy brought over into Strategy from tactics, it was mere pedantry. Formerly the whole order of march was a purely tactical affair, because the Army on a march remained always an indivisible whole, and looked to nothing but a combat of the whole; yet nevertheless Schwerin, for example, when he marched off from his position near Brandeis, on the 5th of May, could not tell whether his future field of battle would be on his right or left, and on this account he was obliged to make his famous countermarch.

If an Army in the old order of battle advanced against the enemy in four columns, the cavalry in the first and second lines on each wing formed the two exterior columns, the two lines of infantry composing the wings formed the two central columns. Now these columns could march off all from the right or all from the left, or the right wing from the right, the left wing from the left, or the left from the right, and the right from the left. In the latter case it would have been called “double column from the centre.” But all these forms, although they ought to have had a relation directly to the future deployment, were really all quite indifferent in that respect. When Frederick the Great entered on the battle of Leuthen, his Army had been marched off by wings from the

right in four columns, therefore the wonderful transition to a march off in order of battle, as described by all writers of history, was done with the greatest ease, because it happened that the King chose to attack the left wing of the Austrians; had he wanted to turn their right, he must have countermarched his Army, as he did at Prague (1757).

* If these forms did not meet that object in those days, they would be mere trifling as regards it now. We know now just as little as formerly the situation of the future battlefield in reference to the road we take; and the little loss of time occasioned by marching off in inverted order is now infinitely less important than formerly. The new order of battle has further a beneficial influence in this respect, that it is now immaterial which Division arrives first or which Brigade is brought under fire first.

Under these circumstances the march off from the right or left is of no consequence now, except that when it is done alternately it tends to equalise the fatigue which the troops undergo. This, which is the only object, is certainly an important one for retaining both modes of marching off with large bodies.

The advance from the centre as a definite evolution naturally comes to an end on account of what has just been stated, and can only take place accidentally. An advance from the centre by one and the same column in strategy is, in point of fact, nonsense, for it supposes a double road.

The order of march belongs, moreover, more to the province of tactics than to that of Strategy, for it is the division of a whole into parts, which, after the march, are once more to resume the state of a whole. As, however, in modern Warfare the formal connection of the parts is not required to be kept up constantly during a march, but on the contrary, the parts during the march may become further separated, and therefore be left more to their own resources, therefore it is much easier now for independent combats to happen in which the parts have to sustain themselves, and which, therefore must be reckoned as complete combats in themselves, and on that account we have thought it necessary to say so much on the subject.

Further, an order of battle in three parts in juxtaposition being, as we have seen in the second* chapter of this book, the most natural where no special object predominates, from that results also that the order of march in three columns is the most natural.

It only remains to observe that the notion of a column in Strategy does not found itself mainly on the line of march of one body of troops. The term is used in Strategy to designate masses of troops marching on the same road on different days as well. For the division into columns is made chiefly to shorten and facilitate the march, as a small number marches quicker and more conveniently than large bodies. But this end may be attained by marching troops on different days, as well as by marching them on different roads.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XI

MARCHES (*Continued*)

Respecting the length of a march and the time it requires, it is natural for us to depend on the general results of experience.

For our modern Armies it has long been settled that a march of fifteen miles should be the usual day's work which, on long distances, may be set down as an average distance of ten miles per day, allowing for the necessary rest days, to make such repairs of all kinds as may be required.

Such a march in a level country, and on tolerable roads, will occupy a Division of 8000 men from eight to ten hours; in a hilly country from ten to twelve hours. If several Divisions are united in one column, the march will occupy a couple of hours longer, without taking into account the intervals which must elapse between the departure of the first and succeeding Divisions.

We see, therefore, that the day is pretty well occupied with such a march; that the fatigue endured by a soldier loaded with his pack for ten or twelve hours is not to be judged by that of an ordinary journey of fifteen miles on foot which a person, on tolerable roads, might easily get over in five hours.

The longest marches to be found in exceptional instances are of twenty-five, or at most thirty miles a day; for a continuance twenty.

A march of twenty-five miles requires a halt for several hours; and a Division of 8000 men will not do it, even on a good road, in less than sixteen hours. If the march is one of thirty miles, and there are several Divisions in the column, we may reckon upon at least twenty hours.

We mean here the march of a number of whole Divisions at once, from one camp to another, for that is the usual form of marches made on a theatre of War. When several Divisions are to march in one column, the first Division to move is assembled and marched off earlier than the rest, and therefore arrives at its camping ground so much the sooner. At the same time this difference can still never amount to the whole time, which corresponds to the depth of a Division on the line of march, and which is so well expressed in French, as the time it requires for its *découlement* (running down). The soldier is, therefore, saved very little fatigue in this way, and every march is very much lengthened in duration in proportion as the number of troops to be moved increases. To assemble and march off the different Brigades of a Division, in like manner at different times, is seldom practicable, and for that reason we have taken the Division itself as the unit.

In long distances, when troops march from one cantonment into another, and go over the road in small bodies, and without points of assembly, the distance they go over

daily may certainly be increased, and in point of fact it is so, from the necessary detours in getting to quarters.

But those marches, on which troops have to assemble daily in Divisions, or perhaps in Corps, and have an additional move to get into quarters, take up the most time, and are only advisable in rich countries, and where the masses of troops are not too large, as in such cases the greater facility of subsistence and the advantage of the shelter which the troops obtain compensate sufficiently for the fatigue of a longer march. The Prussian Army undoubtedly pursued a wrong system in their retreat in 1806 in taking up quarters for the troops every night on account of subsistence. They could have procured subsistence in bivouacs, and the Army would not have been obliged to spend fourteen days in getting over 250 miles of ground, which, after all, they only accomplished by extreme efforts.

If a bad road or a hilly country has to be marched over, all these calculations as to time and distance undergo such modifications that it is difficult to estimate, with any certainty, in any particular case, the time required for a march; much less, then, can any general theory be established. All that theory can do is to direct attention to the liability to error with which we are here beset. To avoid it the most careful calculation is necessary, and a large margin for unforeseen delays. The influence of weather and condition of the troops also come into consideration.

Since the doing away with tents and the introduction of the system of subsisting troops by compulsory demands for provisions on the spot, the baggage of an Army has been very sensibly diminished, and as a natural and most important consequence we look first for an acceleration in the movements of an Army, and, therefore, of course, an increase in the length of the day's march. This, however, is only realised under certain circumstances.

Marches within the theatre of War have been very little accelerated by this means, for it is well known that for many years whenever the object required marches of unusual length it has always been the practice to leave the baggage behind or send it on beforehand, and, generally, to keep it separate from the troops during the continuance of such movements, and it had in general no influence on the movement, because as soon as it was out of the way, and ceased to be a direct impediment, no further trouble was taken about it, whatever damage it might suffer. Marches, therefore, took place in the Seven Years' War, which even now cannot be surpassed; as an instance we cite Lascy's march in 1760, when he had to support the diversion of the Russians on Berlin, on that occasion he got over the road from Schweidnitz to Berlin through Lusatia, a distance of 225 miles, in ten days, averaging, therefore, twenty-two miles a day, which, for a Corps of 15,000, would be an extraordinary march even in these days.

On the other hand, through the new method of supplying troops the movements of Armies have acquired a new *retarding* principle. If troops have partly to procure supplies for themselves, which often happens, then they require more time for the service of supply than would be necessary merely to receive rations from provision waggons. Besides this, on marches of considerable duration troops cannot be

encamped in such large numbers at any one point; the Divisions must be separated from one another, in order the more easily to manage for them. Lastly, it almost always happens that it is necessary to place part of the Army, particularly the cavalry, in quarters. All this occasions on the whole a sensible delay. We find, therefore, that Buonaparte in pursuit of the Prussians in 1806, with a view to cut off their retreat, and Blücher in 1815, in pursuit of the French, with a like object, only accomplished 150 miles in ten days, a rate which Frederick the Great was able to attain in his marches from Saxony to Silesia and back, notwithstanding all the train that he had to carry with him.

At the same time the mobility and handiness, if we may use such an expression, of the parts of an Army, both great and small, on the theatre of War have very perceptibly gained by the diminution of baggage. Partly, inasmuch as while the number of cavalry and guns is the same, there are fewer horses, and therefore, there is less forage required; partly, inasmuch as we are no longer so much tied to any one position, because we have not to be for ever looking after a long train of baggage dragging behind us.

Marches such as that, which, after raising the siege of Olmütz, 1758, Frederick the Great made with 4000 carriages, the escort of which employed half his Army broken up into single battalions and companies, could not be effected now in presence of even the most timid adversary.

On long marches, as from the Tagus to the Niemen, that lightening of the Army is more sensibly felt, for although the usual measure of the day's march remains the same on account of the carriages still retained, yet in cases of great urgency, we can exceed that usual measure at a less sacrifice.

Generally the diminution of baggage tends more to a saving of power than to the acceleration of movement.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XII

MARCHES (*Continued*)

We have now to consider the destructive influence which marches exercise upon an Army. It is so great that it may be regarded as an active principle of destruction, just as much as the combat.

One single moderate march does not wear down the instrument, but a succession of even moderate marches is certain to tell upon it, and a succession of severe ones will, of course, do so much sooner.

At the actual scene of War, want of food and shelter, bad, broken-up, roads, and the necessity of being in a perpetual state of readiness for battle, are causes of an excessive strain upon our means, by which men, cattle, carriages of every description as well as clothing are ruined.

It is commonly said that a long rest does not suit the physical health of an Army; that at such a time there is more sickness than during moderate activity. No doubt sickness will and does occur if soldiers are packed too close in confined quarters; but the same thing would occur in quarters taken up on the march, and the want of air and exercise can never be the cause of such sicknesses, as it is so easy to give the soldier both by means of his exercises.

Only think for a moment, when the organism of a human being is in a disordered and fainting state, what a difference it must make to him whether he falls sick in a house or is seized in the middle of a high road, up to his knees in mud, under torrents of rain, and loaded with a knapsack on his back; even if he is in a camp he can soon be sent to the next village, and will not be entirely without medical assistance, whilst on a march he must be for hours without any assistance, and then be made to drag himself along for miles as a straggler. How many trifling illnesses by that means become serious, how many serious ones become mortal. Let us consider how an ordinary march in the dust, and under the burning rays of a summer sun may produce the most excessive heat, in which state, suffering from intolerable thirst, the soldier then rushes to the first puddle of water, to bring back for himself sickness and death.

It is not our object by these reflections to recommend less activity in War; the instrument is there for use, and if the use wears away the instrument that is only in the natural order of things; we only wish to see everything put in its right place, and to oppose that theoretical bombast according to which the most astonishing surprises the most rapid movements, the most incessant activity cost nothing, and are painted as rich mines which the indolence of the General leaves unworked. It is very much the same with these mines as with those from which gold and silver are obtained; nothing is seen but the produce, and no one asks about the value of the work which has brought this produce to light.

On long marches outside a theatre of War, the conditions under which the march is made are no doubt usually easier, and the daily losses smaller, but on that account men with the slightest sickness are generally lost to the army for some time, as it is difficult for convalescents to overtake an Army constantly advancing.

Amongst the cavalry the number of lame horses and horses with sore backs rises in an increasing ratio, and amongst the carriages many break down or require repair. It never fails, therefore, that at the end of a march of 500 miles or more, an Army arrives much weakened, particularly as regards its cavalry and train.

If such marches are necessary on the theatre of War, that is under the eyes of the enemy, then that disadvantage is added to the other, and from the two combined the losses with large masses of troops, and under conditions otherwise unfavourable may amount to something incredible.

Only a couple of examples in order to illustrate our ideas.

When Buonaparte crossed the Niemen on 24th June 1812, the enormous centre of his Army with which he subsequently marched against Moscow numbered 301,000 men. At Smolensk, on the 15th August, he detached 13,500, leaving, it is to be supposed, 287,500. The actual state of his army however at that date was only 182,000; he had therefore lost 105,000.* Bearing in mind that up to that time only two engagements to speak of had taken place, one between Davoust and Bagration, the other between Murat and Tolstoy-Osterman, we may put down the losses of the French Army in action at 10,000 men at most, and therefore the losses in sick and stragglers within fifty-two days on a march of about 350 miles direct to his front, amounted to 95,000, that is a third part of the whole force.

Three weeks later, at the time of the battle of Borodino, the loss amounted to 144,000 (including the casualties in the battle), and eight days after that again, at Moscow, the number was 198,000. The losses of this Army in general were at the commencement of the campaign at the rate of daily, subsequently they rose to , and in the last period they increased to of the original strength.

The movement of Napoleon from the passage of the Niemen up to Moscow certainly may be called a persistent one; still, we must not forget that it lasted eighty-two days, in which time he only accomplished 600 miles, and that the French Army upon two occasions made regular halts, once at Wilna for about fourteen days, and the other time at Witebsk for about eleven days, during which periods many stragglers had time to rejoin. This fourteen weeks' advance was not made at the worst season of the year, nor over the worst of roads, for it was summer, and the roads along which they marched were mostly sand. It was the immense mass of troops collected on one road, the want of sufficient subsistence, and an enemy who was on the retreat, but by no means in flight, which were the adverse conditions.

Of the retreat of the French from Moscow to the Niemen, we shall say nothing, but this we may mention, that the Russian Army following them left Kaluga 120,000

strong, and reached Wilna with 30,000. Every one knows how few men were lost in actual combats during that period.

One more example from Blücher's campaign of 1813 in Silesia and Saxony, a campaign very remarkable not for any long march but for the amount of marching to and fro. York's corps of Blücher's army began this campaign 16th August about 40,000 strong, and was reduced to 12,000 at the battle of Leipsic, 19th October. The principal combats which this corps fought at Goldberg, Lowenberg, on the Katzbach, at Wartenburg, and Mockern (Leipsic) cost it on the authority of the best writers, 12,000 men. According to that their losses from other causes in eight weeks amounted to 16,000, or two-fifths of the whole.

We must, therefore, make up our minds to great wear and tear of our own forces, if we are to carry on a War rich in movements, we must arrange the rest of our plan accordingly, and above all things the reinforcements which are to follow.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XIII

CANTONMENTS

In the modern system of War cantonments have become again indispensable, because neither tents nor a complete military train make an Army independent of them. Huts and open-air camps (bivouacs as they are called), however far such arrangements may be carried, can still never become the usual way of locating troops without sickness gaining the upper hand, and prematurely exhausting their strength, sooner or later, according to the state of the weather or climate. The campaign in Russia in 1812 is one of the few in which, in a very severe climate, the troops, during the six months that it lasted, hardly ever lay in cantonments. But what was the consequence of this extreme effort, which should be called an extravagance, if that term was not much more applicable to the political conception of the enterprise!

Two things interfere with the occupation of cantonments—the proximity of the enemy, and the rapidity of movement. For these reasons they are quitted as soon as the decision approaches, and cannot be again taken up until the decision is over.

In modern Wars, that is, in all campaigns during the last twenty-five years which occur to us at this moment, the military element has acted with full energy. Nearly all that was possible has generally been done in them, as far as regards activity and the utmost effort of force; but all these campaigns have been of short duration, they have seldom exceeded half a year; in most of them a few months sufficed to bring matters to a crisis, that is, to a point where the vanquished enemy saw himself compelled to sue for an armistice or at once for peace, or to a point where, on the conqueror's part, the impetus of victory had exhausted itself. During this period of extreme effort there could be little question of cantonments, for even in the victorious march of the pursuer, if there was no longer any danger, the rapidity of movement made that kind of relief impossible.

But when from any cause the course of events is less impetuous, when a more even oscillation and balancing of forces takes place, then the housing of troops must again become a foremost subject for attention. This want has some influence even on the conduct of War itself, partly in this way, that we seek to gain more time and security by a stronger system of outposts, by a more considerable advance guard thrown further forward; and partly in this way, that our measures are governed more by the richness and fertility of the country than by the tactical advantages which the ground affords in the geometrical relations of lines and points. A commercial town of twenty or thirty thousand inhabitants, a road thickly studded with large villages or flourishing towns give such facilities for the assembling in one position large bodies of troops, and this concentration gives such a freedom and such a latitude for movement as fully compensate for the advantages which the better situation of some point may otherwise present.

On the form to be followed in arranging cantonments we have only a few observations to make, as this subject belongs for the most part to tactics.

The housing of troops comes under two heads, inasmuch as it can either be the main point or only a secondary consideration. If the disposition of the troops in the course of a campaign is regulated by grounds purely tactical and strategical, and if, as is done more especially with cavalry, they are directed for their comfort to occupy the quarters available in the vicinity of the point of concentration of the Army, then the quarters are subordinate considerations and substitutes for camps; they must, therefore, be chosen within such a radius that the troops can reach the point of assembly in good time. But if an Army takes up quarters to rest and refresh, then the housing of the troops is the main point, and other measures, consequently also the selection of the particular point of assembly, will be influenced by that object.

The first question for examination here is as to the general form of the cantonments as a whole. The usual form is that of a very long oval, a mere widening as it were of the tactical order of battle. The point of assembly for the Army is in front, the Headquarters in rear. Now these three arrangements are, in point of fact, adverse, indeed almost opposed, to the safe assembly of the Army on the approach of the enemy.

The more the cantonments form a square, or rather a circle, the quicker the troops can concentrate at one point, that is the centre. The further the place of assembly is placed in rear, the longer the enemy will be in reaching it, and, therefore, the more time is left us to assemble. A point of assembly in rear of the cantonments can never be in danger. And, on the other hand, the farther the Headquarters are in advance, so much the sooner reports arrive, therefore so much the better is the Commander informed of everything. At the same time, the first named arrangements are not devoid of points which deserve some attention.

By the extension of cantonments in width, we have in view the protection of the country which would otherwise be laid under contributions by the enemy. But this motive is neither thoroughly sound, nor is it very important. It is only sound as far as regards the country on the extremity of the wings, but does not apply at all to intermediate spaces existing between separate groups of the Army, if the quarters of those groups are drawn closer round their point of assembly, for no enemy will then venture into those intervals of space. And it is not very important, because there are simpler means of shielding the districts in our vicinity from the enemy's requisitions than scattering the Army itself.

The placing of the point of assembly in front is with a view to covering the quarters, for the following reasons:—In the first place, a body of troops, suddenly called to arms, always leaves behind it in cantonments a tail of stragglers—sick, baggage, provisions, &c., &c.—which may easily fall into the enemy's hands if the point of assembly is placed in rear. In the second place, we have to apprehend that if the enemy with some bodies of cavalry passes by the advance guard, or if it is defeated in any way, he may fall upon scattered regiments or battalions. If he encounters a force

drawn up in good order, although it is weak, and in the end must be overpowered, still he is brought to a stop, and in that way time is gained.

As respects the position of the Headquarters, it is generally supposed that it cannot be made too secure.

According to these different considerations, we may conclude that the best arrangement for districts of cantonments is where they take an oblong form, approaching the square or circle, have the point of assembly in the centre, and the Headquarters placed on the front line, well protected by considerable masses of troops.

What we have said as to covering of the wings in treating of the disposition of the Army in general, applies here also; therefore bodies detached from the main body, right and left, although intended to fight in conjunction with the rest, will have particular points of assembly of their own in the same line with the main body.

Now, if we reflect that the nature of a country, on the one hand, by favourable features in the ground determines the most natural point of assembly, and on the other hand, by the positions of towns and villages determines the most suitable situation for cantonments, then we must perceive how very rarely any geometrical form can be decisive in our present subject. But yet it was necessary to direct attention to it, because, like all general laws, it affects the generality of cases in a greater or less degree.

What now remains to be said as to an advantageous position for cantonments is that they should be taken up behind some natural obstacle of ground affording cover, whilst the sides next the enemy can be watched by small but numerous detached parties; or they may be taken up behind fortresses, which, when circumstances prevent any estimate being formed of the strength of their garrisons, impose upon the enemy a greater feeling of respect and caution.

We reserve the subject of winter quarters, covered by defensive works, for a separate article.

The quarters taken up by troops on a march differ from “standing” cantonments in this way, that, in order to save the troops from unnecessary marching, cantonments on a march are taken up as much as possible along the lines of march, and not at any considerable distance on either side of these roads; if their extension in this sense does not exceed a short day’s march, the arrangement is not at all unfavourable to the quick concentration of the Army.

In all cases in presence of the enemy, according to the technical phrase in use, that is in all cases where there is no considerable interval between the advance guards of the two Armies respectively, the extent of the cantonments and the time required to assemble the Army determine the strength and position of the advance guard and outposts; but when these must be suited to the enemy and circumstances, then, on the

contrary, the extent of the cantonments must depend on the time which we can count upon gaining from the resistance of the advance guard.

In the third* chapter of this book, we have stated how this resistance, in the case of an advanced body, may be estimated. From the time of that resistance we must deduct the time required for transmission of reports and getting the men under arms, and the remainder only is the time available for assembling at the point of concentration.

We shall conclude here also by establishing our ideas in the form of a result, such as is usual under ordinary circumstances. If the distance at which the advance guard is detached is the same as the radius of the cantonments, and the point of assembly is fixed in the centre of the cantonments, the time which is gained by checking the enemy's advance would be available for the transmission of intelligence and getting under arms, and would in most cases be sufficient, even although the communication is not made by means of signals, cannonshots, &c., but simply by relays of orderlies, the only really certain method.

With an advance guard pushed forward fifteen miles in front, our cantonments might therefore cover a space of 150 square miles. In a moderately-peopled country there would be 10,000 houses in this space, which for an Army of 50,000, after deducting the advance guard, would be four men to a billet, therefore very comfortable quarters; and for an Army of twice the strength nine men to a billet, therefore still not very close quarters. On the other hand, if the advance guard is only five miles in front, we could only occupy a space of twenty square miles; for although the time gained does not diminish exactly in proportion as the distance of the advance guard diminishes, and even with a distance of five miles we may still calculate on a gain of six hours, yet the necessity for caution increases when the enemy is so close. But in such a space an army of 50,000 men could only find partial accommodation, even in a very thickly populated country.

From all this we see what an important part is played here by great or at least considerable towns, which afford convenience for sheltering 10,000 or even 20,000 men almost at one point.

From this result it follows that, if we are not very close to the enemy, and have a suitable advance guard we might remain in cantonments, even if the enemy is concentrated, as Frederick the Great at Breslau in the beginning of the year 1762, and Buonaparte at Witebsk in 1812. But although by preserving a right distance and by suitable arrangements we have no reason to fear not being able to assemble in time, even opposite an enemy who is concentrated, yet we must not forget that an Army engaged in assembling itself in all haste can do nothing else in that time; that it is therefore, for a time at least, not in a condition to avail itself in an instant of fortuitous opportunities, which deprives it of the greater part of its really efficient power. The consequence of this is, that an Army should only break itself up completely in cantonments under some one or other of the three following cases:

1. If the enemy does the same.

2. If the condition of the troops makes it unavoidable.

3. If the more immediate object with the Army is completely limited to the maintenance of a strong position, and therefore the only point of importance is concentrating the troops at that point in good time.

The campaign of 1815 gives a very remarkable example of the assembly of an Army from cantonments. General Ziethen, with Blücher's advance guard, 30,000 men, was posted at Charleroi, only ten miles from Sombreff, the place appointed for the assembly of the Army. The farthest cantonments of the Army were about forty miles from Sombreff, that is, on the one side beyond Ciney, and on the other near Liége. Notwithstanding this, the troops cantoned about Ciney were assembled at Ligny several hours before the battle began, and those near Liége (Bulow's Corps) would have been also, had it not been for accident and faulty arrangements in the communication of orders and intelligence.

Unquestionably, proper care for the security of the Prussian Army was not taken; but in explanation we must say that the arrangements were made at a time when the French Army was still dispersed over widely extended cantonments, and that the real fault consisted in not altering them the moment the first news was received that the enemy's troops were in movement, and that Buonaparte had joined his Army.

Still it remains noteworthy that the Prussian Army was able in any way to concentrate at Sombreff before the attack of the enemy. Certainly, on the night of the 14th, that is, twelve hours before Ziethen was actually attacked, Blucher received information of the advance of the enemy, and began to assemble his Army; but on the 15th at nine in the morning, Ziethen was already hotly engaged, and it was not until the same moment that General Thielman at Ciney first received orders to march to Namur. He had therefore then to assemble his troops, and to march six and a half miles to Sombreff, which he did in twenty-four hours. General Bülow would also have been able to arrive about the same time, if the order had reached him as it should have done.

But Buonaparte did not resolve to make his attack on Ligny until two in the afternoon of the 16th. The apprehension of having Wellington on the one side of him, and Blücher on the other, in other words, the disproportion in the relative forces, contributed to this slowness; still we see how the most resolute Commander may be detained by the cautious feeling of the way which is always unavoidable in cases which are to a certain degree complicated.

Some of the considerations here raised are plainly more tactical than strategic in their nature; but we have preferred rather to encroach a little than to run the risk of not being sufficiently explicit.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XIV

SUBSISTENCE

This subject has acquired much greater importance in modern Warfare from two causes in particular. First, because the Armies in general are now much greater than those of the middle ages, and even those of the old world; for, although formerly Armies did appear here and there which equalled or even surpassed modern ones in size, still these were only rare and transient occurrences, whilst in modern military history, since the time of Louis XIV., Armies have always been very strong in number. But the second cause is still more important, and belongs entirely to modern times. It is the very much closer inner connection which our Wars have in themselves, the constant state of readiness for battle of the belligerents engaged in carrying them on. Almost all old Wars consist of single unconnected enterprises, which are separated from each other by intervals during which the War in reality either completely ceased, and only still existed in a political sense, or when the Armies at least had removed so far from each other that each, without any care about the Army opposite, only occupied itself with its own wants.

Modern Wars, that is, the Wars which have taken place since the Peace of Westphalia, have, through the efforts of respective Governments, taken a more systematic connected form; the military object, in general, predominates everywhere, and demands also that arrangements for subsistence shall be on an adequate scale. Certainly there were long periods of inaction in the Wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, almost amounting to a cessation of War; these are the regular periods passed in cantonments; still even those periods were subordinate to the military object; they were caused by the inclemency of the season, not by any necessity arising out of the subsistence of the troops, and as they regularly terminated with the return of summer, therefore we may say at all events uninterrupted action was the rule of War during the fine season of the year.

As the transition from one situation or method of action to another always takes place gradually so it was in the case before us. In the Wars against Louis XIV. the Allies used still to send their troops into winter cantonments in distant provinces in order to subsist them the more easily; in the Silesian War that was no longer done.

This systematic and connected form of carrying on War only became possible when States took regular troops into their service in place of the feudal levies. The obligation of the feudal law was then commuted into a fine or contribution: personal service either came to an end, enlistment being substituted, or it was only continued amongst the lowest classes, as the nobility regarded the furnishing a quota of men (as is still done in Russia and Hungary) as a kind of tribute, a tax in men. In every case, as we have elsewhere observed, Armies became henceforward an instrument of the Cabinet, their principal basis being the Treasury or the revenue of the Government.

The same kind of thing which took place in the mode of raising and keeping up an establishment of troops could not but follow in the mode of subsisting them. The privileged classes having been released from the first of these services on payment of a contribution in money, the expense of the latter could not be again imposed on them quite so easily. The Cabinet and the Treasury had therefore to provide for the subsistence of the Army, and could not allow it to be maintained in its own country at the expense of the people. Administrations were therefore obliged to look upon the subsistence of the Army as an affair for which they were specially responsible. The subsistence thus became more difficult in two ways: first, because it was an affair belonging to Government, and next, because the forces required to be permanently embodied to confront those kept up in other States.

Thus arose a separate military class in the population, with an independent organisation provided for its subsistence, and carried out to the utmost possible perfection.

Not only were stores of provisions collected, either by purchase or by deliveries in kind from the landed estates (Dominial-lieferungen), consequently from distant points, and lodged in magazines, but they were also forwarded from these by means of special waggons, baked near the quarters of the troops in ovens temporarily established, and from thence again carried away at last by the troops, by means of another system of transport attached to the Army itself. We take a glance at this system not merely from its being characteristic of the military arrangements of the period, but also because it is a system which can never be entirely done away; some parts of it must continually reappear.

Thus military organisation strove perpetually towards becoming more independent of people and country.

The consequence was that in this manner War became certainly a more systematic and more regular affair, and more subordinated to the military, that is the political object; but it was at the same time also much straitened and impeded in its movement, and infinitely weakened in energy. For now an Army was tied to its magazines, limited to the working powers of its transport service, and it naturally followed that the tendency of everything was to economise the subsistence of the troops. The soldier fed on a wretched pittance of bread, moved about like a shadow, and no prospect of a change for the better comforted him under his privations.

Whoever treats this miserable way of feeding soldiers as a matter of no moment, and points to what Frederick the Great did with soldiers subsisted in this manner, only takes a partial view of the matter. The power of enduring privations is one of the finest virtues in a soldier, and without it no Army is animated with the true military spirit; but such privation must be of a temporary kind, conditioned by the force of circumstances, and not the consequence of a wretchedly bad system, or of a parsimonious abstract calculation of the smallest ration that a man can exist upon. When such is the case the powers of the men individually will always deteriorate physically and morally. What Frederick the Great managed to do with his soldiers cannot be taken as a standard for us, partly because he was opposed to those who

pursued a similar system, partly because we do not know how much more he might have effected if he had been able to let his troops live as Buonaparte allowed his to do whenever circumstances permitted.

The feeding of horses by an artificial system of supply is, however, an experiment which has not been tried, because forage is much more difficult to provide on account of its bulk. A ration for a horse weighs about ten times as much as one for a man, and the number of horses with an Army is more than one-tenth the number of men, at present it is one-fourth to one-third, and formerly it was one-third to one-half, therefore the weight of the forage required is three, four, or five times as much as that of the soldier's rations required for the same period of time; on this account the shortest and most direct means were taken to meet the wants of an Army in this respect, that is by foraging expeditions. Now these expeditions occasioned great inconvenience in the conduct of War in other ways, first by making it a principal object to keep the War in the enemy's country; and next because they made it impossible to remain very long in one part of the country. However, at the time of the Silesian War, foraging expeditions were much less frequent, they were found to occasion a much greater drain upon the country, and much greater waste than if the requirements were satisfied by means of requisitions and imposts.

When the French Revolution suddenly brought again upon the War stage a National Army, the means which Governments could command were found insufficient, and the whole system of War, which had its origin in the limited extent of these means, and found again its security in this limitation, fell to pieces, and of course in the downfall of the whole was included that of the branch of which we are now speaking, the system of subsistence. Without troubling themselves about magazines, and still less about such an organisation as the artificial clockwork of which we have spoken, by which the different divisions of the transport service went round like a wheel, the leading spirits of the Revolution sent their soldiers into the field, forced their Generals to fight, subsisted, reinforced their Armies, and kept alive the War by a system of exaction, and of helping themselves to all they required by robbery and plunder.

Between these two extremes the War under Buonaparte, and against him, preserved a sort of medium, that is to say, it made use of such means as suited it best amongst all that were available; and so it will be also in future.

The modern method of subsisting troops, that is, seizing every thing which is to be found in the country without regard to *meum et tuum* may be carried out in four different ways: that is, subsisting on the inhabitant, contributions which the troops themselves look after, general contributions, and magazines. All four are generally applied together, one generally prevailing more than the others: still it sometimes happens that only one is applied entirely by itself.

1.

LIVING ON THE INHABITANT, OR ON THE COMMUNITY, WHICH IS THE SAME THING.

If we bear in mind that in a community consisting even as it does in great towns, of consumers only, there must always be provisions enough to last for several days, we may easily see that the most densely populated place can furnish food and quarters for a day for about as many troops as there are inhabitants, and for a less number of troops for several days without the necessity of any particular previous preparation. In towns of considerable size this gives a very satisfactory result, because it enables us to subsist a large force at one point. But in smaller towns, or even in villages, the supply would be far from sufficient; for a population of 3000 or 4000 in twenty-five square miles which would be large in such a space, would only suffice to feed 3000 or 4000 soldiers, and if the whole mass of troops is great they would have to be spread over such an extent of country as would hardly be consistent with other essential points. But in level countries, and even in small towns, the quantity of those kinds of provisions which are essential in War is generally much greater; the supply of bread which a peasant has is generally adequate to the consumption of his family for several, perhaps from eight to fourteen days; meat can be obtained daily, vegetable productions are generally forthcoming in sufficient quantity to last till the following crop. Therefore in quarters which have never been occupied there is no difficulty in subsisting troops three or four times the number of the inhabitants for several days, which again is a very satisfactory result. According to this, where the population is about 2000 or 3000 per twenty-five square miles, and if no large town is included, a column of 30,000 would require about a hundred square miles, which would be a length of side of ten miles. Therefore for an army of 90,000, which we may reckon at about 75,000 combatants, if marching in three columns contiguous to each other, we should require to take up a front thirty miles in breadth in case three roads could be found within that breadth.

If several columns follow one another into these cantonments, then special measures must be adopted by the civil authorities, and in that way there can be no great difficulty in obtaining all that is required for a day or two more. Therefore if the above 90,000 are followed the day after by a like number, even these last would suffer no want; this makes up the large number of 150,000 combatants.

Forage for the horses occasions still less difficulty, as it neither requires grinding nor baking, and as there must be forage forthcoming in sufficient quantity to last the horses in the country until next harvest, therefore even where there is little stall-feeding, still there should be no want, only the deliveries of forage should certainly be demanded from the community at large, not from the inhabitants individually. Besides, it is supposed that some attention is, of course, paid to the nature of the country in making arrangements for a march, so as not to send cavalry mostly into places of commerce and manufactures, and into districts where there is no forage.

The conclusion to be drawn from this hasty glance is, therefore, that in a moderately populated country, that is, a country of from 2000 to 3000 souls per twenty-five square miles an Army of 150,000 combatants may be subsisted by the inhabitants and community for one or two days within such a narrow space as will not interfere with its concentration for battle, that is, therefore, that such an Army can be subsisted on a continuous march without magazines or other preparation.

On this result were based the enterprises of the French Army in the Revolutionary War, and under Buonaparte. They marched from the Adige to the Lower Danube, and from the Rhine to the Vistula,* with little means of subsistence except upon the inhabitants, and without ever suffering want. As their undertakings depended on moral and physical superiority, as they were attended with certain results, and were never delayed by indecision or caution, therefore their progress in the career of victory was generally that of an uninterrupted march.

If circumstances are less favourable, if the population is not so great, or if it consists more of artisans than agriculturists, if the soil is bad, the country already several times overrun—then of course the results will fall short of what we have supposed. Still, we must remember that if the breadth of the front of a column is extended from ten miles to fifteen, we get a superficial extent of country more than double in size, that is, instead of one hundred we command two hundred and twenty-five square miles, and that this is an extent which in ordinary cases will always admit of concentration for action; we see therefore that even under unfavourable circumstances this method of subsistence will still be always compatible with a continuous march.

But if a halt of several days takes place, then great distress must ensue if preparations have not been made beforehand for such an event. Now these preparatory measures are of two kinds, and without them a considerable Army even now cannot exist. The first is equipping the troops with a waggon train, by means of which bread or flour, as the most essential part of their subsistence, can be carried with them for a few, that is, for three or four days; if to this we add three or four days' rations which the soldier himself can carry, then we have provided what is most indispensable in the way of subsistence for eight days.

The second arrangement is that of a regular commissariat, which whenever there is a moment's halt gathers provisions from distant localities, so that at any moment we can pass over from the method of quartering on the inhabitants to a different system.

Subsisting in cantonments has the immense advantage that hardly any transport is required, and that it is done in the shortest time, but certainly it supposes as a prior condition that cantonments can be provided for all the troops.

2.

SUBSISTENCE THROUGH EXACTIONS ENFORCED BY THE TROOPS THEMSELVES.

If a single battalion occupies a camp, this camp may be placed in the vicinity of some villages, and these may receive notice to furnish subsistence; then the method of subsistence would not differ essentially from the preceding mode. But, as is most usual, if the mass of troops to be encamped at some one point is much larger, there is no alternative but to make a collection in common within the circle of districts marked out for the purpose, collecting sufficient for the supply of one of the parts of the Army, a Brigade or Division, and afterwards to make a distribution from the common stock thus collected.

The first glance shows that by such a mode of proceeding the subsistence of a large Army would be a matter of impossibility. The collection made from the stores in any given district in the country will be much less than if the troops had taken up their quarters in the same district, for when thirty or forty men take possession of a farmer's house they can if necessary collect the last mouthful, but one officer sent with a few men to collect provisions has neither time nor means to hunt out all the provisions that may be stored in a house, often also he has not the means of transport; he will therefore only be able to collect a small proportion of what is actually forthcoming. Besides, in camps the troops are crowded together in such a manner at one point, that the range of country from which provisions can be collected in a hurry is not of sufficient extent to furnish the whole of what is required. What could be done in the way of supplying 30,000 men, within a circle of five miles in diameter, or from an area of fifteen or twenty square miles? Moreover it would seldom be possible to collect even what there is, for the most of the nearest adjacent villages would be occupied by small bodies of troops, who would not allow anything to be removed. Lastly, by such a measure there would be the greatest waste, because some men would get more than they required, whilst a great deal would be lost, and of no benefit to any one.

The result is, therefore, that the subsistence of troops by forced contributions in this manner can only be adopted with success when the bodies of troops are not too large, not exceeding a Division of 8000 or 10,000 men, and even then it is only to be resorted to as an unavoidable evil.

It cannot in general be avoided in the case of troops directly in front of the enemy, such as advance guards and outposts, when the Army is advancing, because these bodies must arrive at points where no preparations could have been made, and they are usually too far from the stores collected for the rest of the Army; further, in the case of movable columns acting independently; and lastly, in all cases where by chance there is neither time nor means to procure subsistence in any other way.

The more troops are accustomed to live by regular requisitions, the more time and circumstances permit the adoption of that way of subsisting, then the more

satisfactory will be the result. But time is generally wanting, for what the troops get for themselves directly is got much quicker.

3.

BY REGULAR REQUISITIONS.

This is unquestionably the simplest and most efficacious means of subsisting troops, and it has been the basis of all modern Wars.

It differs from the preceding way chiefly by its having the co-operation of the local authorities. The supply in this case must not be carried off forcibly just from the spot where it is found, but be regularly delivered according to an equitable division of the burden. This division can only be made by the recognised official authorities of the country.

In this all depends on time. The more time there is, the more general can the division be made, the less will it press on individuals, and the more regular will be the result. Even purchases may be made with ready money to assist, in which way it will approach the mode which follows next in order (Magazines). In all assemblages of troops in their own country there is no difficulty in subsisting by regular requisitions; neither, as a rule, is there any in retrograde movements. On the other hand, in all movements into a country of which we are not in possession, there is very little time for such arrangements, seldom more than the one day which the advance guard is in the habit of preceding the Army. With the advance guard the requisitions are sent to the local officials, specifying how many rations they are to have ready at such and such places. As these can only be furnished from the immediate neighbourhood, that is, within a circuit of ten miles round each point, the collections so made in haste will never be nearly sufficient for an Army of considerable strength, and consequently, if the troops do not carry with them enough for several days, they will run short. It is therefore the duty of the commissariat to economise what is received, and only to issue to those troops who have nothing. With each succeeding day, however, the embarrassment diminishes; that is to say, if the distances from which provisions can be procured increase in proportion to the number of days, then the superficial area over which the contributions can be levied increases as the squares of the distances gained. If on the first day only twenty square miles have been drawn upon, on the next day we shall have eighty, on the third, one hundred and eighty.

Of course this is a mere rough estimate of what may take place, subject to many modifying circumstances which may intervene, of which the principal is, that one district may not be capable of contributing like another. But on the other hand, we must also remember that the radius within which we can levy may increase more than ten miles a day in width, perhaps fifteen or twenty, or in many places still more.

The due execution of these requisitions is enforced by detachments placed under the orders of the official functionaries, but still more by the fear of responsibility,

punishment, and ill-treatment which, in such cases, presses on the whole population like a general weight.

However, it is not our intention to enter into details—into the whole machinery of commissariat and army subsistence; we have only results in view.

The result to be derived from a common-sense view of all the circumstances in general, and the view which the experience of the Wars since the French revolution tends to confirm is,—that even the largest Army, if it carries with it provisions for a few days, may undoubtedly be subsisted by contributions which, commencing at the moment of entering a country, affect at first only the districts in the immediate vicinity of the Army, but afterwards, in the course of time, are levied on a greater scale, over a range of country always increasing, and with an ever increasing weight of authority.

This resource has no limits except those of the exhaustion, impoverishment, and devastation of the country. When the stay of an invading Army is of some duration, the administration of this system at last is handed over to those in the highest official capacity; and they naturally do all they can to equalise its pressure as much as possible, and to alleviate the weight of the tax by purchases; at the same time, even an invader, when his stay is prolonged in his enemy's country, is not usually so barbarous and reckless as to lay upon that country the entire burden of his support; thus the system of contributions of itself gradually approaches to that of magazines, at the same time without ever ceasing altogether, or sensibly losing any of that influence which it exercises on the operations of the War; for there is a wide difference between a case in which some of the resources which have been drawn from a country are replaced by supplies brought from more distant parts (the country, however, still remaining substantially the source on which the Army depends for its supplies), and the case of an Army which—as in the eighteenth century—provides for all its wants from its own resources, the country in which it is operating contributing, as a rule, nothing towards its support.

The great difference consists in two things,—namely, the employment of the transport of the country, and its ovens. In this way, that enormous burden of any Army, that incubus which is always destroying its own work, a military transport train, is almost got rid of.

It is true that even now no Army can do entirely without some subsistence waggons, but the number is immensely diminished, and little more is required than sufficient to carry the surplus of one day on till the next. Peculiar circumstances, as in Russia in 1812, may even again compel an Army to take with it an enormous train, and also field-ovens; but these are exceptional cases; for how seldom will it happen that 300,000 men make a hostile advance of six hundred and fifty miles upon almost a single road, and that through countries such as Poland and Russia, shortly before the season of harvest; in such a case, any means of supply attached to an Army may be looked upon as only an assistance in case of need, the contributions of the country being always regarded as the groundwork of the whole system of supply.

Since the first campaigns of the French Revolutionary War, the requisition system has formed constantly the mainstay of their Armies, the Armies opposed to them were therefore obliged to adopt the same system, and it is not at all likely that it will ever be abandoned. There is no other which can be substituted for it with the same results, both as regards its simplicity and freedom from restraint, and also as respects energy in the prosecution of the War. As an Army is seldom distressed for provisions during the first three or four weeks of a campaign whatever direction it takes, and afterwards can be assisted by magazines, we may very well say that by this method War has acquired the most perfect freedom of action. Certainly difficulties may be greater in one direction than in another, and that may carry weight in preliminary deliberation; but we can never encounter an absolute impossibility, and the attention which is due to the subject of subsistence can never decide a question imperatively. To this there is only one exception, which is a retreat through an enemy's country. In such a case many of the inconveniences connected with subsistence meet together. The operation is one of a continuous nature, generally carried on without a halt worth speaking of; there is, therefore, no time to procure provisions; the circumstances under which the operation commences are generally unfavourable, it is therefore necessary to keep the troops in masses, and a dispersion in cantonments, or even any considerable extension in the width of the column cannot be allowed; the hostile feeling of the country precludes the chance of any collection of contributions by mere orders issued without the support of a force capable of executing the order; and, lastly, the moment is most auspicious for the inhabitants to give vent to their feelings by acts of hostility. On account of all this, an Army so situated is generally obliged to confine itself strictly to its previously prepared lines of communication and retreat.

When Buonaparte had to retreat in 1812, it was impossible for him to do so by any other line but the one upon which he had advanced, on account of the subsistence of his Army; and if he had attempted any other he would only have plunged into more speedy and certain destruction; all the censure therefore passed on him by even French writers as well as by others with regard to this point is sheer nonsense.

4.

SUBSISTENCE FROM MAGAZINES.

If we are to make a generic distinction between this method of subsisting troops and the preceding, it must be by an organisation such as existed for about thirty years at the close of the seventeenth and during the eighteenth century. Can this organisation ever reappear?

Certainly we cannot conceive how it can be dispensed with if great Armies are to be bound down for seven, ten, or twelve years long to one spot, as they were formerly in the Netherlands, on the Rhine, in Upper Italy, Silesia, and Saxony; for what country can continue for such a length of time to endure the burden of two great Armies, making it the entire source of their supplies, without being utterly ruined in the end, and therefore gradually becoming unable to meet the demands?

But here naturally arises the question: shall the War prescribe the system of subsistence, or shall the latter dictate the nature of the War?* To this we answer: the system of subsistence will control the War, as far as the other conditions on which it depends permit; but when the latter are encroached upon, the War will react on the subsistence system, and in such case determine the same.

A War carried on by means of the system of requisitions and local supplies furnished on the spot has such an advantage over one carried on in dependence on issues from magazines, that the latter does not look at all like the same instrument. No State will therefore venture to encounter the former with the latter; and if any War Minister should be so narrow-minded and blind to circumstances as to ignore the real relation which the two systems bear to each other, by sending an Army into the field to live upon the old system, the force of circumstances would carry the Commander of that Army along with it in its course, and the requisition system would burst forth of itself. If we consider besides, that the great expense attending such an organisation must necessarily reduce the extent of the armament in other respects, including of course the actual number of combatant soldiers, as no state has a superabundance of wealth, then there seems no probability of any such organisation being again resorted to, unless it should be adopted by the belligerents by mutual agreement, an idea which is a mere play of the imagination.

Wars therefore may be expected henceforward always to commence with the requisition system; how much one or other government will do to supplement the same by an artificial organisation to spare their own country, &c., &c., remains to be seen; that it will not be overmuch we may be certain, for at such moments the tendency is to look to the most urgent wants, and an artificial system of subsisting troops does not come under that category.

But now, if a War is not so decisive in its results, if its operations are not so comprehensive as is consistent with its real nature, then the requisition system will begin to exhaust the country in which it is carried on to that degree that either peace must be made, or means must be found to lighten the burden on the country, and to become independent of it for the supplies of the Army. The latter was the case of the French Army under Buonaparte in Spain, but the first happens much more frequently. In most Wars the exhaustion of the State increases to such a degree that, instead of thinking of prosecuting the War at a still greater expense, the necessity for peace becomes so urgent as to be imperative. Thus from this point of view the modern method of carrying on War has a tendency to shorten the duration of Wars.

At the same time we shall not positively deny the possibility of the old system of subsistence reappearing in future Wars; it will perhaps be resorted to by belligerents hereafter, where the nature of their mutual relations urge them to it, and circumstances are favourable to its adoption; but we can never perceive in that system a natural organisation; it is much rather an abnormal growth permitted by circumstances, but which can never spring from War in its true sense. Still less can we consider that form or system as any improvement in War on the ground of its being more humane, for War itself is not a humane proceeding.

Whatever method of providing subsistence may be chosen, it is but natural that it should be more easily carried out in rich and well-peopled countries, than in the midst of a poor and scanty population. That the population should be taken into consideration, lies in the double relation which that element bears to the quantity of provisions to be found in a country: first because, where the consumption is large, the provision to meet that consumption is also large; and in the next place, because as a rule a large population produces also largely. From this we must certainly except districts peopled chiefly by manufacturers, particularly when, as is often the case, such districts lie in mountain valleys surrounded by unproductive land; but in the generality of cases it is always very much easier to feed troops in a well populated than in a thinly inhabited country. An Army of 100,000 men cannot be supported on two thousand square miles inhabited by 400,000 people, as well as it would be on two thousand square miles with a population of 2,000,000 inhabitants, even supposing the soil equally good in the two cases. Besides, the roads and means of water-carriage are much better in rich countries and afford a greater choice, being more numerous, the means of transport are more abundant, the commercial relations easier and more certain. In a word, there is infinitely less difficulty in supporting an Army in Flanders than in Poland.

The consequence is, that War with its manifold suckers fixes itself by preference along high roads, near populous towns, in the fertile valleys of large rivers, or along such sea-coasts as are well frequented.

This shows clearly how the subsistence of troops may have a general influence upon the direction and form of military undertakings, and upon the choice of a theatre of War and lines of communication.

The extent of this influence, what weight shall attach to the facility or difficulty of provisioning the troops, depends very much on the way in which the War is to be conducted. If it is to be carried on in its real spirit, that is, with the unbridled force which belongs to its being, with a constant pressing forward to, or seeking for the combat and decisive solution, then the sustenance of the troops although an important, is but a subordinate, affair; but if there is to be a state of equilibrium during which the Armies move about here and there in the same province for several years, then the subsistence must often become the principal thing, the intendant the Commander-in-Chief, and the conduct of the War an administration of waggons.*

There are numberless campaigns of this kind in which nothing took place; the plans miscarried, the forces were used to no purpose, the only excuse being the plea of a want of subsistence; on the other hand Buonaparte used to say "*Qu'on ne me parle pas des vivres!*"

Certainly that General in the Russian campaign proved that such recklessness may be carried too far, for not to say that perhaps his whole campaign was ruined through that cause alone, which at best would be only a supposition, still it is beyond doubt that to his want of regard to the subsistence of his troops he was indebted for the extraordinary melting away of his Army on his advance, and for its utter ruin on the retreat.

But while fully recognising in Buonaparte the eager gambler who ventures on many a mad extreme, we may justly say that he and the Revolutionary Generals who preceded him dispelled a powerful prejudice in respect to the subsistence of troops, and showed that it should never be looked upon in any other light than as a *condition* of War, never as an object.

Besides, it is with privation in War just as with physical exertion and danger; the demands which the General can make on his Army are without any defined bounds; an iron character demands more than a feeble sensitive man; also the endurance of an Army differs in degree, according as habit, military spirit, confidence in and affection towards the Commander, or enthusiasm for the cause, sustain the will and energy of the soldier. But this we may look upon as an established principle, that privation and want, however far they may be carried, should never be otherwise regarded than as transition-states which should be succeeded by a state of abundance, indeed even by superfluity. Can there be anything more touching than the thought of so many thousand soldiers, badly clothed, with packs on their backs weighing thirty or forty pounds, toiling over every kind of road, in every description of weather, for days and days, continually on the march, health and life for ever in peril, and for all that unable to get a sufficiency of dry bread. Any one who knows how often this happens in War, is at a loss to know how it does not oftener lead to a refusal of the will and powers to submit any longer to such exactions, and how the mere bent constantly given to the imagination of human beings in one direction, is capable of first calling forth, and then supporting such incredible efforts.

Let any one then, who imposes great privations on his men because great objects demand such a trial of endurance, always bear in mind as a matter of prudence, if not prompted to it by his own feelings, that there is a recompence for such sacrifices which he is bound to pay at some other time.

We have now to consider the difference which takes place in respect to the question of subsistence in War, according as the action is offensive or defensive.

The defensive is in a position to make uninterrupted use of the subsistence which he has been able to lay in beforehand, as long as his defensive act continues. The defensive side therefore can hardly be in want of the necessaries of life, particularly if he is in his own country; but even in the enemy's this holds good. The offensive on the other hand is moving away from his resources, and as long as he is advancing, and even during the first weeks after he stops, must procure from day to day what he requires, and this can very rarely be done without want and inconvenience being felt.

This difficulty is felt in its fullest force at two particular periods, first in the advance, before the decision takes place; then the supplies of the defensive side are all at hand, whilst the assailant has been obliged to leave his behind; he is obliged to keep his masses concentrated, and therefore cannot spread his Army over any considerable space; even his transport cannot keep close to him when he commences his movements preliminary to a battle. If his preparations have not been very well made, it may easily happen at this moment that his troops may be in want of supplies for

several days before the decisive battle, which certainly is not a means of bringing them into the fight in the highest state of efficiency.

The second time a state of want arises is at the end of a victorious career, if the lines of communication begin to be too long, especially if the War is carried on in a poor, sparsely-populated country, and perhaps also in the midst of a people whose feelings are hostile. What an enormous difference between a line of communication from Wilna to Moscow, on which every carriage must be forcibly seized, and a line from Cologne by Liége, Louvain, Brussels, Mons, and Valenciennes to Paris, where a mercantile contract or a bill of exchange would suffice to procure millions of rations.

Frequently has the difficulty we are now speaking of resulted in obscuring the splendour of the most brilliant victories, reduced the powers of the victorious Army, rendered retreat necessary, and then by degrees ended in producing all the symptoms of a real defeat.

Forage, of which, as we have before said, there is usually at first the least deficiency, will run short soonest if a country begins to become exhausted, for it is the most difficult supply to procure from a distance, on account of its bulk, and the horse feels the effect of low feeding much sooner than the man. For this reason, an over-numerous cavalry and artillery may become a real burden, and an element of weakness to an Army.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XV

BASE OF OPERATIONS

If an Army sets out on any expedition, whether it be to attack the enemy and his theatre of War, or to take post on its own frontier, it continues in a state of necessary dependence on the sources from which it draws its subsistence and reinforcements, and must maintain its communication with them, as they are the conditions of its existence and preservation. This dependence increases in intensity and extent in proportion to the size of the Army. But now it is neither always possible nor requisite that the Army should continue in direct communication with the whole of its own country; it is sufficient if it does so with that portion immediately in its rear, and which is consequently covered by its position. In this portion of the country then, as far as necessary, special depôts of provisions are formed, and arrangements are made for regularly forwarding reinforcements and supplies. This strip of territory is therefore the foundation of the Army and of all its undertakings, and the two must be regarded as forming in connection only one whole. If the supplies for their greater security are lodged in fortified places, the idea of a base becomes more distinct; but the idea does not originate in any arrangement of that kind, and in a number of cases no such arrangement is made.

But a portion of the enemy's territory may also become a base for our Army, or, at least, form part of it; for when an Army penetrates into an enemy's land, a number of its wants are supplied from that part of the country which is taken possession of; but it is then a necessary condition that we are completely masters of this portion of territory, that is, certain of our orders being obeyed within its limits. This certainty, however, seldom extends beyond the reach of our ability to keep the inhabitants in awe by small garrisons, and detachments moving about from place to place, and that is not in general very far. The consequence is, that in the enemy's country, the part of territory from which we can draw supplies is seldom of sufficient extent to furnish all the supplies we require, and we must therefore still depend on our own land for much, and this brings us back again to the importance of that part of our territory immediately in rear of our Army as an indispensable portion of our base.

The wants of an Army may be divided into two classes, first those which every cultivated country can furnish; and next those which can only be obtained from those localities where they are produced. The first are chiefly provisions, the second the means of keeping an Army complete in every way. The first can therefore be obtained in the enemy's country; the second, as a rule, can only be furnished by our own country, for example men, arms, and almost all munitions of war. Although there are exceptions to this classification in certain cases, still they are few and trifling, and the distinction we have drawn is of standing importance, and proves again that the communication with our own country is indispensable.

Depôts of provisions and forage are generally formed in open towns, both in the enemy's and in our own country, because there are not as many fortresses as would be required for these bulky stores continually being consumed, and wanted sometimes here, sometimes there, and also because their loss is much easier to replace; on the other hand, stores to keep the Army complete, such as arms, munition of war, and articles of equipment are never lodged in open places in the vicinity of the theatre of War if it can be avoided, but are rather brought from a distance, and in the enemy's country never stored anywhere but in fortresses. From this point, again, it may be inferred that the base is of more importance in relation to supplies intended to refit an Army than in relation to provisions for food.

Now, the more means of each kind are collected together in great magazines before being brought into use, the more, therefore, all separate streams unite in great reservoirs, so much the more may these be regarded as taking the place of the whole country, and so much the more will the conception of a base fix itself upon these great depôts of supply; but this must never go so far that any such place becomes looked upon as constituting a base in itself alone.

If these sources of supply and refitment are abundant, that is, if the tracts of territory are wide and rich, if the stores are collected in great depôts to be more speedily brought into use, if these depôts are covered in a military sense in one way or another, if they are in close proximity to the Army and accessible by good roads, if they extend along a considerable width in the rear of the Army or surround it in part as well—then follows a greater vitality for the Army, as well as a greater freedom in its movements. Attempts have been made to sum up all the advantages which an Army derives from being so situated in one single conception, that is, the extent of the base of operations. By the relation which this base bears to the object of the undertakings, by the angle which its extremities make with this object (supposed as a point), it has been attempted to express the whole sum of the advantages and disadvantages which accrue to an Army from the position and nature of its sources of supply and equipment; but it is plain this elegant piece of geometrical refinement is merely a play of fancy, as it is founded on a series of substitutions which must all be made at the expense of truth. As we have seen, the base of an Army is a triple formation in connection with the situation in which an Army is placed: the resources of the country adjacent to the position of the Army, the depôts of stores which have been made at particular points, and the *province* from which these stores are derived or collected. These three things are separated in space, and cannot be collected into one whole, and least of all can we substitute for them a line which is to represent the width of the base, a line which is generally imagined in a perfectly arbitrary manner, either from one fortress to another or from one capital of a province to another, or along a political boundary of a country. Neither can we determine precisely the mutual relation of these three steps in the formation of a base, for in reality they blend themselves with each other always more or less. In one case the surrounding country affords largely the means of refitting an Army with things which otherwise could only be obtained from a long distance; in another case we are obliged to get even food from a long distance. Sometimes the nearest fortresses are great arsenals, ports, or commercial cities, which contain all the military resources of a whole State,

sometimes they are nothing but old, feeble ramparts, hardly sufficient for their own defence.

The consequence is that all deductions from the length of the base of operations and its angles, and the whole theory of War founded on these data, as far as its geometrical phase, have never met with any attention in real War, and in theory they have only caused wrong tendencies. But as the basis of this chain of reasoning is a truth, and only the conclusions drawn are false, this same view will easily and frequently thrust itself forward again.

We think, therefore, that we cannot go beyond acknowledging generally the influence of a base on military enterprises, that at the same time there are no means of framing out of this maxim any serviceable rules by a few abstract ideas; but that in each separate case the whole of the things which we have specified must be *kept in view together*.

When once arrangements are made within a certain radius to provide the means of subsisting an Army and keeping it complete in every respect, and with a view to operations in a certain direction, then, even in our own country, this district only is to be regarded as the base of the Army; and as any alteration of a base requires time and labour, therefore an Army cannot change its base every day, even in its own country, and this again limits it always more or less in the direction of its operations. If, then, in operating against an enemy's country we take the whole line of our own frontier, where it forms a boundary between the two countries as our base, we may do so in a general sense, in so far that we might make those preparations which constitute a base anywhere on that frontier; but it will not be a base at any moment if preparations have not been already made everywhere. When the Russian Army retreated before the French in 1812, at the beginning of the campaign the whole of Russia might have been considered as its base, the more so because the vast extent of the country offered the Army abundance of space in any direction it might select. This is no illusory notion, as it was actually realised at a subsequent time, when other Russian Armies from different quarters entered the field; but still at every period throughout the campaign the base of the Russian Army was not so extensive; it was principally confined to the road on which the whole train of transport to and from their Army was organised. This limitation prevented the Russian Army, for instance, from making the further retreat which became necessary after the three days' fighting at Smolensk in any direction but that of Moscow, and so hindered their turning suddenly in the direction of Kaluga, as was proposed, in order to draw the enemy away from Moscow. Such a change of direction could only have been possible by having been prepared for long beforehand.

We have said that the dependence on the base increases in intensity and extent with the size of the Army, which is easy to understand. An Army is like a tree. From the ground out of which it grows it draws its nourishment; if it is small it can easily be transplanted, but this becomes more difficult as it increases in size. A small body of troops has also its channels, from which it draws the sustenance of life, but it strikes root easily where it happens to be; not so a large Army. When, therefore, we talk of

the influence of the base on the operations of an Army, the dimensions of the Army must always serve as the scale by which to measure the magnitude of that influence.

Further it is consistent with the nature of things that for the immediate wants of the present hour the *subsistence* is the main point, but for the general efficiency of the Army through a long period of time the *refitment* and *recruitment* are the more important, because the latter can only be done from particular sources while the former may be obtained in many ways; this again defines still more distinctly the influence of the base on the operations of the Army.

However great that influence may be, we must never forget that it belongs to those things which can only show a decisive effect after some considerable time, and that therefore the question always remains what may happen in that time. The value of a base of operations will seldom determine the choice of an undertaking in the first instance. Mere difficulties which may present themselves in this respect must be put side by side and compared with other means actually at our command; obstacles of this nature often vanish before the force of decisive victories.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XVI

LINES OF COMMUNICATION

The roads which lead from the position of an Army to those points in its rear where its depôts of supply and means of recruiting and refitting its forces are principally united, and which it also in all ordinary cases chooses for its retreat, have a double signification; in the first place, they are its *lines of communication* for the constant nourishment of the combatant force, and next they are *roads of retreat.*

We have said in the preceding chapter, that, although according to the present system of subsistence, an Army is chiefly fed from the district in which it is operating, it must still be looked upon as forming a whole with its base. The lines of communication belong to this whole; they form the connection between the Army and its base, and are to be considered as so many great vital arteries. Supplies of every kind, convoys of munitions, detachments moving backwards and forwards, posts, orderlies, hospitals, depôts, reserves of stores, agents of administration, all these objects are constantly making use of these roads, and the total value of these services is of the utmost importance to the Army.

These great channels of life must therefore neither be permanently severed, nor must they be of too great length, or beset with difficulties, because there is always a loss of strength on a long road, which tends to weaken the condition of an Army.

By their second purpose, that is as lines of retreat, they constitute in a real sense the strategic rear of the Army.

For both purposes the value of these roads depends on their *length,* their *number,* their *situation,* that is their general direction, and their direction specially as regards the Army, their *nature* as roads, *difficulties* of *ground,* the *political relations and feeling of local population,* and lastly, on the *protection* they derive from fortresses or natural obstacles in the country.

But all the roads which lead from the point occupied by an Army to its sources of existence and power, are not on that account necessarily lines of communication for that Army. They may no doubt be used for that purpose, and may be considered as supplementary of the system of communication, but that system is confined to the lines regularly prepared for the purpose. Only those roads on which magazines, hospitals, stations, posts for despatches and letters are organised under commandants with police and garrisons, can be looked upon as real lines of communication. But here a very important difference between our own and the enemy's Army makes its appearance, one which is often overlooked. An Army, even in its own country, has its prepared lines of communication, but it is not completely limited to them, and can in case of need change its line, taking some other which presents itself, for it is everywhere at home, has officials in authority, and the friendly feeling of the people.

Therefore, although other roads may not be as good as those at first selected there is nothing to prevent their being used, and the use of them is not to be regarded as *impossible* in case the Army is turned and obliged to change its front. An Army in an enemy's country on the contrary can as a rule only look upon those roads as lines of communication upon which it has advanced; and hence arises through small and almost invisible causes a great difference in operating.

The Army in the enemy's country takes under its protection the organisation which, as it advances, it necessarily introduces to form its lines of communication; and in general, inasmuch as terror, and the presence of an enemy's force in the country invests these measures in the eyes of the inhabitants with all the weight of unalterable necessity, the inhabitants may even be brought to regard them as an alleviation of the evils inseparable from War. Small garrisons left behind in different places support and maintain this system. But if these commissaries, commandants of stations, police, field-posts, and the rest of the apparatus of administration, were sent to some distant road upon which the Army had not been seen, the inhabitants then would look upon such measures as a burden which they would gladly get rid of, and if the most complete defeats and catastrophes had not previously spread terror throughout the land, the probability is that these functionaries would be treated as enemies, and driven away with very rough usage. Therefore in the first place it would be necessary to establish garrisons to subjugate the new line, and these garrisons would require to be of more than ordinary strength, and still there would always be a danger of the inhabitants rising and attempting to overpower them. In short, an Army marching into an enemy's country is destitute of the mechanism through which obedience is enforced; it has to institute its officials into their places, which can only be done by a strong hand, and this cannot be effected thoroughly without sacrifices and difficulties, nor is it the work of a moment.—From this it follows that a change of the system of communication is much less easy of accomplishment in an enemy's country than in our own, where it is at least possible; and it also follows that the Army is more restricted in its movements, and must be much more sensitive about any demonstrations against its communications.

But the choice and organisation of lines of communication is from the very commencement subject also to a number of conditions by which it is restricted. Not only must they follow in a general sense the good high roads, but they will be the more serviceable the wider they are, the more populous and wealthy towns they pass through, the more strong places there are which afford them protection. Rivers, also, as means of water communication, and bridges as points of passage, have a decisive weight in the choice. It follows from this that the situation of a line of communication, and consequently the road by which an Army proceeds to commence the offensive, is only a matter of free choice up to a certain point, its situation being dependent on certain geographical relations.

All the foregoing circumstances taken together determine the strength or weakness of the communication of an Army with its base, and this result, compared with one similarly obtained with regard to the enemy's communications, decides which of the two opponents is in a position to operate against the other's lines of communication, or to cut off his retreat, that is, in technical language to *turn him.* Setting aside all

considerations of moral or physical superiority, that party can only effectually accomplish this whose communications are the strongest of the two, for otherwise the enemy saves himself in the shortest mode, by a counterstroke.

Now this turning can, by reason of the double signification of these lines, have also two purposes. Either the communications may be interfered with and interrupted, that the enemy may melt away by degrees from want, and thus be compelled to retreat, or the object may be directly to cut off the retreat.

With regard to the first, we have to observe that a mere momentary interruption will seldom have any effect while Armies are subsisted as they now are; a certain time is requisite to produce an effect in this way in order that the losses of the enemy by frequent repetition may compensate in number for the small amount he suffers in each case. One single enterprise against the enemy's flank, which might have been a decisive stroke in those days when thousands of bread-waggons traversed the lines of communication, carrying out the systematised method then in force for subsisting troops, would hardly produce any effect now, if ever so successful; one convoy at most might be seized, which would cause the enemy some partial damage, but never compel him to retreat.*

The consequence is, that enterprises of this description on a flank, which have always been more in fashion in books than in real warfare, now appear less of a practical nature than ever, and we may safely say that there is no danger in this respect to any lines of communication but such as are very long, and otherwise unfavourably circumstanced, more especially by being exposed everywhere and at any moment to attacks from an *insurgent population.*

With respect to the cutting off an enemy's retreat, we must not be over-confident in this respect, either of the consequences of threatening, or closing the enemy's lines of retreat, as recent† experience has shown that, when troops are good and their leader resolute, it is *more difficult* to make them prisoners, than it is for them to cut their way through the force opposed to them.

The means of shortening and protecting long lines of communication are very limited. The seizure of some fortresses adjacent to the position taken up by the Army, and on the roads leading to the rear—or in the event of there being no fortresses in the country, the construction of temporary defences at suitable points—the kind treatment of the people of the country, strict discipline on the military roads, good police, and active measures to improve the roads, are the only means by which the evil may be diminished, but it is one which can never be entirely removed.

Furthermore, what we said when treating of the question of subsistence with respect to the roads which the Army should chose by preference, applies also particularly to lines of communication. The best lines of communication are roads leading through the most flourishing towns and the most important provinces; they ought to be preferred, even if considerably longer, and in most cases they exercise an important influence on the definitive disposition of the Army.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XVII

ON COUNTRY AND GROUND

Irrespective quite of their influence as regards the means of subsistence of an Army, country and ground bear another most intimate and never-failing relation to the business of War, viz., their decisive influence on the battle, both upon what concerns its course, as well as upon the preparation for it, and the use to be made of it. We now proceed to consider country and ground in this phase, that is, in the full meaning of the French expression "*Terrain.*"

The way to make use of them is a subject which lies mostly within the province of tactics, but the effects resulting from them appear in Strategy; a battle in the mountains is, in its consequences as well as in itself, quite a different thing from a battle on a level plain.

But until we have studied the distinction between offensive and defensive, and examined the nature of each separately and fully, we cannot enter upon the consideration of the principal features of the ground in their effects; we must therefore for the present confine ourselves to an investigation of its general properties. There are three properties through which the ground has an influence on action in War; viz., as presenting an obstacle to approach, as an obstacle to an extensive view, and as protection against the effect of firearms; all other effects may be traced back to these three.

Unquestionably this threefold influence of ground has a tendency to make warfare more diversified, more complicated, and more scientific, for they are plainly three more quantities which enter into military combinations.

A completely level plain, quite open at the same time, that is, a tract of country which cannot influence War at all, has no existence except in relation to small bodies of troops, and with respect to them only for the duration of some given moment of time. When larger bodies are concerned, and a longer duration of time, accidents of ground mix themselves up with the action of such bodies, and it is hardly possible in the case of a whole Army to imagine any particular moment, such as a battle, when the ground would not make its influence felt.

This influence is therefore never in abeyance, but it is certainly stronger or weaker according to the nature of the country.

If we keep in view the great mass of topographical phenomena we find that countries deviate from the idea of perfectly open level plains principally in three ways: first by the form of the ground, that is, hills and valleys; then by woods, marshes, and lakes as natural features; and lastly, by such changes as have been introduced by the hand of man. Through each of these three circumstances there is an increase in the influence

of ground on the operations of War. If we trace them up to a certain distance we have mountainous country, a country little cultivated and covered with woods and marshes, and the well cultivated. The tendency in each case is to render War more complicated and connected with Art.

The degree of influence which cultivation exercises is greater or less according to the nature of the cultivation; the system pursued in Flanders, Holstein, and some other countries, where the land is intersected in every direction with ditches, dykes, hedges, and walls, interspersed with many single dwellings and small woods has the greatest effect on military operations.

The conduct of War is therefore easiest in a level moderately-cultivated country. This however only holds good in quite a general sense, leaving entirely out of consideration the use which the defensive can make of obstacles of ground.

Each of these three kinds of ground has its own effect on movement, on the range of sight, and in the cover it affords.

In a thickly-wooded country the obstacle to sight preponderates; in a mountainous country, the difficulty of movement presents the greatest obstacle to an enemy; in countries very much cultivated both these obstacles exist in a medium degree.

As thick woods render great portions of ground in a certain manner impracticable for military movements, and as, besides the difficulty which they oppose to movement they also obstruct the view, thereby preventing the use of means to clear a passage, the result is that they simplify the measures to be adopted on one side in proportion as they increase the difficulties with which the other side has to contend. Although it is difficult practically to concentrate forces for action in a wooded country, still a partition of forces does not take place to the same extent as it usually does in a mountainous country, or in a country very much intersected with canals, rivers, &c.: in other words, the partition of forces in such a country is more unavoidable but not so great.

In mountains, the obstacles to movement preponderate and take effect in two ways, because in some parts the country is quite impassable, and where it is practicable we must move slower and with greater difficulty. On this account the rapidity of all movements is much diminished in mountains, and all operations are mixed up with a larger quantity of the element of time. But the ground in mountains has also the special property peculiar to itself, that one point commands another. We shall devote the following chapter to the discussion of the subject of commanding heights generally, and hall only here remark that it is this peculiarity which causes the great partition of forces in operations carried on amongst mountains, for particular points thus acquire importance from the influence they have upon other points in addition to any intrinsic value which they have in themselves.

As we have elsewhere observed, each of these three kinds of ground in proportion as its own special peculiarity has a tendency to an extreme, has in the same degree a tendency to lower the influence of the supreme command, increasing in like manner

the independent action of subordinates down to the private soldier. The greater the partition of any force, the less an undivided control is possible, so much the more are subordinates left to themselves; that is self-evident. Certainly when the partition of a force is greater, then through the diversity of action and greater scope in the use of means the influence of intelligence must increase, and even the Commander-in-Chief may show his talents to advantage under such circumstances; but we must here repeat what has been said before, that in War the sum total of single results decides more than the form or method in which they are connected, and therefore, if we push our present considerations to an extreme case, and suppose a whole Army extended in a line of skirmishers so that each private soldier fights his own little battle, more will depend on the sum of single victories gained than on the form in which they are connected; for the benefit of good combinations can only follow from positive results, not from negative. Therefore in such a case the courage, the dexterity, and the spirit of individuals will prove decisive. It is only when two opposing Armies are on a par as regards military qualities, or that their peculiar properties hold the balance even, that the talent and judgment of the Commander become again decisive. The consequence is that national Armies and insurgent levies, &c., &c., in which, at least in the individual, the warlike spirit is highly excited, although they are not superior in skill and bravery, are still able to maintain a superiority by a great dispersion of their forces favoured by a difficult country, and that they can only maintain themselves for a continuance upon that kind of system, because troops of this description are generally destitute of all the qualities and virtues which are indispensable when tolerably large numbers are required to act as a united body.*

Also in the nature of forces there are many gradations between one of these extremes and the other, for the very circumstance of being engaged in the defence of its own country gives to even a regular standing army something of the character of a national Army, and makes it more suited for a War waged by an Army broken up into detachments.

Now the more these qualifications and influences are wanting in an Army, the greater they are on the side of its opponent, so much the more will it dread being split into fractions, the more it will avoid a broken country; but to avoid fighting in such a description of country is seldom a matter of choice; we cannot choose a theatre of War like a piece of merchandise from amongst several patterns, and thus we find generally that troops which from their nature fight with advantage in concentrated masses, exhaust all their ingenuity in trying to carry out their system as far as possible in direct opposition *to the nature of the country.* They must in consequence submit to other disadvantages, such as scanty and difficult subsistence, bad quarters, and in the combat numerous attacks from all sides; but the disadvantage of giving up their own special advantage would be greater.

These two tendencies in opposite directions, the one to concentration the other to dispersion of forces, prevail more or less according as the nature of the troops engaged incline them more to one side or the other, but however decided the tendency, the one side cannot always remain with his forces concentrated, neither can the other expect success by following his system of Warfare in scattered bodies on all occasions. The French were obliged to resort to partitioning their forces in Spain, and

the Spaniards, whilst defending their country by means of an insurgent population, were obliged to try the fate of great battles in the open field with part of their forces.

Next to the connection which country and ground have with the general, and especially with the political, composition of the forces engaged, the most important point is the relative proportion of the three arms.

In all countries which are difficult to traverse, whether the obstacles are mountains, forests, or a peculiar cultivation, a numerous cavalry is useless: that is plain in itself; it is just the same with artillery in wooded countries; there will probably be a want of room to use it with effect, of roads to transport it, and of forage for the horses. For this arm highly cultivated countries are less disadvantageous, and least of all a mountainous country. Both, no doubt, afford cover against its fire, and in that respect they are unfavourable to an arm which depends entirely on its fire: both also often furnish means for the enemy's infantry to place the heavy artillery in jeopardy, as infantry can pass anywhere; but still in neither is there in general any want of space for the use of a numerous artillery, and in mountainous countries it has this great advantage, that its effects are prolonged and increased in consequence of the movements of the enemy being slower.

But it is undeniable that infantry has a decided advantage over every other arm in difficult country, and that, therefore, in such a country its number may considerably exceed the usual proportion.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XVIII

COMMAND OF GROUND

The word "command" has a charm in the Art of War peculiar to itself, and in fact to this element belongs a great part, perhaps half the influence which ground exercises on the use of troops. Here many of the sacred relics of military erudition have their root, as, for instance, commanding positions, key positions, strategic manœuvres,* &c. We shall take as clear a view of the subject as we can without prolixity, and pass in review the true and the false, reality and exaggeration.

Every exertion of physical force if made upwards is more difficult than if it is made in the contrary direction (downwards); consequently it must be so in fighting; and there are three evident reasons why it is so. First, every height may be regarded as an obstacle to approach; secondly, although the range is not perceptibly greater in shooting down from a height, yet, all geometrical relations being taken into consideration, we have a better chance of hitting than in the opposite case; thirdly, an elevation gives a better command of view. How all these advantages unite themselves together in battle we are not concerned with here; we collect the sum total of the advantages which tactics derives from elevation of position and combine them in one whole which we regard as the first strategic advantage.

But the first and last of these advantages that have been enumerated must appear once more as advantages of Strategy itself, for we march and reconnoitre in Strategy as well as in tactics; if, therefore, an elevated position is an obstacle to the approach of those on lower ground, that is the second; and the better command of view which this elevated position affords is the third advantage which Strategy may derive in this way.

Of these elements is composed the power of dominating, overlooking, commanding; from these sources springs the sense of superiority and security which is felt in standing on the brow of a hill and looking at the enemy below, and the feeling of weakness and apprehension which pervades the minds of those below. Perhaps the total impression made is at the same time stronger than it ought to be, because the advantage of the higher ground strikes the senses more than the circumstances which modify that advantage. Perhaps the impression made surpasses that which the truth warrants, in which case the effect of imagination must be regarded as a new element, which exaggerates the effect produced by an elevation of ground.

At the same time the advantage of greater facility of movement is not absolute, and not always in favour of the side occupying the higher position; it is only so when his opponent wishes to attack him; it is not if the combatants are separated by a great valley, and it is actually in favour of the army on the lower ground if both wish to fight in the plain (battle of Hohenfriedberg). Also the power of overlooking, or command of view, has likewise great limitations. A wooded country in the valley below, and often the very masses of the mountains themselves on which we stand,

obstruct the vision, Countless are the cases in which we might seek in vain on the spot for those advantages of an elevated position which a map would lead us to expect; and we might often be led to think we had only involved ourselves in all kinds of disadvantages, the very opposite of the advantages we counted upon. But these limitations and conditions do not abrogate or destroy the superiority which the more elevated position confers, both on the defensive and offensive. We shall point out, in a few words, how this is the case with each.

Out of the three strategic advantages of the more elevated ground, *the greater tactical strength, the more difficult approach,* and *the better view,* the first two are of such a nature that they belong really to the defensive only; for it is only in holding firmly to a position that we can make use of them, whilst the other side (offensive) in moving cannot remove them and take them with him; but the third advantage can be made use of by the offensive just as well as by the defensive.

From this it follows that the more elevated ground is highly important to the defensive, and as it can only be maintained in a decisive way in mountainous countries, therefore it would seem to follow, as a consequence, that the defensive has an important advantage in mountain positions. How it is that, through other circumstances, this is not so in reality, we shall show in the chapter on the defence of mountains.

We must first of all make a distinction if the question relates merely to commanding ground at one single point, as, for example, a position for an Army; in such case the strategic advantages rather merge in the tactical one of a battle fought under advantageous circumstances; but if now we imagine a considerable tract of country—suppose a whole province—as a regular slope, like the declivity at a general watershed, so that we can make several marches, and always hold the upper ground, then the strategic advantages become greater, because we can now use the advantages of the more elevated ground not only in the combination of our forces with each other for one particular combat, but also in the combination of several combats with one another. Thus it is with the defensive.

As regards the offensive, it enjoys to a certain extent the same advantages as the defensive from the more elevated ground; for this reason that the strategic attack is not confined to one act like the tactical. The strategic advance is not the continuous movement of a piece of wheelwork; it is made in single marches with a longer or shorter interval between them, and at each halting point the assailant is just as much acting on the defensive as his adversary.

Through the advantage of a better view of the surrounding country, an elevated position confers, in a certain measure, on the offensive as well as the defensive, a power of action which we must not omit to notice; it is the facility of operating with separate masses. For each portion of a force separately derives the same advantages which the whole derives from this more elevated position; by this—a separate corps, let it be strong or weak in numbers, is stronger than it would otherwise be, and we can venture to take up a position with less danger than we could if it had not that

particular property of being on an elevation. The advantages which are to be derived from such separate bodies of troops is a subject for another place.

If the possession of more elevated ground is combined with other geographical advantages which are in our favour, if the enemy finds himself cramped in his movements from other causes, as, for instance, by the proximity of a large river, such disadvantages of his position may prove quite decisive, and he may feel that he cannot too soon relieve himself from such a position. No Army can maintain itself in the valley of a great river if it is not in possession of the heights on each side by which the valley is formed.

The possession of elevated ground may therefore become virtually command, and we can by no means deny that this idea represents a reality. But nevertheless the expressions "commanding ground," "sheltering position," "key of the country," in so far as they are founded on the nature of heights and descents, are hollow shells without any sound kernel. These imposing elements of theory have been chiefly resorted to in order to give a flavour to the seeming commonplace of military combinations; they have become the darling themes of learned soldiers, the magical wands of adepts in Strategy, and neither the emptiness of these fanciful conceits, nor the frequent contradictions which have been given to them by the results of experience have sufficed to convince authors, and those who read their books, that with such phraseology they are drawing water in the leaky vessel of the Danaides. The conditions have been mistaken for the thing itself, the instrument for the hand. The occupation of such and such a position or space of ground, has been looked upon as an exercise of power like a thrust or a cut,* the ground or position itself as a substantive quantity; whereas the one is like the lifting of the arm, the other is nothing but the lifeless instrument, a mere property which can only realise itself upon an object, a mere sign of plus or minus which wants the figures or quantities. This cut and thrust, this object, this quantity, is *a victorious battle;* it alone really counts; with it only can we reckon; and we must always have it in view, as well in giving a critical judgment in literature as in real action in the field.

Consequently, if nothing but the number and value of victorious combats decides in War, it is plain that the comparative value of the opposing forces and ability of their respective leaders again rank as the first points for consideration, and that the part which the influence of ground plays can only be one of an inferior grade.

[Back to Table of Contents]

BOOK VI

DEFENCE

CHAPTER I

OFFENCE AND DEFENCE

I.

CONCEPTION OF DEFENCE.

What is defence in conception? The warding off a blow. What is then its characteristic sign? The state of expectancy (or of waiting for this blow). This is the sign by which we always recognise an act as of a defensive character, and by this sign alone can the defensive be distinguished from the offensive in War. But inasmuch as an absolute defence completely contradicts the idea of War, because there would then be War carried on by one side only, it follows that the defence in War can only be relative and the above distinguishing signs must therefore only be applied to the essential idea or general conception: it does not apply to all the separate acts which compose the War. A partial combat is defensive if we receive the onset, the charge of the enemy; a battle is so if we receive the attack, that is wait for the appearance of the enemy before our position and within range of our fire; a campaign is defensive if we wait for the entry of the enemy into our theatre of War. In all these cases the sign of waiting for and warding off belongs to the general conception, without any contradiction arising with the conception of War, for it may be to our advantage to wait for the charge against our bayonets, or the attack on our position or our theatre of War. But as we must return the enemy's blows if we are really to carry on War on our side, therefore this offensive act in defensive War takes place more or less under the general title defensive—that is to say, the offensive of which we make use falls under the conception of position or theatre of War. We can, therefore, in a defensive campaign fight offensively, in a defensive battle we may use some Divisions for offensive purposes, and lastly, while remaining in position awaiting the enemy's onslaught, we still make use of the offensive by sending at the same time bullets into the enemy's ranks. The defensive form in War is therefore no mere shield but a shield formed of blows delivered with skill.

2.

ADVANTAGES OF THE DEFENSIVE.

What is the object of defence? *To preserve.* To preserve is easier than to acquire; from which follows at once that the means on both sides being supposed equal, the defensive is easier than the offensive. But in what consists the greater facility of preserving or keeping possession? In this, that all time which is not turned to any account falls into the scale in favour of the defence. He reaps where he has not sowed. Every suspension of offensive action, either from erroneous views, from fear or from indolence, is in favour of the side acting defensively. This advantage saved the State of Prussia from ruin more than once in the Seven Years' War. It is one which derives itself from the conception and object of the defensive, lies in the nature of all defence, and in ordinary life, particularly in legal business which bears so much resemblance to War, it is expressed by the Latin proverb, *Beati sunt possidentes.* Another advantage arising from the nature of War and belonging to it exclusively, is the aid afforded by locality or ground; this is one of which the defensive form has a preferential use.

Having established these general ideas we now turn more directly to the subject.

In tactics every combat, great or small, is *defensive* if we leave the initiative to the enemy, and wait for his appearance in our front. From that moment forward we can make use of all offensive means without losing the said two advantages of the defence, namely, that of waiting for, and that of ground. In Strategy, at first, the campaign represents the battle, and the theatre of War the position; but afterwards the whole War takes the place of the campaign, and the whole country that of the theatre of War, and in both cases the defensive remains that which it was in tactics.

It has been already observed in a general way that the defensive is easier than the offensive; but as the defensive has a negative object, that of *preserving,* and the offensive a positive object, that of *conquering,* and as the latter increases our own means of carrying on War, but the preserving does not, therefore in order to express ourselves distinctly, we must say, *that the defensive form of War is in itself stronger than the offensive.* This is the result we have been desirous of arriving at; for although it lies completely in the nature of the thing, and has been confirmed by experience a thousand times, still it is completely contrary to prevalent opinion—a proof how ideas may be confused by superficial writers.

If the defensive is the stronger form of conducting War, but has a negative object, it follows of itself that we must only make use of it so long as our weakness compels us to do so, and that we must give up that form as soon as we feel strong enough to aim at the positive object. Now as the state of our circumstances is usually improved in the event of our gaining a victory through the assistance of the defensive, it is therefore, also, the natural course in War to begin with the defensive, and to end with the offensive. It is therefore just as much in contradiction with the conception of War to suppose the defensive the ultimate object of the War as it was a contradiction to understand passivity to belong to all the parts of the defensive, as well as to the

defensive as a whole. In other words: a War in which victories are merely used to ward off blows, and where there is no attempt to return the blow, would be just as absurd as a battle in which the most absolute defence (passivity) should everywhere prevail in all measures.

Against the justice of this general view many examples might be quoted in which the defensive continued defensive to the last, and the assumption of the offensive was never contemplated; but such an objection could only be urged if we lost sight of the fact that here the question is only about general ideas (abstract ideas), and that examples in opposition to the general conception we are discussing are all of them to be looked upon as cases in which the time for the possibility of offensive reaction had not yet arrived.

In the Seven Years' War, at least in the last three years of it, Frederick the Great did not think of an offensive; indeed we believe further, that generally speaking, he only acted on the offensive at any time in this War as the best means of defending himself; his whole situation compelled him to this course, and it is natural that a General should aim more immediately at that which is most in accordance with the situation in which he is placed for the time being. Nevertheless, we cannot look at this example of a defence upon a great scale without supposing that the idea of a possible counterstroke against Austria lay at the bottom of the whole of it, and saying to ourselves, the moment for that counterstroke had not arrived before the War came to a close. The conclusion of peace shows that this idea is not without foundation even in this instance; for what could have actuated the Austrians to make peace except the thought that they were not in a condition with their own forces alone to make head against the talent of the King; that to maintain an equilibrium their exertions must be greater than heretofore, and that the slightest relaxation of their efforts would probably lead to fresh losses of territory. And, in fact, who can doubt that if Russia, Sweden, and the army of the Holy Roman Empire had ceased to act together against Frederick the Great he would have tried to conquer the Austrians again in Bohemia and Moravia?

Having thus defined the true meaning of the defensive, having defined its boundaries, we return again to the assertion that the defensive *is the stronger form of making War.*

Upon a closer examination, and comparison of the offensive and defensive, this will appear perfectly plain; but for the present we shall confine ourselves to noticing the contradiction in which we should be involved with ourselves, and with the results of experience by maintaining the contrary to be the fact. If the offensive form was the stronger there would be no further occasion ever to use the defensive, as it has merely a negative object, every one would be for attacking, and the defensive would be an absurdity. On the other hand, it is very natural that the higher object should be purchased by greater sacrifices. Whoever feels himself strong enough to make use of the weaker form has it in his power to aim at the greater object; whoever sets before himself the smaller object can only do so in order to have the benefit of the stronger form.—If we look to experience, such a thing is unheard of as any one carrying on a War upon two different theatres—offensively on one with the weaker Army, and defensively on the other with his strongest force. But if the reverse of this has

everywhere and at all times taken place, that shows plainly that Generals, although their own inclination prompts them to the offensive, still hold the defensive to be the stronger form. We have still in the next chapters to explain some preliminary points.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER II

THE RELATIONS OF THE OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE TO EACH OTHER IN TACTICS

First of all we must inquire into the circumstances which give the victory in a battle.

Of superiority of numbers, and bravery, discipline, or other qualities of an Army, we say nothing here, because, as a rule, they depend on things which lie out of the province of the Art of War in the sense in which we are now considering it; besides which they exercise the same effect in the offensive as the defensive; and, moreover also, the superiority in *numbers in general* cannot come under consideration here, as the number of troops is likewise a given quantity or condition, and does not depend on the will or pleasure of the General. Further, these things have no particular connection with attack and defence. But, irrespective of these things, there are other three which appear to us of decisive importance, these are: *surprise, advantage of ground,* and *the attack from several quarters.* The surprise produces an effect by opposing to the enemy a great many more troops than he expected at some particular point. The superiority in numbers in this case is very different to a general superiority of numbers; it is the most powerful agent in the Art of War.

The way in which the advantage of ground contributes to the victory is intelligible enough of itself, and we have only one observation to make which is, that we do not confine our remarks to obstacles which obstruct the advance of an enemy, such as scarped grounds, high hills, marshy streams, hedges, inclosures, &c.; we also allude to the advantage which ground affords as cover, under which troops are concealed from view. Indeed we may say that even from ground which is apparently featureless a person acquainted with the locality may derive assistance. The attack from several quarters includes in itself all tactical turning movements great and small, and its effects are derived partly from the double execution obtained in this way from firearms, and partly from the enemy's dread of his retreat being cut off.

Now how do the offensive and defensive stand respectively in relation to these things?

Having in view the three principles of victory just described, the answer to this question is, that only a small portion of the first and last of these principles is in favour of the offensive, whilst the greater part of them, and the whole of the second principle, are at the command of the party acting defensively.

The offensive side can only have the advantage of one complete surprise of the whole mass with the whole, whilst the defensive is in a condition to surprise incessantly, throughout the whole course of the combat, by the force and form which he gives to his partial attacks.

The offensive has greater facilities than the defensive for surrounding and cutting off the whole, as the latter is in a manner in a fixed position while the former is in a state of movement having reference to that position. But the superior advantage for an enveloping movement, which the offensive possesses, as now stated, is again limited to a movement against the whole mass; for during the course of the combat, and with separate divisions of the force, it is easier for the defensive than for the offensive to make attacks from several quarters, *because, as we have already said, the former is in a better situation to surprise by the force and form of his attacks.*

That the defensive in an especial manner enjoys the assistance which ground affords is plain in itself; as to what concerns the advantage which the defensive has in surprising by the force and form of his attacks, that results from the offensive being obliged to approach by roads and paths where he may be easily observed, whilst the defensive conceals his position, and, until almost the decisive moment, remains invisible to his opponent.—Since the true method of defence has been adopted, reconnaissances have gone quite out of fashion,* that is to say, they have become impossible. Certainly reconnaissances are still made at times, but they seldom bring home much with them. Immense as is the advantage of being able to examine well a position, and become perfectly acquainted with it before a battle, plain as it is that he (the defender) who lies in wait near such a chosen position can much more easily effect a surprise than his adversary, yet still to this very hour the old notion is not exploded that a battle which is accepted is half lost. This comes from the old kind of defensive practised twenty years ago, and partly also in the Seven Years' War, when the only assistance expected from the ground was that it should be difficult of approach in front (by steep mountain slopes, &c., &c.), when the little depth of the positions and the difficulty of moving the flanks produced such weakness that the Armies dodged one another from one hill to another, which increased the evil. If some kind of support were found on which to rest the wings, then all depended on preventing the Army stretched along between these points, like a piece of work on an embroidery frame, from being broken through at any point. The ground occupied possessed a direct value at every point, and therefore a direct defence was required everywhere. Under such circumstances, the idea of making a movement or attempting a surprise during the battle could not be entertained; it was the exact reverse of what constitutes a good defence, and of that which the defence has actually become in modern Warfare.

In reality, contempt for the defensive has always been the result of some particular method of defence having become worn out (outlived its period); and this was just the case with the method we have now mentioned, for in times antecedent to the period we refer to, that very method was superior to the offensive.

If we go through the progressive development of the modern Art of War, we find that at the commencement—that is the Thirty Years' War and the War of the Spanish Succession—the deployment and drawing up of the Army in array, was one of the great leading points connected with the battle. It was the most important part of the plan of the battle. This gave the defensive, as a rule, a great advantage, as he was already drawn up and deployed before the attack could commence. As soon as the troops acquired greater capability of manœuvring, this advantage ceased, and the

superiority passed over to the side of the offensive for a time. Then the defensive sought shelter behind rivers or deep valleys, or on high land. The defensive thus recovered the advantage, and continued to maintain it until the offensive acquired such increased mobility and expertness in manœuvring that he himself could venture into broken ground and attack in separate columns, and therefore became able *to turn* his adversary. This led to a gradual increase in the length of positions, in consequence of which, no doubt, it occurred to the offensive to concentrate at a few points, and break through the enemy's thin line.* The offensive thus, for a third time, gained the ascendency, and the defence was again obliged to alter its system. This it has done in recent Wars by keeping its forces concentrated in large masses, the greater part not deployed, and, where possible, concealed, thus merely taking up a position in readiness to act according to the measures of the enemy as soon as they are sufficiently revealed.

This does not preclude a partially passive defence of the ground; its advantage is too great for it not to be used a hundred times in a campaign. But that kind of passive defence of the ground is usually no longer the principal affair: that is what we have to do with here.

If the offensive should discover some new and powerful element which it can bring to its assistance—an event not very probable, seeing the point of simplicity and natural order to which all is now brought—then the defence must again alter its method. But the defensive is always certain of the assistance of ground, which ensures to it in general its natural superiority, as the special properties of country and ground exercise a greater influence than ever on actual Warfare.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER III

THE RELATIONS OF THE OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE TO EACH OTHER IN STRATEGY

Let us ask again, first of all, what are the circumstances which ensure a successful result in Strategy?

In Strategy there is no victory, as we have before said. On the one hand, the strategic success is the successful preparation of the tactical victory; the greater this strategic success, the more probable becomes the victory in the battle. On the other hand, strategic success lies in the making use of the victory gained. The more events the strategic combinations can in the sequel include in the consequences of a battle gained, the more Strategy can lay hands on amongst the wreck of all that has been shaken to the foundation by the battle, the more it sweeps up in great masses what of necessity has been gained with great labour by many single hands in the battle, the grander will be its success. Those things which chiefly lead to this success, or at least facilitate it, consequently the leading principles of efficient action in Strategy, are as follow:—

1. The advantage of ground.

2. The surprise, let it be either in the form of an actual attack by surprise or by the unexpected display of large forces at certain points.

3. The attack from several quarters (all three, as in tactics).

4. The assistance of the theatre of War by fortresses, and everything belonging to them.

5. The support of the people.

6. The utilisation of great moral forces.

Now, what are the relations of offensive and defensive with respect to these things?

The Defender has the advantage of ground; the Assailant that of the attack by surprise in Strategy, as in tactics. But respecting the surprise, we must observe that it is infinitely more efficacious and important in the former than in the latter. In tactics, a surprise seldom rises to the level of a great victory, while in Strategy it often finishes the war at one stroke. But at the same time we must observe that the advantageous use of this means supposes some *great* and *uncommon,* as well as *decisive* error committed by the adversary, therefore it does not alter the balance much in favour of the offensive.

The surprise of the enemy, by placing superior forces in position at certain points, has again a great resemblance to the analogous case in tactics. Were the defensive compelled to distribute his forces upon several points of approach to his theatre of War, then the offensive would have plainly the advantage of being able to fall upon one point with all his weight. But here also, the new art of acting on the defensive by a different mode of proceeding has imperceptibly brought about new principles. If the defender does not apprehend that the enemy, by making use of an undefended road, will throw himself upon some important magazine or depôt, or on some unprepared fortification, or on the capital itself,—and if he is not reduced to the alternative of opposing the enemy on the road he has chosen, or of having his retreat cut off, then there are no peremptory grounds for dividing his forces; for if the offensive chooses a different road-from that on which the defensive is to be found, then some days later the latter can march against his opponent with his whole force upon the road he has chosen; besides, he may at the same time, in most cases, rest satisfied that the offensive will do him the honour to seek him out.* —If the offensive is obliged to advance with his forces divided, which is often unavoidable on account of subsistence, then plainly the defensive has the advantage on his side of being able to fall in force upon a fraction of the enemy.

Attacks in flank and rear, which in Strategy mean on the sides and reverse of the theatre of War, are of a very different nature to attacks so called in tactics.

1st. There is no bringing the enemy under two fires, because we cannot fire from one end of a theatre of War to the other.

2nd. The apprehension of losing the line of retreat is very much less, for the spaces in Strategy are so great that they cannot be barred as in tactics.

3rd. In Strategy, on account of the extent of space embraced, the efficacy of interior, that is of shorter lines, is much greater, and this forms a great safeguard against attacks from several directions.

4th. A new principle makes its appearance in the sensibility, which is felt as to lines of communication, that is in the effect which is produced by merely interrupting them.

Now it confessedly lies in the nature of things, that on account of the greater spaces in Strategy, the enveloping attack, or the attack from several sides, as a rule is only possible for the side which has the initiative, that is the offensive, and that the defensive is not in a condition, as he is in tactics, in the course of the action, to turn the tables on the enemy by surrounding him, because he has it not in his power either to draw up his forces with the necessary depth relatively, or to conceal them sufficiently: but then, of what use is the facility of enveloping to the offensive, if its advantages are not forthcoming? We could not therefore bring forward the enveloping attack in Strategy as a principle of victory in general, if its influence on the lines of communication did not come into consideration. But this factor is seldom great at the first moment, when attack and defence first meet, and while they are still opposed to each other in their original position; it only becomes great as a campaign advances, when the offensive in the enemy's country is by degrees brought into the condition of

defensive; then the lines of communication of this new party acting on the defensive, become weak, and the party originally on the defensive, in assuming the offensive can derive advantage from this weakness. But who does not see that this casual superiority of the attack is not to be carried to the credit of the offensive in general, for it is in reality created out of the superior relations of the defensive.

The fourth principle, the *Assistance of the Theatre of War,* is naturally an advantage on the side of the defensive. If the attacking Army opens the campaign, it breaks away from its own theatre, and is thus weakened, that is, it leaves fortresses and depôts of all kinds behind it. The greater the sphere of operations which must be traversed, the more it will be weakened (by marches and garrisons); the Army on the defensive continues to keep up its connection with everything, that is, it enjoys the support of its fortresses, is not weakened in any way, and is near to its sources of supply.

The support of the population as a fifth principle is not realised in every defence, for a defensive campaign may be carried on in the enemy's country, but still this principle is only derived from the idea of the defensive, and applies to it in the majority of cases. Besides by this is meant chiefly, although not exclusively, the effect of calling out the last reserves, and even of a national armament, the result of which is that all friction is diminished, and that all resources are sooner forthcoming and flow in more abundantly.

The campaign of 1812, gives as it were in a magnifying glass a very clear illustration of the effect of the means specified under principles 3 and 4. 500,000 men passed the Niemen, 120,000 fought at Borodino, and much fewer arrived at Moscow.

We may say that the effect itself of this stupendous attempt was so disastrous that even if the Russians had not assumed any offensive at all, they would still have been secure from any fresh attempt at invasion for a considerable time. It is true that with the exception of Sweden there is no country in Europe which is situated like Russia, but the efficient principle is always the same, the only distinction being in the greater or less degree of its strength.

If we add to the fourth and fifth principles, the consideration that these forces of the defensive belong to the original defensive, that is the defensive carried on in our own soil, and that they are much weaker if the defence takes place in an enemy's country and is mixed up with an offensive undertaking, then from that there is a new disadvantage for the offensive, much the same as above, in respect to the third principle; for the offensive is just as little composed entirely of active elements, as the defensive of mere warding off blows; indeed every attack which does not lead directly to peace must inevitably end in the defensive.

Now, if all defensive elements which are brought into use in the attack are weakened by its nature, that is by belonging to the attack, then this must also be considered as a general disadvantage of the offensive.

This is far from being an idle piece of logical refinement, on the contrary we should rather say that in it lies the chief disadvantage of the offensive in general, and

therefore from the very commencement of, as well as throughout every combination for a strategic attack, most particular attention ought to be directed to this point, that is to the defensive, which may follow, as we shall see more plainly when we come to the book on plans of campaigns.

The great moral forces which at times saturate the being of War, as it were with a leaven of their own, which therefore the Commander in certain cases can use to assist the other means at his disposal, are to be supposed as much on the side of the defensive as of the offensive; at least those which are more especially in favour of the attack, such as confusion and disorder in the enemy's ranks—do not generally appear until after the decisive stroke is given, and consequently seldom contribute beforehand to produce that result.

We think we have now sufficiently established our proposition, that the *defensive is a stronger form of war than the offensive;* * but there still remains to be mentioned one small factor hitherto unnoticed. It is the high spirit, the feeling of superiority in an Army which springs from a consciousness of belonging to the attacking party. The thing is in itself a fact, but the feeling soon merges into the more general and more powerful one which is imparted by victory or defeat, by the talent or incapacity of the General.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER IV

CONVERGENCE OF ATTACK AND DIVERGENCE OF DEFENCE

These two conceptions, these forms in the use of offensive and defensive, appear so frequently in theory and reality, that the imagination is involuntarily disposed to look upon them as intrinsic forms, necessary to attack and defence, which, however, is not really the case, as the smallest reflection will show. We take the earliest opportunity of examining them, that we may obtain once for all clear ideas respecting them, and that, in proceeding with our consideration of the relations of attack and defence, we may be able to set these conceptions aside altogether, and not have our attention for ever distracted by the appearance of advantage and the reverse which they cast upon things. We treat them here as pure abstractions, extract the conception of them like an essence, and reserve our remarks on the part which it has in actual things for a future time.

The defending party, both in tactics and in Strategy, is supposed to be waiting in expectation, therefore standing, whilst the assailant is imagined to be in movement, and in movement expressly directed against that standing adversary. It follows from this, necessarily, that turning and enveloping is at the option of the assailant only, that is to say, as long as his movement and the immobility of the defensive continue. This freedom of choice of the mode of attack, whether it shall be convergent or not, according as it shall appear advantageous or otherwise, ought to be reckoned as an advantage to the offensive in general. But this choice is free only in tactics; it is not always allowed in Strategy. In the first, the points on which the wings rest are hardly ever absolutely secure; but they are very frequently so in Strategy, as when the front to be defended stretches in a straight line from one sea to another, or from one neutral territory to another. In such cases, the attack cannot be made in a convergent form, and the liberty of choice is limited. It is limited in a still more embarrassing manner if the assailant is obliged to operate by converging lines. Russia and France cannot attack Germany in any other way than by converging lines; therefore they cannot attack with their forces united. Now if we assume as granted that the concentric form in the action of forces in the majority of cases is the weaker form, then the advantage which the assailant possesses in the greater freedom of choice may probably be completely outweighed by the disadvantage, in other cases, of being compelled to make use of the weaker form.

We proceed to examine more closely the action of these forms, both in tactics and in Strategy.

It has been considered one of the chief advantages of giving a concentric direction to forces, that is, operating from the circumference of a circle towards the centre, that the further the forces advance, the nearer they approach to each other; the fact is true, but the supposed advantage is not; for the tendency to union is going on equally on both

sides; consequently, the equilibrium is not disturbed. It is the same in the dispersion of force by eccentric movements.

But another and a real advantage is, that forces operating on converging lines direct their action towards a *common point,* those operating on diverging lines do not.—Now what are the effects of the action in the two cases? Here we must separate tactics from strategy.

We shall not push the analysis too far, and therefore confine ourselves to the following points as the advantages of the action in tactics.

1. A cross fire, or, at least, an increased effect of fire, as soon as all is brought within a certain range.

2. Attack of one and the same point from several sides.

3. The cutting off the retreat.

The interception of a retreat may be also conceived strategically, but then it is plainly much more difficult, because great spaces are not easily blocked. The attack upon one and the same body from several quarters is generally more effectual and decisive, the smaller this body is, the nearer it approaches to the lowest limit—that of a single combatant. An Army can easily give battle on several sides, a Division less easily, a battalion only when formed in mass, a single man not at all. Now Strategy, in its province, deals with large masses of men, extensive spaces and considerable duration of time; with tactics, it is the reverse. From this follows that the attack from several sides in Strategy cannot have the same results as in tactics.

The effect of fire does not come within the scope of Strategy; but in its place there is something else. It is that tottering of the base which every Army feels when there is a victorious enemy in its rear, whether near or far off.

It is, therefore, certain that the concentric action of forces has an advantage in this way, that the action or effect against *a* is at the same time one against *b,* without its force against *a* being diminished, and that the action against *b* is likewise action against *a.* The whole, therefore, is not *a*+*b,* but something more; and this advantage is produced both in tactics and Strategy, although somewhat differently in each.

Now what is there in the eccentric or divergent action of forces to oppose to this advantage? Plainly the advantage of having the forces in greater proximity to each other, and the moving on *interior lines.* It is unnecessary to demonstrate how this can become such a multiplier of forces that the assailant cannot encounter the advantage it gives his opponent unless he has a great superiority of force.—When once the defensive has adopted the principle of movement (movement which certainly commences later than that of the assailant, but still time enough to break the chains of paralysing inaction), then this advantage of greater concentration and the interior lines tends much more decisively, and in most cases more effectually, towards victory than the concentric form of the attack. But victory must precede the realisation of this superiority; we must conquer before we can think of cutting off an enemy's retreat. In

short, we see that there is here a relation similar to that which exists between attack and defence generally; the concentric form leads to brilliant results, the advantages of the eccentric are more secure: the former is the weaker form with the positive object; the latter, the stronger form with the negative object. In this way these two forms seem to us to be brought nearly to an even balance. Now if we add to this that the defence, not being always absolute, is also not always precluded from using its forces on converging lines, we have no longer a right to believe that this converging form is alone sufficient to ensure to the offensive a superiority over the defensive universally, and thus we set ourselves free from the influence which that opinion usually exercises over the judgment, whenever there is an opportunity.

What has been said up to the present, relates to both tactics and Strategy; we have still a most important point to bring forward, which applies to Strategy only. The advantage of interior lines increases with the distances to which these lines relate. In distances of a few thousand yards, or a couple of miles, the time which is gained, cannot of course be as much as in distances of several days' march, or indeed, of one hundred or one hundred and fifty miles; the first, that is, the small distances, concerns tactics, the greater ones belong to Strategy. But, although we certainly require more time to reach an object in Strategy, than in tactics, and an Army is not so quickly defeated as a battalion, still, these periods of time in Strategy can only increase up to a certain point; that is, they can only last until a battle takes place, or, perhaps, over and above that, for a few days during which a battle may be avoided without serious loss. Further, there is a much greater difference in the real start in advance, which is gained in one case, as compared with the other. Owing to the insignificance of the distances in tactics, the movements of one Army in a battle take place almost in sight of the other; the Army, therefore, on the exterior line, will generally very soon be made aware of what his adversary is doing. From the long distances, with which Strategy has to deal, it very seldom happens that the movement of one Army is not concealed from the other for at least a day, and there are numerous instances, in which especially if the movement is only partial, such as a considerable detachment, that it remains secret for weeks.—It is easy to see, what a great advantage this power of concealing movements must be to that party, who through the nature of his position has reason to desire it most.

We here close our considerations on the convergent and divergent use of forces, and the relation of those forms to attack and defence, proposing to return to the subject at another time.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER V

CHARACTER OF STRATEGIC DEFENSIVE

We have already explained what the defensive is generally, namely, nothing more than a stronger form of carrying on War (page 133), by means of which we endeavour to wrest a victory, in order, after having gained a superiority, to pass over to the offensive, that is to the positive object of War.

Even if the intention of a War is only the maintenance of the existing situation of things, the *status quo,* still a mere parrying of a blow is something quite contradictory to the conception of the term War, because the conduct of War is unquestionably no mere state of endurance. If the defender has obtained an important advantage, then the defensive form has done its part, and under the protection of this success he must give back the blow, otherwise he exposes himself to certain destruction; common sense points out that iron should be struck while it is hot, that we should use the advantage gained to guard against a second attack. How, when, and where this reaction shall commence is subject certainly to a number of other conditions, which we can only explain hereafter. (For the present we keep to this, that we must always consider this transition to an offensive return as a natural tendency of the defensive, therefore as an essential element of the same, and always conclude that there is something wrong in the management of a War when a victory gained through the defensive form is not turned to good account in any manner, but allowed to wither away.)

A swift and vigorous assumption of the offensive—the flashing sword of vengeance—is the most brilliant point in the defensive; he who does not at once think of it at the right moment, or rather he who does not from the first include this transition in his idea of the defensive will never understand the superiority of the defensive as a form of War; he will be for ever thinking only of the means which will be consumed by the enemy and gained by ourselves through the offensive, which means however depend not on tying the knot, but on untying it. Further, it is a stupid confusion of ideas if, under the term offensive, we always understand sudden attack or surprise, and consequently under defensive imagine nothing but embarrassment and confusion.

It is true that a conqueror makes his determination to go to War sooner than the unconscious defender, and if he knows how to keep his measures properly secret, he may also perhaps take the defender unawares; but that is a thing quite foreign to War itself, for it should not be so. War actually takes place more for the defensive than for the conqueror, for invasion only calls forth resistance, and it is not until there is resistance that there is War. A conqueror is always a lover of peace (as Buonaparte always asserted of himself); he would like to make his entry into our State unopposed; in order to prevent this, we must choose War, and therefore also make preparations, that is in other words, it is just the weak, or that side which must defend itself, which

should be always armed in order not to be taken by surprise; so it is willed by the Art of War.

The appearance of one side sooner than the other in the theatre of War depends, besides, in most cases on things quite different from a view to offensive or defensive. But although a view to one or other of these forms is not the cause, it is often the result of this priority of appearance. Whoever is first ready will on that account go to work offensively, if the advantage of surprise is sufficiently great to make it expedient; and the party who is the last to be ready can only then in some measure compensate for the disadvantage which threatens him by the advantages of the defensive.

At the same time, it must be looked upon in general as an advantage for the offensive, that he can make that good use of being the first in the field which has been noticed in the third book; only this general advantage is not an absolute necessity in every case.

If, therefore, we imagine to ourselves a defensive, such as it should be, we must suppose it with every possible preparation of all means, with an Army fit for, and inured to, War, with a General who does not wait for his adversary with anxiety from an embarrassing feeling of uncertainty, but from his own free choice, with cool presence of mind, with fortresses which do not dread a siege, and lastly, with a loyal people who fear the enemy as little as he fears them. With such attributes the defensive will act no such contemptible part in opposition to the offensive, and the latter will not appear such an easy and certain form of War, as it does in the gloomy imaginations of those who can only see in the offensive courage, strength of will, and energy; in the defensive, helplessness and apathy.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER VI

EXTENT OF THE MEANS OF DEFENCE

We have shown in the second and third chapters of this book how the defence has a natural advantage in the employment of those things, which,—irrespective of the absolute strength and qualities of the combatant force,—influence the tactical as well as the strategic result, namely, the advantage of ground, sudden attack, attack from several directions (converging form of attack), the assistance of the theatre of War, support of the people, and the utilising great moral forces. We think it useful now to cast again a glance over the extent of the means which are at command of the defensive in particular, and which are to be regarded as the columns of the different orders of architecture in his edifice.

1.

LANDWEHR.

* This force has been used in modern times to combat the enemy on foreign soil; and it is not to be denied that its organisation in many states, for instance in Prussia, is of such a kind, that it may almost be regarded as part of the standing Army, therefore it does not belong to the defensive exclusively. At the same time, we must not overlook the fact, that the very great use made of it in 1813-14-15 was the result of defensive War; that it is organised in very few places to the same degree as in Prussia, and in so far as its organisation falls below the level of complete efficiency, it is better suited for the defensive than for the offensive. But besides that, there always lies in the idea of a “Landwehr” the notion of a very extensive more or less voluntary co-operation of the whole mass of the people in support of the War, with all their physical powers, as well as with their feelings, and a ready sacrifice of all they possess. The more its organisation deviates from this, so much the more the force thus created will become a standing Army under another name, and the more it will have the advantages of such a force; but it will also lose in proportion the advantages which belong properly to a patriotic levy, viz., those of being a force, the limits of which are undefined, and capable of being easily increased by appealing to the feelings and patriotism of the people. In these things lies the essence of a militia; in its organisation, latitude must be allowed for this co-operation of the whole people; if we seek to obtain something extraordinary from a militia, we are only following a shadow.

The close relationship between this essence of a militia system, and the conception of the defensive, it not to be denied, neither can it be denied that such a militia will always belong more to the defensive form than to the offensive, and that it will manifest chiefly in the defensive, those effects through which it surpasses the attack.

2.

FORTRESSES.

The assistance afforded by fortresses to the offensive does not extend beyond what is given by those close upon the frontiers, and is only feeble in influence; the assistance which the defensive can derive from this reaches further into the heart of the country, and therefore more of them can be brought into use, and their utility itself differs in the degree of its intensity. A fortress which is made the object of a regular siege, and holds out, is naturally of more weight in the scales of War, than one which by the strength of its works merely forbids the idea of its capture, and therefore neither occupies nor consumes any of the enemy's forces.

3.

THE PEOPLE.

Although the influence of a single inhabitant of the theatre of War on the course of the war in most cases is not more perceptible than the co-operation of a drop of water in a whole river, still even in cases where there is no such thing as a general rising of the people, the *total influence* of the inhabitants of a country in War is anything but imperceptible. Every thing goes on easier in our own country, provided it is not opposed by the general feeling of the population. All contributions, great and small, are only yielded to the enemy under the compulsion of direct force; that operation must be undertaken by the troops, and cost the employment of many men as well as great exertions. The defensive receives all he wants, if not always voluntarily, as in cases of enthusiastic devotion, still through the long-used channels of submission to the State on the part of the citizens, which has become second nature, and which besides that, is enforced by the terrors of the law, with which the Army has nothing to do. But the spontaneous co-operation of the people, proceeding from true attachment, is in all cases most important, as it never fails in all those points where service can be rendered without any sacrifice. We shall only notice one point, which is of the highest importance in War, that is *intelligence,* not so much special, great, and important information through persons employed, as that respecting the innumerable little matters in connection with which the daily service of an Army is carried on in uncertainty, and with regard to which a good understanding with the inhabitants gives the defensive a general advantage.

If we ascend from this quite general and never failing beneficial influence, up to special cases in which the populace begins to take part in the War, and then further up to the highest degree, where as in Spain, the War, as regards its leading events, is chiefly a War carried on by the people themselves, we may see that we have here virtually a new power rather than a manifestation of increased co-operation on the part of the people, and therefore that—

4.

THE NATIONAL ARMAMENT,

or general call to arms, may be considered as a particular means of defence.

5.

ALLIES.

Finally, we may further reckon *allies* as the last support of the defensive. Naturally we do not mean ordinary allies, which the assailant may likewise have; we speak of those *essentially interested in maintaining* the integrity of the country. If for instance we look at the various States composing Europe at the present time, we find (without speaking of a systematically regulated balance of power and interests, as that does not exist, and therefore is often with justice disputed) that the great and small States and interests of nations are interwoven with each other in a most diversified and changeable manner, each of these points of intersection forming a binding knot, for in it the direction of the one gives equilibrium to the direction of the other; by all these knots therefore, evidently a more or less compact connection of the whole will be formed, and this general connection must be partially overturned by every change. In this manner the whole relations of all States to each other serve rather to preserve the stability of the whole than to produce changes, that is to say, *this tendency* to stability exists in general.

This we conceive to be the true notion of a balance of power, and in this sense it will always of itself come into existence, wherever there are extensive connections between civilised States.

How far this tendency of the general interests to the maintenance of the existing state of things is efficient is another question; at all events we can conceive some changes in the relations of single States to each other, which promote this efficiency of the whole, and others which obstruct it. In the first case they are efforts to perfect the political balance, and as these have the same tendency as the universal interests, they will also be supported by the majority of these interests. But in the other case, they are of an abnormal nature, undue activity on the part of some single States, real maladies; still that these should make their appearance in a whole with so little cohesion as an assemblage of great and little States is not to be wondered at, for we see the same in that marvellously organised whole, the natural world.

If in answer we are reminded of instances in history where single States have effected important changes, solely for their own benefit, without any effort on the part of the whole to prevent the same, or cases where a single State has been able to raise itself so much above others as to become almost the arbiter of the whole,—then our answer is that these examples by no means prove that a tendency of the interests of the whole in favour of stability does not exist, they only show that its action was not powerful enough at the moment. The effort towards an object is a different thing from the

motion towards it. At the same time it is anything but a nullity, of which we have the best exemplification in the dynamics of the heavens.

We say, the tendency of equilibrium is to the maintenance of the existing state, whereby we certainly assume that rest, that is equilibrium, existed in this state; for where that has been already disturbed, tension has already commenced, and there the equilibrium may certainly also tend to a change. But if we look to the nature of the thing, this change can only affect some few separate States, never the majority, and therefore it is certain that the preservation of the latter is supported and secured through the collective interests of the whole—certain also that each single State which has not against it a tension of the whole will have more interest in favour of its defence than opposition to it.

Whoever laughs at these reflections as utopian dreams, does so at the expense of philosophical truth. Although we may learn from it the relations which the essential elements of things bear to each other, it would be rash to attempt to deduce laws from the same by which each individual case should be governed without regard to any accidental disturbing influences. But when a person, in the words of a great writer, "*never rises above anecdote,*" builds all history on it, begins always with the most individual points, with the climaxes of events, and only goes down just so deep as he finds a motive for doing, and therefore never reaches to the lowest foundation of the predominant general relations, his opinion will never have any value beyond the one case, and to him, that which philosophy proves to be applicable to cases in general, will only appear a dream.

Without that general striving for rest and the maintenance of the existing condition of things, a number of civilised States could not long live quietly side by side; they must necessarily become fused into one. Therefore, as Europe has existed in its present state for more than a thousand years, we can only regard the fact as a result of that tendency of the collective interests; and if the protection afforded by the whole has not in every instance proved strong enough to preserve the independence of each individual State, such exceptions are to be regarded as irregularities in the life of the whole, which have not destroyed that life, but have themselves been mastered by it.

It would be superfluous to go over the mass of events in which changes which would have disturbed the balance too much have been prevented or reversed by the opposition more or less openly declared of other States. They will be seen by the most cursory glance at history. We only wish to say a few words about a case which is always on the lips of those who ridicule the idea of a political balance, and because it appears specially applicable here as a case in which an unoffending State, acting on the defensive, succumbed without receiving any foreign aid. We allude to Poland. That a State of eight millions of inhabitants should disappear, should be divided amongst three others without a sword being drawn by any of the rest of the European States, appears, at first sight, a fact which either proves conclusively the general inefficiency of the political balance, or at least shows that it is inefficient to a very great extent in some instances. That a State of such extent should disappear, a prey to others, and those already the most powerful (Russia and Austria), appears such a very extreme case that it will be said, if an event of this description could not rouse the

collective interests of all free States, then the efficient action which this collective interest should display for the benefit of individual States is imaginary. But we still maintain that a single case, however striking, does not negative the general truth, and we assert next that the downfall of Poland is also not so unaccountable as may at first sight appear. Was Poland really to be regarded as a European State, as a homogeneous member of the community of nations in Europe? No! It was a Tartar State, which instead of being located, like the Tartars of the Crimea, on the Black Sea, on the confines of the territory inhabited by the European community, had its habitation in the midst of that community on the Vistula. We neither desire by this to speak disrespectfully of the Poles, nor to justify the partition of their country, but only to look at things as they really are. For a hundred years this country had ceased to play any independent part in European politics, and had been only an apple of discord for the others. It was impossible that for a continuance it could maintain itself amongst the others with its state and constitution unaltered: an essential alteration in its Tartar nature would have been the work of not less than half, perhaps a whole century, supposing the chief men of that nation had been in favour of it. But these men were far too thorough Tartars to wish any such change. Their turbulent political condition, and their unbounded levity went hand in hand, and so they tumbled into the abyss. Long before the partition of Poland the Russians had become quite at home there, the idea of its being an independent State, with boundaries of its own, had ceased, and nothing is more certain than that Poland, if it had not been partitioned, must have become a Russian province. If this had not been so, and if Poland had been a State capable of making a defence, the three Powers would not so readily have proceeded to its partition, and those Powers most interested in maintaining its integrity, like France, Sweden, and Turkey, would have been able to co-operate in a very different manner towards its preservation. But if the maintenance of a State is entirely dependent on external support, then certainly too much is asked.

The partition of Poland had been talked of frequently for a hundred years, and for that time the country had been not like a private house, but like a public road, on which foreign armies were constantly jostling one another. Was it the business of other States to put a stop to this; were they constantly to keep the sword drawn to preserve the political inviolability of the Polish frontier? That would have been to demand a moral impossibility. Poland was at this time politically little better than an uninhabited steppe; and as it is impossible that defenceless steppes, lying in the midst of other countries should be guarded for ever from invasion, therefore it was impossible to preserve the integrity of this State, as it was called. For all these reasons there is as little to cause wonder in the noiseless downfall of Poland as in the silent conquest of the Crimean Tartars; the Turks had a greater interest in upholding the latter than any European State had in preserving the independence of Poland, but they saw that it would be a vain effort to try to protect a defenceless steppe.—

We return to our subject, and think we have proved that the defensive in general may count more on foreign aid than the offensive; he may reckon the more certainly on it in proportion as his existence is of importance to others, that is to say, the sounder and more vigorous his political and military condition.

Of course the subjects which have been here enumerated as means properly belonging to the defensive will not be at the command of each particular defensive. Sometimes one, sometimes another, may be wanting; but they all belong to the idea of the defensive as a whole.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER VII

MUTUAL ACTION AND REACTION OF ATTACK AND DEFENCE

We shall now consider attack and defence separately, as far as they can be separated from each other. We commence with the defensive for the following reasons:—It is certainly very natural and necessary to base the rules for the defence upon those of the offensive, and *vice versâ;* but one of the two must still have a third point of departure, if the whole chain of ideas is to have a beginning, that is, to be possible. The first question concerns this point.

If we reflect upon the commencement of War philosophically, the conception of War does not originate properly with the *offensive,* as that form has for its absolute object, not so much *fighting* as the *taking possession of something.* The idea of War arises first by the *defensive,* for that form has the battle for its direct object, as warding off and fighting plainly are one and the same. The warding off is directed entirely against the attack; therefore supposes it, necessarily; but the attack is not directed against the warding off; it is directed upon something else—the *taking possession;* consequently does not presuppose the warding off. It lies, therefore, in the nature of things, that the party who first brings the element of War into action, the party from whose point of view two opposite parties are first conceived, also establishes the first laws of War, and that party is the *defender.* We are not speaking of any individual case; we are only dealing with a general, an abstract case, which theory imagines in order to determine the course it is to take.

By this we now know where to look for this fixed point, outside and independent of the reciprocal effect of attack and defence, and find that it lies in the defensive.

If this is a logical consequence, the defender must have motives of action, even when as yet he knows nothing of the intentions of the offensive; and these motives of action must determine the organisation of the means of fighting. On the other hand, as long as the offensive knows nothing of the plans of his adversary, there are no motives of action for him, no grounds for the application of his military means. He can do nothing more than take these means along with him, that is, take possession by means of his Army. And thus it is also in point of fact; for to carry about the apparatus of War is not to use it; and the assailant who takes such things with him, on the quite general supposition that he may require to use them, and who, instead of taking possession of a country by official functionaries and proclamations, does so with an Army, has not as yet committed, properly speaking, any act of warfare; but the defender who both collects his apparatus of War, and disposes of it with a view to fighting, is the first to exercise an act which really accords with the conception of War.

The second question is now: what is theoretically the nature of the motives which must arise in the mind of the defensive first, before the attack itself is thought of? Plainly the advance made with a view to taking possession, which we have imagined extraneous to the War, but which is the foundation of the opening chapter. The defence has to oppose this advance; therefore in idea we must connect this advance with the land (country); and thus arise the first most general measures of the defensive. When these are once established, then upon them the application of the offensive is founded, and from a consideration of the means which the offensive then applies, new principles again of defence are derived. Now here is the reciprocal effect which theory can follow in its inquiry, as long as it finds the fresh results which are produced are worth examination.

This little analysis was necessary in order to give more clearness and stability to what follows, such as it is; it is not made for the field of battle, neither is it for the Generals of the future; it is only for the army of theorists, who have made a great deal too light of the subject hitherto.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER VIII

METHODS OF RESISTANCE

The conception of the defence is warding off; in this warding off lies the state of expectance, and this state of expectance we have taken as the chief characteristic of the defence, and at the same time as its principal advantage.

But as the defensive in War cannot be a state of endurance, therefore this state of expectation is only a relative, not an absolute state; the subjects with which this waiting for is connected are, as regards space, either the country, or the theatre of War, or the position, and, as regards time, the War, the campaign, or the battle. That these subjects are no immutable units, but only the centres of certain limited regions, which run into one another and are blended together, we know; but in practical life we must often be contented only to group things together, not rigidly to separate them; and these conceptions have, in the real world itself, sufficient distinctness to be made use of as centres round which we may group other ideas.

A defence of the country, therefore, only waits for attack on the country; a defence of a theatre of War an attack on the theatre of War; and the defence of a position the attack of that position. Every positive, and consequently more or less offensive, kind of action which the defensive uses after the above period of waiting for, does not negative the idea of the continuance of the defensive; for the state of expectation, which is the chief sign of the same, and its chief advantage, has been realised.

The conception of War, campaign, and battle, in relation to time, are coupled respectively with the ideas of country, theatre of War, and position, and on that account they have the same relations to the present subject.

The defensive consists, therefore, of two heterogeneous parts, the state of expectancy and that of action. By having referred the first to a definite subject, and therefore given it precedence of action, we have made it possible to connect the two into one whole. But an act of the defensive, especially a considerable one, such as a campaign or a whole War, does not, as regards time, consist of two great halves, the first the state of mere expectation, the second entirely of a state of action; it is a state of alternation between the two, in which the state of expectation can be traced through the whole act of the defensive like a continuous thread.

We give to this state of expectation so much importance simply because it is demanded by the nature of the thing. In preceding theories of War it has certainly never been brought forward as an independent conception, but in reality it has always served as a guide, although often unobserved. It is such a fundamental part of the whole act of War, that the one without the other appears almost impossible; and we shall therefore often have occasion to recur to it hereafter by calling attention to its effects in the dynamic action of the powers called into play.

For the present we shall employ ourselves in explaining how the principle of the state of expectation runs through the act of defence, and what are the successive stages in the defence itself which have their origin in this state.

In order to establish our ideas on subjects of a more simple kind, we shall defer the defence of a country, a subject on which a very great diversity of political influences exercises a powerful effect, until we come to the book on the Plan of War; and as on the other hand, the defensive act in a position or in a battle is matter of tactics, which only forms a starting-point for strategic action as a *whole,* we shall take the defence of a *theatre of War* as being the subject, in which we can best show the relations of the defensive.

We have said, that the state of expectation and of action—which last is always a counterstroke, therefore a reaction—are both essential parts of the defensive; for without the first, there would be no defensive, without the second no War. This view led us before to the idea of the defensive being nothing but the *stronger form of War, in order the more certainly to conquer the enemy;* this idea we must adhere to throughout, partly because it alone saves us in the end from absurdity, partly, because the more vividly it is impressed on the mind, so much the greater is the energy it imparts to the whole act of the defensive.

If therefore we should make a distinction between the reaction, constituting the second element of the defensive, and the other element which consists in reality in the repulse only of the enemy;—if we should look at expulsion from the country, from the theatre of War, in such a light as to see in it alone the *necessary thing* by itself, the ultimate objects beyond the attainment of which our efforts should not be carried, and on the other hand, regard the possibility of a reaction carried still further, and *passing into the real strategic attack,* as a subject foreign to and of no consequence to the defence,—such a view would be *in opposition to* the nature of the idea above represented, and therefore we cannot look upon this distinction as really existing, and we must adhere to our assertion, that the idea of *revenge* must always be at the bottom of every defensive; for otherwise, however much damage might be occasioned to the enemy, by a successful issue of the first reaction, there would always be a deficiency in the necessary balance of the dynamic relations of the attack and defence.

We say, then, the defensive is the more powerful form of making War, in order to overcome the enemy more easily, and we leave to circumstances to determine whether this victory over the object against which the defence was commenced is sufficient or not.

But as the defensive is inseparable from the idea of the state of expectation, that object, *the defeat of the enemy,* only exists conditionally, that is, only if the offensive takes place; and otherwise (that is, if the offensive stroke does not follow) of course the defensive is contented with the maintenance of its possessions; this maintenance is therefore its object in the state of expectation, that is, its immediate object; and it is only as long as it contents itself with this more modest end, that it preserves the advantages of the stronger form of War.

If we suppose an Army with its theatre of War intended for defence, the defence may be made as follows:

1. By attacking the enemy the moment he enters the theatre of War (Mollwitz, Hohenfriedberg).

2. By taking up a position close on the frontier, and waiting till the enemy appears with the intention of attacking it, in order then to attack him (Czaslau, Soor, Rosbach). Plainly this second mode of proceeding, partakes more of endurance, we "wait for" longer; and although the *time* gained by it as compared with that gained in the first, may be very little, or none at all if the enemy's attack actually takes place, still, the battle which in the first case was certain, is in the second much less certain, perhaps the enemy may not be able to make up his mind to attack; the advantage of the "waiting for," is then at once greater.

3. By the Army in such position not only awaiting the decision of the enemy to fight a battle, that is his appearance in front of the position, but also waiting to be actually assaulted (in order to keep to the history of the same General,—Bunzelwitz). In such case, we fight a regular defensive battle, which however, as we have before said, may include offensive movements with one or more parts of the Army. Here also, as before, the gain of time does not come into consideration, but the determination of the enemy is put to a new proof; many a one has advanced to the attack, and at the last moment, or after one attempt given it up, finding the position of the enemy too strong.

4. By the Army transferring its defence to the heart of the country. The object of retreating into the interior is to cause a diminution in the enemy's strength, and to wait until its effects are such that his forward march is of itself discontinued, or at least until the resistance which we can offer him at the end of his career is such as he can no longer overcome.

This case is exhibited in the simplest and plainest manner, when the defensive can leave one or more of his fortresses behind him, which the offensive is obliged to besiege or blockade. It is clear in itself, how much his forces must be weakened in this way, and what a chance there is of an opportunity for the defensive to attack at some point with superior forces.

But even when there are no fortresses, a retreat into the interior of the country may procure by degrees for the defender that necessary equilibrium or that superiority which was wanting to him on the frontier; for every forward movement in the strategic attack lessens its force, partly absolutely, partly through the separation of forces which becomes necessary, of which we shall say more under the head of the "Attack." We anticipate this truth here as we consider it as a fact sufficiently exemplified in all wars.

Now in this fourth case the gain of time is to be looked upon as the principal point of all. If the assailant lays siege to our fortresses, we have time till their probable fall (which may be some weeks or in some cases months); but if the weakening, that is the expenditure, of the force of the attack is caused by the advance, and the garrisoning or

occupation of certain points, therefore merely through the length of the assailant's march, then the time gained in most cases becomes greater, and our action is not so much restricted in point of time.

Besides the altered relations between offensive and defensive in regard to power which is brought about at the end of this march, we must bring into account in favour of the defensive an *increased* amount of the *advantage* of the state of "waiting for." Although the assailant by this advance may not in reality be weakened to such a degree that he is unfit to attack our main body where he halts, still he will probably want resolution to do so, for that is an act requiring more resolution in the position in which he is now placed, than would have sufficed when operations had not extended beyond the frontier: partly, because the powers are weakened, and no longer in fresh vigour, while the danger is increased; partly, because with an irresolute Commander the possession of that portion of the country which has been obtained is often sufficient to do away with all idea of a battle, because he either really believes or assumes as a pretext, that it is no longer necessary. By the offensive thus declining to attack, the defensive certainly does not acquire, as he would on the frontier, a sufficient result of a negative kind, but still there is a great gain of time.

It is plain that, in all the four methods indicated, the defensive has the benefit of the ground or country, and likewise that he can by that means bring into co-operation his fortresses and the people; moreover these efficient principles increase at each fresh stage of the defence, for they are a chief means of bringing about the weakening of the enemy's force in the fourth stage. Now as the advantages of the "state of expectation"* increase in the same direction, therefore it follows of itself that these stages are to be regarded as a real intensifying of the defence, and that this form of War always gains in strength the more it differs from the offensive. We are not afraid on this account of any one accusing us of holding the opinion that the most passive defence would therefore be the best. The action of resistance is not weakened at each new stage, it is only *delayed, postponed.* But the assertion that a stouter resistance can be offered in a strong judiciously entrenched position, and also that when the enemy has exhausted his strength in fruitless efforts against such a position a more effective counterstroke may be levelled at him, is surely not unreasonable. Without the advantage of position Daun would not have gained the victory at Kollin, and as Frederick the Great only brought off 18,000 men from the field of battle, if Daun had pursued him with more energy the victory might have been one of the most brilliant in military history.

We therefore maintain, that at each new stage of the defensive the preponderance, or more correctly speaking, the counterpoise increases in favour of the defensive, and consequently there is also a gain in power for the counter-stroke.

Now are these advantages of the increasing force of the defensive to be had for nothing? By no means, for the sacrifice with which they are purchased increases in the same proportion.

If we wait for the enemy within our own theatre of War, however near the border of our territory the decision takes place, still this theatre of War is entered by the enemy,

which must entail a sacrifice on our part; whereas, had we made the attack, this disadvantage would have fallen on the enemy. If we do not proceed at once to meet the enemy and attack him, our loss will be the greater, and the extent of the country which the enemy will overrun, as well as the time which he requires to reach our position, will continually increase. If we wish to give battle on the defensive, and we therefore leave its determination and the choice of time for it to the enemy, then perhaps he may remain for some time in occupation of the territory which he has taken, and the time which through his deferred decision we are allowed to gain will in that manner be paid for by us. The sacrifices which must be made become still more burdensome if a retreat into the heart of the country takes place.

But all these sacrifices on the part of the defensive, at most only occasion him in general a loss of power which merely diminishes his military force *indirectly,* therefore, at a later period, and not directly, and often so indirectly that its effect is hardly felt at all. The defensive, therefore, strengthens himself for the present moment at the expense of the future, that is to say, he borrows, as every one must who is too poor for the circumstances in which he is placed.

Now, if we would examine the result of these different forms of resistance, we must look to the *object of the aggression.* This is, to obtain possession of our theatre of War, or, at least, of an important part of it, for under the conception of the whole, at least the greater part must be understood, as the possession of a strip of territory a few miles in extent is, as a rule, of no real consequence in Strategy. As long, therefore, as the aggressor is not in possession of this, that is, as long as from fear of our force he has either not yet advanced to the attack of the theatre of War, or has not sought to find us in our position, or has declined the combat we offer, the object of the defence is fulfilled, and the effects of the measures taken for the defensive have therefore been successful. At the same time this result is only a *negative one,* which certainly cannot directly give the force for a real counter-stroke. But it may give it *indirectly,* that is to say, it is on the way to do so; for the time which elapses *the aggression loses,* and every loss of time is a disadvantage, and must weaken in some way the party who suffers the loss.

Therefore in the first three stages of the defensive, that is, if it takes place on the frontier, *the non-decision is already a result in favour of the defensive.*

But it is not so with the fourth.

If the enemy lays siege to our fortresses we must relieve them in time, to do this we must therefore bring about the decision by positive action.

This is likewise the case if the enemy follows us into the interior of the country without besieging any of our places. Certainly in this case we have more time; we can wait until the enemy's weakness is extreme, but still it is always an indispensable condition that we are at last to act. The enemy is now, perhaps, in possession of the whole territory which was the object of his aggression, but it is only lent to him; the tension continues, and the decision is yet pending. As long as the defensive is gaining strength and the aggressor daily becoming weaker, the postponement of the decision

is in the interest of the former: but as soon as the culminating point of this progressive advantage has arrived, as it must do, were it only by the ultimate influence of the general loss to which the offensive has exposed himself, it is time for the defender to proceed to action, and bring on a solution, and the advantage of the "waiting for" may be considered as completely exhausted.

There can naturally be no point of time fixed generally at which this happens, for it is determined by a multitude of circumstances and relations; but it may be observed that the winter is usually a natural turning point. If we cannot prevent the enemy from wintering in the territory which he has seized, then, as a rule, it must be looked upon as given up. We have only, however, to call to mind Torres Vedras, to see that this is no general rule.

What is now the solution generally?

We have always supposed it in our observations in the form of a battle; but in reality, this is not necessary, for a number of combinations of battles with separate corps may be imagined, which may bring about a change of affairs, either because they have really ended with bloodshed, or because their probable result makes the retreat of the enemy necessary.

Upon the theatre of War itself there can be no other solution; that is a necessary consequence of our view of War; for, in fact, even if an enemy's Army, merely from want of provisions, commences his retreat, still it takes place from the state of restraint in which our sword holds him; if our Army was not in the way he would soon be able to provision his forces.

Therefore, even at the end of his aggressive course, when the enemy is suffering the heavy penalty of his attack, when detachments, hunger, and sickness have weakened and worn him out, it is still always the dread of our sword which causes him to turn about, and allow everything to go on again as usual. But nevertheless, there is a great difference between such a solution and one which takes place on the frontier.

In the latter case our arms only were opposed to his to keep him in check, or carry destruction into his ranks; but at the end of the aggressive career the enemy's forces, by their own exertions, are half destroyed, by which our arms acquire a totally different value, and therefore, although they are the final they are not the only means which have produced the solution. This destruction of the enemy's forces in the advance prepares the solution, and may do so to this extent, that the mere possibility of a reaction on our part may cause the retreat, consequently a reversal of the situation of affairs. In this case, therefore, we can practically ascribe the solution to nothing else than the efforts made in the advance. Now, in point of fact we shall find no case in which the sword of the defensive has not co-operated; but, for the practical view, it is important to distinguish which of the two principles is the predominating one.

In this sense we think we may say that there is a double solution in the defensive, consequently a double kind for reaction, according as the aggressor is ruined by the *sword of the defensive,* or *by his own efforts.*

That the first kind of solution predominates in the first three steps of the defence, the second in the fourth, is evident in itself; and the latter will, in most cases, only come to pass by the retreat being carried deep into the heart of the country, and nothing but the prospect of that result can be a sufficient motive for such a retreat, considering the great sacrifices which it must cost.

We have, therefore, ascertained that there are two different principles of defence; there are cases in military history where they each appear as separate and distinct as it is possible for an elementary conception to appear in practical life. When Frederick the Great attacked the Austrians at Hohenfriedberg, just as they were descending from the Silesian mountains, their force could not have been weakened in any sensible manner by detachments or fatigue; when, on the other hand, Wellington, in his entrenched camp at Torres Vedras, waited till hunger, and the severity of the weather, had reduced Massena's Army to such extremities that they commenced to retreat of themselves, the sword of the defensive party had no share in the weakening of the enemy's forces. In other cases, in which they are combined with each other in a variety of ways, still, one of them distinctly predominates. This was the case in the year 1812. In that celebrated campaign such a number of bloody encounters took place as might, under other circumstances, have sufficed for a most complete decision by the sword; nevertheless, there is hardly any campaign in which we can so plainly see how the aggressor may be ruined by his own efforts. Of the 300,000 men composing the French centre only about 90,000 reached Moscow; not more than 13,000 were detached; consequently there had been a loss of 197,000 men, and certainly not a third of that loss can be put to account of battles.

All campaigns which are remarkable for temporising, as it is called, like those of the famous Fabius Cunctator, have been calculated chiefly on the destruction of the enemy by his own efforts. This principle has been the leading one in many campaigns without that point being almost ever mentioned; and it is only when we disregard the specious reasoning of historians, and look at things clearly with our own eyes, that we are led to this real cause of many a solution.

By this we believe we have unravelled sufficiently those ideas which lie at the root of the defensive, and that in the two great kinds of defence we have shown plainly and made intelligible how the principle of the waiting for runs through the whole system and connects itself with positive action in such a manner that, sooner or later, action does take place, and that then the advantage of the attitude of waiting for appears to be exhausted.

We think, now, that in this way we have gone over and brought into view everything comprised in the province of the defensive. At the same time, there are subjects of sufficient importance in themselves to form separate chapters, that is, points for consideration in themselves, and these we must also study; for example, the nature and influence of fortified places, entrenched camps, defence of mountains and rivers, operations against the flank, &c., &c. We shall treat of them in subsequent chapters, but none of these things lie outside of the preceding sequence of ideas; they are only to be regarded as a closer application of it to locality and circumstances. That order of ideas has been deduced from the conception of the defensive, and from its relation to

the offensive; we have connected these simple ideas with reality, and therefore shown the way by which we may return again from the reality to those simple ideas, and obtain firm ground, and not be forced in reasoning to take refuge on points of support which themselves vanish in the air.

But resistance by the sword may wear such an altered appearance, assume such a different character, through the multiplicity of ways of combining battles, especially in cases where these are not actually realised, but become effectual merely through their possibility, that we might incline to the opinion that there must be some other efficient active principle still to be discovered; between the sanguinary defeat in a simple battle, and the effects of strategic combinations which do not bring the thing nearly so far as actual combat, there seems such a difference, that it is necessary to suppose some fresh force at work, using a method of reasoning similar to that which has led astronomers to conclude the existence of other planets from the great space between Mars and Jupiter.

If the assailant finds the defender in a strong position which he thinks he cannot take, or behind a large river which he thinks he cannot cross, or even if he fears that by advancing further he will not be able to subsist his Army, in all these cases it is nothing but the sword of the defensive which produces the effect; for it is the fear of being conquered by this sword, either in a great battle or at some specially important points, which compels the aggressor to stop, only he will either not admit that at all, or does not admit it in a straightforward way.

Now even if it is granted that, where there has been a decision without bloodshed, the combat merely *offered,* but not accepted, has been the ultimate cause of the decision, it will still be thought that in such cases the really effectual principle is the *strategic combination of* these combats and not their tactical decision, and that this superiority of the strategic combination could only have been thought of because there are other defensive means which may be considered besides an actual appeal to the sword. We admit this, and it brings us just to the point we wished to arrive at, which is as follows: if the tactical result of a battle must be the *foundation* of all strategic combinations, then it is always possible and to be feared that the assailant may lay hold of this principle, and above all things direct his efforts to be superior in the hour of decision, in order to baffle the strategic combination; and that therefore this strategic combination can *never be regarded as something all-sufficient in itself;* that it only has a value when either on one ground or another we can look forward to the tactical solution without any misgivings. In order to make ourselves intelligible in a few words, we shall merely call to our readers' recollection how such a General as Buonaparte marched without hesitation through the whole web of his opponents' strategic plans, to seek for the battle itself, because he had no doubts as to its issue. Where, therefore, Strategy had not directed its whole effort to ensure a preponderance over him in this battle, where it engaged in finer (feebler) plans, there it was rent asunder like a cobweb. But a General like Daun might be checked by such measures; it would therefore be folly to offer Buonaparte and his Army what the Prussian Army of the Seven Years' War dared to offer Daun and his contemporaries.
Why?—Because Buonaparte knew right well that all depended on the tactical issue,

and made certain of gaining it; whereas with Daun it was very different in both respects.

On this account we hold it therefore to be serviceable to show that every strategic combination rests only upon the tactical results, and that these are everywhere, in the bloody as well as in the bloodless solution, the real fundamental grounds of the ultimate decision. It is only if we have no reason to fear that decision, whether on account of the character or the situation of the enemy, or on account of the moral and physical equality of the two Armies, or on account of our own superiority—it is only then that we can expect something from strategic combinations in themselves without battles.

Now if a great many campaigns are to be found within the compass of military history in which the assailant gives up the offensive without any blood being spilt in fight, in which, therefore, strategic combinations show themselves effectual to that degree, this may lead to the idea that these combinations have at least great inherent force in themselves, and might in general decide the affair alone, where too great a preponderance in the tactical results is not supposed on the side of the aggressor. To this we answer that, if the question is about things which have their origin in the theatre of War, and consequently belong to the War itself, this idea is also equally false; and we add that the cause of the failure of most attacks is to be found in the higher, the political relations of War.

The general relations out of which a War springs, and which naturally constitute its foundation, determine also its character; on this subject we shall have more to say hereafter, in treating of the plan of a War. But these general relations have converted most Wars into half-and-half things, into which real hostility has to force its way through such a conflict of interests, that it is only a very weak element at the last. This effect must naturally show itself chiefly and with most force on the side of the offensive, *the side of positive action.* One cannot therefore wonder if such a short-winded, consumptive attack is brought to a standstill by the touch of a finger. Against a weak resolution so fettered by a thousand considerations, that it has hardly any existence, a mere show of resistance is often enough.

It is not the number of unassailable positions in all directions, not the formidable look of the dark mountain masses grouped around the theatre of War, or the broad river which passes through it, not the ease with which certain combinations of battles can effectually paralyse the arm which should strike the blow against us—none of these things are the true causes of the numerous successes which the defensive gains on bloodless fields; the cause lies in the weakness of the will with which the assailant puts forward his hesitating feet.

These counteracting influences may and ought to be taken into consideration, but they should only be looked upon in their true light, and their effects should not be ascribed to other things, namely the things of which alone we are now treating. We must omit to point out in an emphatic manner how easily military history in this respect may become a perpetual liar and deceiver if criticism is not careful about taking a correct point of view.

Let us now consider, in what we may call their ordinary form, the many offensive campaigns which have miscarried without a bloody solution.

The assailant advances into the enemy's country, drives back his opponent a little way, but finds it too serious a matter to bring on a decisive battle. He therefore remains standing opposite to him; acts as if he had made a conquest, and had nothing else to do but to protect it; as if it was the enemy's business to seek the battle, as if he offered it to him daily, &c., &c. These are the *representations* with which the Commander deludes his Army, his Government, the world, even himself. But the truth is, that he finds the enemy in a position too strong for him. We do not now speak of a case where an aggressor does not proceed with his attack because he can make no use of a victory, because at the end of his first bound he has not enough impulsive force left to begin another. Such a case supposes an attack which has been successful, a real conquest; but we have here in view the case where an assailant sticks fast half way to his intended conquest

He is now waiting to take advantage of favourable circumstances, of which favourable circumstances there is in general no prospect, for the aggression now intended shows at once that there is no better prospect from the future than from the present; it is, therefore, a further illusion. If now, as is commonly the case, the undertaking is in connection with other simultaneous operations, then what they do not want to do themselves is transferred to other shoulders, and their own inactivity is ascribed to want of support and proper co-operation. Insurmountable obstacles are talked of, and motives in justification are discovered in the most confused and subtil considerations. Thus the forces of the assailant are wasted away in inactivity, or rather in a partial activity, destitute of any utility. The defensive gains time, the greatest gain to him; bad weather arrives, and the aggression ends by the return of the aggressor to winter quarters in his own theatre of War.

A tissue of false representations thus passes into history in place of the simple real ground of absence of any result, namely, *fear of the enemy's sword.* When criticism takes up such a campaign, it wearies itself in the discussion of a number of motives and counter-motives, which give no satisfactory result, because they all dwindle into vapour, and we have not descended to the real foundation of the truth. The opposition through which the elementary energy of War, and therefore of the offensive in particular, becomes weakened, lies for the most part in the relations and views of States, and these are always concealed from the world, from the mass of the people belonging to the State, as well as from the Army, and very often from the General-in-Chief. No one will account for his faintheartedness by the admission that he feared he could not attain the desired object with the force at his disposal, or that new enemies would be roused, or that he did not wish to make his allies too powerful, &c. Such things are hushed up; but as occurrences have to be placed before the world in a presentable form, therefore the Commander is obliged, either on his own account or on that of his Government to pass off a tissue of fictitious motives. This ever-recurring deception in military dialectics has ossified into systems of theory, which, of course, are equally devoid of truth. Theory can never be deduced from the essence of things except by following the simple thread of cause and effect, as we have tried to do.

If we look at military history with this feeling of suspicion, then a great parade of mere words about offensive and defensive collapses, and the simple idea of it, which we have given, comes forward of itself. We believe it therefore to be applicable to the whole domain of the defensive, and that we must adhere closely to it in order to obtain that clear view of the mass of events by which alone we can form correct judgments.

We have still to inquire into the question of the employment of these different forms of defence.

As they are merely gradations of the same which must be purchased by a higher sacrifice, corresponding to the increased intensity of the form, there would seem to be sufficient in that view to indicate always to the General which he should choose, provided there are no other circumstances which interfere. He would, in fact, choose that form which appeared sufficient to give his force the requisite degree of defensive power and no more, that there might be no unnecessary waste of his force. But we must not overlook the circumstance that the room given for choice amongst these different forms is generally very circumscribed, because other circumstances which must be attended to necessarily urge a preference for one or other of them. For a retreat into the interior of the country a considerable superficial space is required, or such a condition of things as existed in Portugal (1810), where one ally (England) gave support in rear, and another (Spain) with its wide territory, considerably diminished the impulsive force of the enemy. The position of the fortresses more on the frontier or more in the interior may likewise decide for or against such a plan; but still more the nature of the country and ground, the character, habits, and feelings of the inhabitants. The choice between an offensive or defensive battle may be decided by the plans of the enemy, by the peculiar qualities of both Armies and their Generals; lastly, the possession of an excellent position or line of defence, or the want of them may determine for one or the other;—in short, at the bare mention of these things, we can perceive that the choice of the form of defensive must in many cases be determined more by them than by the mere relative strength of the Armies. As we shall hereafter enter more into detail on the more important subjects which have just been touched upon, the influence which they must have upon the choice will then develop itself more distinctly, and in the end the whole will be methodised in the book on Plans of Wars and Campaigns.

But this influence will not, in general, be decisive unless the inequality in the strength of the opposing Armies is trifling; in the opposite case (as in the generality of cases), the relation of the numerical strength will be decisive. There is ample proof, in military history, that it has done so heretofore, and that without the chain of reasoning by which it has been brought out here; therefore in a manner intuitively by *mere tact of judgment,* like most things that happen in War. It was the same General who at the head of the same Army, and on the same theatre of War, fought the battle of Hohenfriedberg, and at another time took up the camp of Bunzelwitz. Therefore even Frederick the Great, a General above all inclined to the offensive as regards the battle, saw himself compelled at last, by a great disproportion of force, to resort to a real defensive position; and Buonaparte, who was once in the habit of falling on his enemy like a wild boar, have we not seen him, when the proportion of force turned against

him, in August and September, 1813, turn himself hither and thither as if he had been pent up in a cage, instead of rushing forward recklessly upon some one of his adversaries? And in October of the same year, when the disproportion reached its climax, have we not seen him at Leipsic, seeking shelter in the angle formed by the Parth, the Elster, and Pleiss, as it were waiting for his enemy in the corner of a room, with his back against the wall?

We cannot omit to observe, that from this chapter, more than from any other in our book, it is plainly shown that our object is not to lay down new principles and methods of conducting War, but merely to investigate what has long existed in its innermost relations, and to reduce it to its simplest elements.

Note.—The case of Napoleon around Dresden in 1813 is peculiar, the whole of the facts were not known in Clausewitz's day. Hitherto he had invented and carried through his campaigns by sheer originality of conception. Face to face with a strong numerical superiority, his nerve forsook him; he instinctively fell back upon the ideas he had learnt in his earlier days. There exist several appreciations of his position written in his own hand during August and September, which embody all the fallacies of conception, he himself had so often overthrown, which might in fact have been the work of Daun or Lloyd. In those days which he is described as spending in a state of lethargy, amounting to nervous prostration, his intellect hardly attained mediocrity. Like others he was the slave of his environment and previous education—but, no sooner did the enemy appear before him, this lethargy fell from him, he saw facts as they really were, and his orders breathe the same spirit of genius as in 1806-1807, 1809, and the spring of 1813 (Bautzen).—Ed.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER IX

DEFENSIVE BATTLE

We have said, in the preceding chapter, that the defender, in the conduct of his operations, would make use of a battle, technically speaking, of a purely offensive character, if, at the moment the enemy invades his theatre of War, he marches against him and attacks him; but that he might also wait for the appearance of the enemy in his front, and then pass over to the attack; in which case also the battle tactically would be again an offensive battle, although in a modified form; and lastly, that he might wait till the enemy attacked his position, and then oppose him both by holding a particular spot, and by offensive action with portions of his force. In all this we may imagine several different gradations and shades, deviating always more from the principle of a positive counterstroke, and passing into that of the defence of a spot of ground. We cannot here enter on the subject of how far this should be carried, and which is the most advantageous proportion of the two elements of offensive and defensive, as regards the winning a decisive victory. But we maintain that when such a result is desired, the offensive part of the battle should never be completely omitted, and we are convinced that all the effects of a decisive victory may and must be produced by this offensive part, just as well as in a purely tactical offensive battle.

In the same manner as the field of battle is only a point in Strategy, the duration of a battle is only, Strategically, an instant of time, and the end and result, not the course of a battle, constitutes a strategic quantity.

Now, if it is true that a complete victory may result from the offensive elements which lie in every defensive battle, then there would be no fundamental difference between an offensive and a defensive battle, as far as regards strategic combinations; we are indeed convinced that this is so, but the thing wears a different appearance. In order to fix the subject more distinctly in the eye, to make our view clear and thereby remove the appearance now referred to, we shall sketch, hastily, the picture of a defensive battle, such as we imagine it.

The defensive waits the attack in a position; for this he has selected proper ground, and turned it to the best account, that is, he has made himself well acquainted with the locality, thrown up strong entrenchments at some of the most important points, opened and levelled communications, constructed batteries, fortified villages, and looked out places where he can draw up his masses under cover, &c., &c. Whilst the forces on both sides are consuming each other at the different points where they come into contact, the advantage of a front more or less strong, the approach to which is made difficult by one or more parallel trenches or other obstacles, or also by the influence of some strong commanding points, enables him with a *small part of his force* to destroy *greatnumbers of the enemy* at every stage of the defence up to the heart of the position. The points of support which he has given his wings secure him from any sudden attack from several quarters; the covered ground which he has

chosen for his masses makes the enemy cautious, indeed timid, and affords the defensive the means of diminishing by partial and successful attacks the general backward movement which goes on as the combat becomes gradually concentrated within narrower limits. The defender therefore casts a contented look at the battle as it burns in a moderate blaze before him;—but he does not reckon that his resistance in front can last for ever;—he does not think his flanks impregnable;—he does not expect that the whole course of the battle will be changed by the successful charge of a few battalions or squadrons. His position is *deep,* for each part in the scale of gradation of the order of battle, from the Division down to the battalion, has its reserve for unforeseen events, and for a renewal of the fight; and at the same time an important mass, one fifth to a quarter of the whole, is kept quite in the rear out of the battle, so far back as to be quite out of fire, and if possible so far as to be beyond the circuitous line by which the enemy might attempt to turn either flank. With this body he intends to cover his flanks from wider and greater turning movements, secure himself against unforeseen events, and in the latter stage of the battle, when the assailant's plan is fully developed, when the most of his troops have been brought into action, he will throw this mass on a part of the enemy's Army, and open at that part of the field a smaller offensive battle on his own part, using all the elements of attack, such as charges, surprise, turning movements, and by means of this pressure against the centre of gravity of the battle, now only resting on a point, make the whole recoil.

This is the normal idea which we have formed of a defensive battle, based on the tactics of the present day. In this battle the general turning movement made by the assailant in order to assist his attack, and at the same time with a view to make the results of victory more complete, is replied to by a partial turning movement on the part of the defensive, that is, by the turning of that part of the assailant's force used by him in the attempt to turn. This partial movement may be supposed sufficient to destroy the effect of the enemy's attempt, but it cannot lead to a like general enveloping of the assailant's Army; and there will always be a distinction in the features of a victory on this account, that the side fighting an offensive battle encircles the enemy's Army, and acts towards the centre of the same, while the side fighting on the defensive acts more or less from the centre to the circumference, in the direction of the radii.

On the field of battle itself, and in the first stages of the pursuit, the enveloping form must always be considered the most effectual; we do not mean on account of its form generally, we only mean in the event of its being carried out to such an extreme as to limit very much the enemy's means of retreat during the battle. But it is just against this extreme point that the enemy's positive counter-effort is directed, and in many cases where this effort is not sufficient to obtain a victory, it will at least suffice to protect him from such an extreme as we allude to. But we must always admit that this danger, namely, of having the line of retreat seriously contracted, is particularly great in defensive battles, and if it cannot be guarded against, the results in the battle itself, and in the first stage of the retreat are thereby very much enhanced in favour of the enemy.

But as a rule this danger does not extend beyond the first stage of the retreat, that is, until nightfall; on the following day enveloping is at an end, and both parties are again on an equality in this respect.

Certainly the defender may have lost his principal line of retreat, and therefore be placed in a disadvantageous strategic situation for the future; but in most cases the turning movement itself will be at an end, because it was only planned to suit the field of battle, and therefore cannot apply much further. But what will take place, on the other hand, if the *defender* is victorious? A *division* of the defeated force. This may facilitate the retreat at the first moment, but *next day a concentration of all parts* is the one thing most needful. Now if the victory is a most decisive one, if the defender pursues with great energy, this concentration will often become impossible, and from this separation of the beaten force the worst consequences may follow, which may go on step by step to a complete rout. If Buonaparte had conquered at Leipsic, the allied Army would have been completely cut in two, which would have considerably lowered their relative strategic position. At Dresden, although Buonaparte certainly did not fight a regular defensive battle, the attack had the geometrical form of which we have been speaking, that is, from the centre to the circumference; the embarrassment of the Allies in consequence of their separation, is well known, an embarrassment from which they were only relieved by the victory on the Katzbach, the tidings of which caused Buonaparte to return to Dresden with the Guard.

This battle on the Katzbach itself is a similar example. In it the defender, at the last moment passes over to the offensive, and consequently operates on diverging lines; the French corps were thus wedged asunder, and several days after, as the fruits of the victory, Pacthod's division fell into the hands of the Allies.

The conclusion we draw from this is, that if the assailant, by the concentric form which is homogeneous to him, has the means of giving expansion to his victory, on the other hand the defender also, by the divergent form which is homogeneous to the defence, acquires a means of giving greater results to his victory than would be the case by a merely parallel position and perpendicular attack, and we think that one means is at least as good as the other.

If in military history we rarely find such great victories resulting from the defensive battle as from the offensive, that proves nothing against our assertion that the one is as well suited to produce victory as the other; the real cause is in the very different relations of the defender. The Army acting on the defensive is generally the weaker of the two, not only in the amount of his forces, but also in every other respect; he either is, or thinks he is, not in a condition to follow up his victory with great results, and contents himself with merely fending off the danger and saving the honour of his arms. That the defender by inferiority of force and other circumstances may be tied down to that degree we do not dispute, but there is no doubt that this, which is only the consequence of a contingent necessity, has often been assumed to be the consequence of that part which every defender has to play; and thus in an absurd manner it has become a prevalent view of the defensive that its battles should really be confined to warding off the attacks of the enemy, and not directed to the destruction of the enemy. We hold this to be a prejudicial error, a regular substitution

of the form for the thing itself; and we maintain unreservedly that in the form of War which we call *defence,* the victory may not only be more probable, but may also attain the same magnitude and efficacy as in the attack, and that this may be the case not only in the *total result* of all the combats which constitute a campaign, but also in any *particular* battle, if the necessary degree of force and energy is not wanting.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER X

FORTRESSES

Formerly, and up to the time of great standing Armies, fortresses, that is castles and fortified towns, were only built for the defence and protection of the inhabitants. The baron, if he saw himself pressed on all sides, took refuge in his castle to gain time and wait a more favourable moment; and towns sought by their walls to keep off the passing hurricane of War. This simplest and most natural object of fortresses did not continue to be the only one; the relation which such a place acquired with regard to the whole country and to troops acting here and there in the country soon gave these fortified points a wider importance, a signification which made itself felt beyond their walls, and contributed essentially to the conquest or occupation of the country, to the successful or unsuccessful issue of the whole contest, and in this manner they even became a means of making War more of a connected whole. Thus fortresses acquired that strategic significance which for a time was regarded as so important that it dictated the leading features of the plans of campaigns, which were more directed to the taking of one or more fortresses than the destruction of the enemy's Army in the field. Men reverted to the cause of the importance of these places, that is to the connection between a fortified point, and the country, and the Armies; and then thought that they could not be sufficiently particular or too philosophical in choosing the points to be fortified. In these abstract objects the original one was almost lost sight of, and at length they came to the idea of fortresses without either towns or inhabitants.

On the other hand, the times are past in which the mere enclosure of a place with walls, without any military preparations, could keep a place dry during an inundation of War sweeping over the whole country. Such a possibility rested partly on the division of Nations formerly into small States, partly on the periodical character of the incursions then in vogue, which had fixed and very limited duration, almost in accordance with the seasons, as either the feudal forces hastened home, or the pay for the condottieri used regularly to run short. Since large standing Armies, with powerful trains of artillery mow down the opposition of walls or ramparts as it were with a machine, neither town nor other small corporation has any longer an inclination to hazard all their means only to be taken a few weeks or months later, and then to be treated so much the worse. Still less can it be the interest of an Army to break itself up into garrisons for a number of strong places, which may for a time retard the progress of the enemy, but must in the end submit. We must always keep enough forces, over and above those in garrison, to make us equal to the enemy in the open field, unless we can depend on the arrival of an Ally, who will relieve our strong places and set our Army free. Consequently the number of fortresses has necessarily much diminished, and this has again led to the abandonment of the idea of directly protecting the population and property in towns by fortifications, and promoted the other idea of regarding the fortresses as an *indirect* protection to the country, which they secure by their strategic importance as knots which hold together the strategic web.

Such has been the course of ideas, not only in books but also in actual experience. At the same time, as usually happens, it has been much more spun out in books.

Natural as was this tendency of things, still these ideas were carried out to an extreme, and mere crotchets and fancies displaced the sound core of a natural and urgent want. We shall look into these simple and important wants when we enumerate the objects and conditions of fortresses all together; we shall thereby advance from the simple to the more complicated, and in the succeeding chapter we shall see what is to be deduced therefrom as to the determination of the position and number of fortresses.

The efficacy of a fortress is plainly composed of two different elements, the passive and the active. By the first it shelters the place, and all that it contains; by the other it possesses a certain influence over the adjacent country, even beyond the range of its guns.

This active element consists in the attacks which the garrison may undertake upon every enemy who approaches within a certain distance. The larger the garrison, so much the stronger numerically will be the detachments that may be employed on such expeditions, and the stronger such detachments the wider as a rule will be the range of their operations; from which it follows that the sphere of the active influence of a great fortress is not only greater in intensity but also more extensive than that of a small one. But the active element itself is again, to a certain extent, of two kinds, consisting namely of enterprises of the garrison proper, and of enterprises which other bodies of troops, great and small, not belonging to the garrison but in co-operation with it, may be able to carry out. For instance, bodies which independently would be too weak to face the enemy, may through the shelter which, in case of necessity, the walls of a fortress afford them, be able to maintain themselves in the country, and to a certain extent to command it.

The enterprises which the garrison of a fortress can venture to undertake are always somewhat restricted. Even in the case of large places and strong garrisons, the detachments which can be employed on such operations are mostly inconsiderable as compared with the forces in the field, and their average sphere of action seldom exceeds a couple of days' marches. If the fortress is small, the detachments it can send out are quite insignificant and the range of their activity will generally be confined to the nearest villages. But bodies which do not belong to the garrison, and therefore are not under the necessity of returning to the place, are thereby much more at liberty in their movements, and by their means, if other circumstances are favourable, the external zone of action of a fortress may be immensely extended. Therefore if we speak of the active influence of fortresses in general terms, we must always keep this feature of the same principally in view.

But even the smallest active element of the weakest garrison, is still essential for the different objects which fortresses are destined to fulfil, for strictly speaking even the most passive of all the functions of a fortress (defence against attack) cannot be imagined exclusive of that active agency. At the same time it is evident that amongst the different purposes which a fortress may have to answer generally, or in this or that moment, the passive element will be most required at one time, the active at another.

The rôle which a fortress is to fulfil may be perfectly simple, and the action of the place will in such case be to a certain extent direct; it may be partly complicated, and the action then becomes more or less indirect. We shall examine these subjects separately, commencing with the first; but at the outset we must state that a fortress may be intended to answer several of these purposes, perhaps all of them, either at once, or at least at different stages of the War.

We say, therefore, that fortresses are great and most important supports of the defensive.

1. *As secure depôts of stores of all kinds.* The assailant during his aggression subsists his Army from day to day; the defensive usually must have made preparations long beforehand, he need not therefore draw provisions exclusively from the district he occupies, and which he no doubt desires to spare. Storehouses are therefore for him a great necessity. The provisions of all kinds which the aggressor possesses are in his rear as he advances, and are therefore exempt from the dangers of the theatre of War, while those of the defensive are exposed to them. If these provisions of all kinds are not in *fortified places,* then a most injurious effect on the operations in the field is the consequence, and the most extended and compulsory positions often become necessary in order to cover depôts or sources of supply.

An Army on the defensive without fortresses has a hundred vulnerable spots; it is a body without armour.

2. *As a protection to great and wealthy towns.* This purpose is closely allied to the first, for great and wealthy towns, especially commercial ones, are the natural storehouses of an Army; as such their possession and loss affects the Army directly. Besides this, it is also always worth while to preserve this portion of the national wealth, partly on account of the resources which they furnish directly, partly because, in negotiations for peace, an important place is in itself a valuable weight thrown into the scale.

This use of fortresses has been too little regarded in modern times, and yet it is one of the most natural, and one which has a most powerful effect, and is the least liable to mistakes. If there was a country in which not only all great and rich cities, but all populous places as well were fortified, and defended by the inhabitants and the people belonging to the adjacent districts, then by that means the expedition of military operation would be so much reduced, and the people attacked would press with so great a part of their whole weight in the scales, that the talent as well as the force of will of the enemy's General would sink to nothing.

We just mention this ideal application of fortification to a country to do justice to what we have just supposed to be the proper use of fortresses, and that the importance of the *direct* protection which they afford may not be overlooked for a moment; but in any other respect this idea will not again interrupt our considerations, for amongst the whole number of fortresses there must always be some which must be more strongly fortified than others, to serve as the real supports of the active Army.

The purposes specified under 1 and 2 hardly call forth any other but the passive action of fortresses.

3. *As real barriers,* they close the roads, and in most cases the rivers, on which they are situated.

It is not as easy as is generally supposed to find a practicable lateral road which passes round a fortress, for this turning must be made, not only out of reach of the guns of this place, but also by a detour greater or less, to avoid sorties of the garrison.

If the country is in the least degree difficult, there are often delays connected with the slightest deviation of the road which may cause the loss of a whole day's march, and, if the road is much used, may become of great importance.

How they may have an influence on enterprises by closing the navigation of a river is clear in itself.

4. *As tactical points d'appui.* As the diameter of the zone covered by the fire of even a very inferior class of fortifications is usually some miles, fortresses may be considered always as the best points d'appui for the flanks of a position. A lake of several miles long is certainly an excellent support for the wing of an Army, and yet a fortress of moderate size is better. The flank does not require to rest close upon it, as the assailant, for the sake of his retreat, would not throw himself between our flank and that obstacle.

5. *As a station* (*or stage*). If fortresses are on the line of communication of the defensive, as is generally the case, they serve as halting places for all that passes up and down these lines. The chief danger to lines of communication is from irregular bands, whose action is always of the nature of a shock. If a valuable convoy, on the approach of such a comet, can reach a fortress by hastening the march or quickly turning, it is saved, and may wait there till the danger is past. Further, all troops marching to or from the Army, after halting here for a few days, are better able to hasten the remainder of the march, and a halting day is just the time of greatest danger. In this way a fortress situated half way on a line of communication of one hundred and fifty miles shortens the line in a manner one half.

6. *As places of refuge for weak or defeated Corps.* Under the guns of a moderate sized fortress every Corps is safe from the enemy's blows, even if no entrenched camp is specially prepared for them. No doubt such a Corps must give up its further retreat if it waits too long; but this is no great sacrifice in cases where a further retreat would only end in complete destruction.

In many cases a fortress can ensure a few days' halt without the retreat being altogether stopped. For the slightly wounded and fugitives who precede a beaten Army, it is especially suited as a place of refuge, where they can wait to rejoin their corps.

If Magdeburg had lain on the direct line of the Prussian retreat in 1806, and if that line had not been already lost at Auerstadt, the Army could easily have halted for three or

four days near that great fortress, and rallied and reorganised itself. But even as it was it served as a rallying point for the remains of Hohenlohe's Corps, which there first resumed the appearance of an Army.

It is only by actual experience in War itself that the beneficial influence of fortresses close at hand in disastrous times can be rightly understood. They contain powder and arms, forage and bread, give covering to the sick, security to the sound, and recovery of sense to the panic-stricken. They are like an hostelry in the desert.

In the four last named purposes it is evident that the active agency of fortresses is called more into requisition.

7. *As a real shield against the enemy's aggression.* Fortresses which the defender leaves in his front break the stream of the enemy's attack like ice breakers on the piers of a bridge. The enemy must at least invest them, and requires for that, if the garrisons are brave and enterprising, perhaps double their strength. But, besides, these garrisons may and do mostly consist in part of troops, who, although competent to duty in a garrison, are not fit for the field—half trained militia, invalids, convalescents, armed citizens, landsturm, &c. The enemy, therefore, in such case is perhaps weakened four times more than we are.

This disproportionate weakening of the enemy's power is the first and most important but not the only advantage which a besieged fortress affords by its resistance. From the moment that the enemy crosses our line of fortresses, all his movements become much more constrained; he is limited in his lines of retreat, and must constantly attend to the direct covering of the sieges which he undertakes.

Here, therefore, fortresses co-operate with the defensive, act in a most extensive and decisive manner, and of all the objects that they can have, this may be regarded as the most important.

If this use of fortresses—far from being seen regularly repeating itself—occurs comparatively seldom in military history, the cause is to be found in the character of most Wars, this means being to a certain extent far too decisive and too thoroughly effectual for them, the explanation of which we leave till hereafter.

In this use of fortresses it is chiefly their offensive power that is called for, at least it is that by which their effectual action is chiefly produced. If a fortress was no more to an aggressor than a point which could not be occupied by him, it might be an obstacle to him, but not to such a degree as to compel him to lay siege to it. But as he cannot leave six, eight, or ten thousand men to do as they like in his rear, he is obliged to invest the place with a sufficient force, and if he desires that this investment should not continue to employ so large a detachment, he must convert the investment into a siege, and take the place. From the moment the siege commences, it is then chiefly the passive efficacy of the fortress which comes into action.

All the destinations of fortresses which we have been hitherto considering are fulfilled in a simple and mainly in a direct manner. On the other hand, in the next two objects the method of action is more complicated.

8. *As a protection to extended cantonments.* That a moderate-sized fortress closes the approach to cantonments lying behind it for a width of fifteen to twenty miles is a simple result of its existence; but how such a place comes to have the honour of covering a line of cantonments seventy-five to one hundred miles in length, which we find frequently spoken of in military history as a fact—that requires investigation as far as it has really taken place, and refutation so far as it may be mere illusion.

The following points offer themselves for consideration:—

(1.) That the place in itself blocks one of the main roads, and really covers a breadth of fifteen to twenty miles of country.

(2.) That it may be regarded as an exceptionally strong advanced post, or that it affords a more complete observation of the country, to which may be added facilities in the way of secret information through the ordinary relations of civil life which exist between a great town and the adjacent districts. It is natural that in a place of six, eight, or ten thousand inhabitants, one should be able to learn more of what is going on in the neighbourhood than in a mere village, the quarters of an ordinary outpost.

(3.) That smaller bodies are pivoted on it, derive from it protection and security, and from time to time can advance towards the enemy, it may be to bring in intelligence, or, in case he attempts to turn the fortress, to undertake something against his rear; that therefore although a fortress cannot quit its place, still it may have the efficacy of an advanced corps (Fifth Book, eighth Chapter).

(4.) That the defender, after assembling his troops, can take up his position at a point directly behind this fortress, which the assailant cannot reach without becoming exposed to danger from leaving the fortress in his rear.

No doubt every attack on a line of cantonments as such is to be taken in the sense of a surprise, or rather, we are only speaking here of that kind of attack; but it is evident in itself that an attack by surprise accomplishes its effect in a much shorter space of time than a regular attack on a theatre of War. Therefore, although in the latter case, a fortress which is to be passed by must necessarily be invested and kept in check, this investment will not be so indispensable in the case of a mere sudden attack on cantonments, and therefore in the same proportion the fortress will be less an obstacle to the attack of the cantonments. That is true enough; also the cantonments lying at a distance of thirty to forty miles from the fortress cannot be directly protected by it; but the object of such a sudden attack does not consist alone in the attack of a few cantonments. Until we reach the book on attack we cannot describe circumstantially the real object of such a sudden attack and what may be expected from it; but this much we may say at present, that its principal results are obtained, not by the actual attack on some isolated quarters, but by the series of combats which the aggressor forces on isolated detachments not in proper order, and more bent upon hurrying to

certain points than upon fighting. But this attack and pursuit will always be in a direction more or less towards the centre of the enemy's cantonments, and, therefore, an important fortress lying in front of this centre will certainly prove a very great impediment to the attack.

If we reflect on these four points in the whole of their effects, we see that an important fortress in a direct and in an indirect way certainly gives some security to a much greater extent of cantonments than we should think at first sight. "Some security" we say, for all these indirect agencies do not render the advance of the enemy *impossible;* they only make it *more difficult,* and a *more serious consideration;* consequently less probable and less of a danger for the defensive. But that is also all that was required, and all that should be understood in this case under the term "covering." The real direct security must be attained by means of outposts and the arrangement of the cantonments themselves.

There is, therefore, some truth in ascribing to a great fortress the capability of covering a wide extent of cantonments lying in rear of it; but it is also not to be denied that often in plans of real campaigns, but still oftener in historical works, we meet with vague and empty expressions, or illusory views in connection with this subject. For if that covering is only realised by the co-operation of several circumstances, if it then also only produces a diminution of the danger, we can easily see that, in particular cases, through special circumstances, above all, through the boldness of the enemy, this whole covering may prove an illusion, and therefore in actual war we must not content ourselves with assuming hastily at once the efficacy of such and such a fortress, but carefully examine and study each single case on its own merits.

9. *As covering a province not occupied.* If during War a province is either not occupied at all, or only occupied by an insufficient force, and likewise exposed more or less to incursions from flying columns, then a fortress, if not too unimportant in size, may be looked upon as a covering, or, if we prefer, as a security for this province. As a security it may at all events be regarded, for an enemy cannot become master of the province until he has taken it, and that gives us time to hasten to its defence. But the actual covering can certainly only be supposed very indirect, or as *not properly belonging to it.* That is, the fortress by its active opposition can only in some measure check the incursions of hostile bands. If this opposition is limited to merely what the garrison can effect, then the result must be little indeed, for the garrisons of such places are generally weak and usually consist of infantry only, and that not of the best quality. The idea gains a little more reality if small columns keep themselves in communication with the place, making it their base and place of retreat in case of necessity.

10. *As the focus of a general arming of the nation.* Provisions, arms, and munitions can never be supplied in a regular manner in a People's War; on the other hand, it is just in the very nature of such a War to do the best we can; in that way a thousand small sources furnishing means of resistance are opened which otherwise might have remained unused; and it is easy to see that a strong commodious fortress, as a great magazine of these things, can well give to the whole defence more force and intensity, more cohesion, and greater results.

Besides, a fortress is a place of refuge for wounded, the seat of the civil functionaries, the treasury, the point of assembly for the greater enterprises, &c., &c.; lastly, a nucleus of resistance which during the siege places the enemy's force in a condition which facilitates and favours the attacks of national levies acting in conjunction.

11. *For the defence of rivers and mountains.* Nowhere can a fortress answer so many purposes, undertake to play so many parts, as when it is situated on a great river. It secures the passage at any time at that spot, and hinders that of the enemy for several miles each way, it commands the use of the river for commercial purposes, receives all ships within its walls, blocks bridges and roads, and helps the indirect defence of the river, that is, the defence by a position on the enemy's side. It is evident that, by its influence in so many ways, it very greatly facilitates the defence of the river, and may be regarded as an essential part of that defence.

Fortresses in mountains are important in a similar manner. They there form the knots of whole systems of roads, which have their commencement and termination at that spot; they thus command the whole country which is traversed by these roads, and they may be regarded as the true buttresses of the whole defensive system.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XI

FORTRESSES (*Continued*)

We have discussed the object of fortresses: now for their situation. At first the subject seems very complicated, when we think of the diversity of objects, each of which may again be modified by the locality; but such a view has very little foundation if we keep to the essence of the thing, and guard against unnecessary subtilties.

It is evident that all these demands are at once satisfied, if, in those districts of country which are to be regarded as the theatre of War, all the largest and richest towns on the great high roads connecting the two countries with each other are fortified, more particularly those adjacent to harbours and bays of the sea, or situated on large rivers and in mountains. Great towns and great roads always go hand in hand, and both have also a natural connection with great rivers and the coasts of the sea, all these four conditions, therefore, agree very well with each other, and give rise to no incongruity; on the other hand, it is not the same with mountains, for large towns are seldom found there. If, therefore, the position and direction of a mountain chain makes it favourable to a defensive line, it is necessary to close its roads and passes by small forts, built for this purpose only, and at the least possible cost, the great outlay on works of fortification being reserved for the important places of arms in the level country.

We have not yet noticed the frontiers of the state, nor said anything of the geometrical form of the whole system of fortresses, nor of the other geographical points in connection with their situation, because we regard the objects above mentioned as the most essential, and are of opinion that in many cases they alone are sufficient, particularly in small States. But, at the same time, other considerations may be admitted, and may be imperative in countries of a greater superficial extent, which either have a great many important towns and roads, or, on the contrary, are almost without any, which are either very rich, and, possessing already many fortresses, still want new ones, or those which, on the other hand, are very poor, and under the necessity of making a few answer, in short, in cases where the number of fortresses does not correspond with the number of important towns and roads which present themselves, being either considerably greater or less.

We shall now cast a glance at the nature of such other considerations.

The chief questions which remain relate to—

1. The choice of the principal roads, if the two countries are connected by more roads than we wish to fortify.

2. Whether the fortresses are to be placed on the frontier only, or spread over the country. Or,

3. Whether they shall be distributed uniformly, or in groups.

4. Circumstances relating to the geography of the country to which it is necessary to pay attention.

A number of other points with respect to the geometrical form of the line of fortifications, such as whether they should be placed in a single line or in several lines, that is, whether they do more service when placed one behind another, or side by side in line with each other; whether they should be chequer-wise, or in a straight line; or whether they should take the form of a fortification itself, with salients and re-entering angles—all these we look upon as empty subtilties, that is, considerations so insignificant, that, compared with the really important points, they are not worth notice; and we only mention them here because they are not merely treated of in many books, but also a great deal more is made of this rubbish than it is worth.

As regards the first question, in order to place it in a clearer light we shall merely instance the relation of the south of Germany to France, that is, to the upper Rhine. If, without reference to the number of separate States composing this district of country, we suppose it a whole which is to be fortified strategically, much doubt will arise, for a great number of very fine roads lead from the Rhine into the interior of Franconia, Bavaria, and Austria. Certainly, towns are not wanting which surpass others in size and importance, as Nuremburg, Wurzburg, Ulm, Augsburg, and Munich; but if we are not disposed to fortify all, there is no alternative but to make a selection. If, further, in accordance with our view, the fortification of the greatest and wealthiest is held to be the principal thing, still it is not to be denied that, owing to the distance between Nuremburg and Munich, the first has a very different strategic signification from the second; and therefore it always remains to be considered whether it would not be better, in place of Nuremburg, to fortify some other place in the neighbourhood of Munich, even if the place is one of less importance in itself.

As concerns the decision in such cases, that is, answering the first question, we must refer to what has been said in the chapters on the general plan of defence, and on the choice of points of attack. Wherever the most natural point of attack is situated, there the defensive arrangements should be made by preference.

Therefore, amongst a number of great roads leading from the enemy's country into ours, we should first of all fortify that which leads most directly to the heart of our dominions, or that which, traversing fertile provinces, or running parallel to navigable rivers, facilitates the enemy's undertaking, and then we may rest secure. The assailant then encounters these works, or should he resolve to pass them by, he will naturally offer a favourable opportunity for operations against his flank.

Vienna is the heart of South Germany, and plainly Munich or Augsburg, in relation to France alone (Switzerland and Italy being therefore supposed neutral) would be more efficient as a principal fortress than Nuremburg or Wurzburg. But if, at the same time, we look at the roads leading from Italy into Germany by Switzerland and the Tyrol, this will become still more evident, because, in relation to these, Munich and Augsburg will always be places of importance, whereas Wurzburg and Nuremburg are much the same, in this respect, as if they did not exist.

We turn now to the second question—Whether the fortresses should be placed on the frontier, or distributed over the country? In the first place, we must observe, that, as regards small States, this question is superfluous, for what are called *strategic frontiers* coincide, in their case, nearly with the whole country. The larger the State is supposed to be in the consideration of this question, the plainer appears the necessity for its being answered.

The most natural answer is,—that fortresses belong to the frontiers, for they are to defend the State, and the State is defended as long as the frontiers are defended. This argument may be valid in the abstract, but the following considerations will show that it is subject to very many modifications.

Every defence which is calculated chiefly on foreign assistance lays great value on gaining time: it is not a vigorous counterstroke, but a slow proceeding, in which the chief gain consists more in delay than in any weakening of the enemy which is effected. But now it lies in the nature of the thing that, supposing all other circumstances alike, fortresses which are spread over the whole country, and include between them a very considerable area of territory, will take longer to capture than those squeezed together in a close line on the frontier. Further, in all cases in which the object is to overcome the enemy through the length of his communications, and the difficulty of his existence, therefore in countries which can chiefly reckon on this kind of reaction, it would be a complete contradiction to have the defensive preparations of this kind only on the frontier. Lastly, let us also remember that, if circumstances will in any way allow of it, the fortification of the capital is a main point; that according to our principles the chief towns and places of commerce in the provinces demand it otherwise; that rivers passing through the country, mountains, and other irregular features of ground, afford advantages for new lines of defence; that many towns, through their strong natural situation, invite fortification; moreover, that certain accessories of War, such as manufactories of arms, &c., are better placed in the interior of the country than on the frontier, and their value well entitles them to the protection of works of fortification; then we see that there is always more or less occasion for the construction of fortresses in the interior of a country; on this account we are of opinion, that although States which possess a great number of fortresses are right in placing the greater number on the frontier, still it would be a great mistake if the interior of the country was left entirely destitute of them. We think that this mistake has been made in a remarkable degree in France.—A great doubt may with reason arise if the border provinces of a country contain no considerable towns, such towns lying further back towards the interior, as is the case in South Germany in particular, where Swabia is almost destitute of great towns, whilst Bavaria contains a large number. We do not hold it to be necessary to remove these doubts once for all on general grounds, believing that in such cases, in order to arrive at a solution, reasons derived from the particular situation must come into consideration. Still we must call attention to the closing remarks in this chapter.

The third question—Whether fortresses should be disposed in groups, or more equally distributed?—will, if we reflect upon it, seldom arise; still we must not, for that reason, set it down as a useless subtilty, because certainly a group of two, three, or four fortresses, which are only a few days' march from a common centre, give that

point and the Army placed there such strength, that, if other conditions allowed of it, in some measure one would be very much tempted to form such a strategic bastion.

The last point concerns the other geographical properties of the points to be chosen. That fortresses on the sea, on streams and great rivers, and in mountains, are doubly effective, has been already stated to be one of the principal considerations; but there are a number of other points in connection with fortresses to which regard must be paid.

If a fortress cannot lie on the river itself, it is better not to place it near, but at a distance of fifty to sixty miles from it; otherwise, the river intersects, and lowers the value of the sphere of action of the fortress in all those points above mentioned.*

This is not the same in mountains, because there the movement of large or small masses upon particular points is not restricted in the same degree as it is by a river. But fortresses on the enemy's side of a mountain are not well placed, because they are difficult to succour. If they are on our side, the difficulty of laying siege to them is very great, as the mountains cut across the enemy's line of communication. We give Olmütz, 1758, as an example.

It is easily seen that impassable forests and marshes have a similar effect to that of rivers.

The question has been often raised as to whether towns situated in a very difficult country are well or ill suited for fortresses. As they can be fortified and defended at a small expense, or be made much stronger, often impregnable, at an equal expenditure, and the services of a fortress are always more passive than active, it does not seem necessary to attach much importance to the objection that they can easily be blockaded.

If we now, in conclusion, cast a retrospective glance over our simple system of fortification for a country, we may assert that it rests on comprehensive data, lasting in their nature, and directly connected with the foundations of the state itself, not on transient views on War, fashionable only for a day; not on imaginary strategic niceties, nor on requirements completely singular in character—an error which might be attended with irreparable consequences if allowed to influence the construction of fortresses intended to last five hundred, perhaps a thousand, years. Silberberg, in Silesia, built by Frederick the Great on one of the ridges of the Sudetics, has, from the complete alteration in circumstances which has since taken place, lost almost entirely its importance and object, whilst Breslau, if it had been made a strong place of arms, and continued to be so, would have always maintained its value against the French, as well as against the Russians, Poles, and Austrians.

Our reader will not overlook the fact that these considerations are not raised on the supposed case of a State providing itself with a set of new fortifications; they would be useless if such was their object, as such a case seldom, if ever, happens; but they may all arise at the designing of each single fortification.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XII

DEFENSIVE POSITION

Every position in which we accept battle, at the same time making use of the ground as a means of protection, is a *defensive position,* and it makes no difference in this respect whether we act more passively or more offensively in the action. This follows from the general view of the defensive which we have given.

Now we may also apply the term to every position in which an Army whilst marching to encounter the enemy would certainly accept battle if the latter sought for it. In point of fact, most battles take place in this way, and in all the Middle Ages no other was ever thought of. That is, however, not the kind of position of which we are now speaking; by far the greater number of positions are of this kind, and the conception of a *position* in contradistinction to a *camp taken up on the march* would suffice for that. A position which is specially called a *defensive position* must therefore have some other distinguishing characteristics.

In the decisions which take place in an ordinary position, the idea of *time* evidently predominates; the Armies march against each other in order to come to an engagement: the place is a subordinate point, all that is required from it is that it should not be unsuitable. But in a real defensive position the idea of *place* predominates; the decision is to be realised on this *spot,* or rather, chiefly *through* this spot. That is the only kind of position we have here in view.

Now the connection of place is a double one; that is, in the first instance, inasmuch as a force posted at this point exercises a certain influence upon the War in general; and next, inasmuch as the local features of the ground contribute to the strength of the Army and afford protection: in a word, a strategic and a tactical connection.

Strictly speaking, the term *defensive position* has its origin only in connection with tactics, for its connection with strategy, namely, that an Army posted at this point by its presence serves to defend the country, will also suit the case of an Army acting offensively.

The strategic effect to be derived from a position cannot be shown completely until hereafter, when we discuss the defence of a theatre of War; we shall therefore only consider it here as far as can be done at present, and for that end we must examine more closely the nature of two ideas which have a similarity and are often mistaken for one another, that is, the *turning a position,* and *the passing by it.*

The turning a position relates to its front, and is done either by an attack upon the side of the position or on its rear, or by acting against its lines of retreat and communication.

The first of these, that is, an attack on flank or rear is tactical in its nature. In our days in which the mobility of troops is so great, and all plans of battles have more or less in view the turning or enveloping the enemy, every position must accordingly be adopted to meet such measures, and one to deserve the name of strong must, with a strong front, allow at least of good combinations for battle on the sides and rear as well, in case of their being menaced. In this way a position will not become untenable by the enemy turning it with a view to an attack on the flank or rear, as the battle which then takes place was provided for in the choice of the position, and should ensure the defender all the advantages which he could expect from this position generally.

If the position *is turned* by the enemy with a view to acting against the lines of retreat and communication, this is a *strategic* relation, and the question is how long the position can be maintained, and whether we cannot outbid the enemy by a scheme like his own, both these questions depend on the situation of the point (strategically), that is, chiefly on the relations of the lines of communication of both combatants. A good position should secure to the Army on the defensive the advantage in this point. In any case the position will not be rendered of no effect in this way, as the enemy is neutralised by the position when he is occupied by it in the manner supposed.

But if the assailant, without troubling himself about the existence of the Army awaiting his attack in a defensive position, advances with his main body by another line in pursuit of his object, then he *passes by the position;* and if he can do this with impunity, and really does it, he will immediately enforce the abandonment of the position, consequently put an end to its usefulness.

There is hardly any position in the world which, in the simple sense of the words, cannot be passed by, for cases such as the isthmus of Perekop are so rare that they are hardly worth attention. The impossibility of passing by must therefore be understood as merely applying to the disadvantages in which the assailant would become involved if he set about such an operation. We shall have a more fitting opportunity to state these disadvantages in the twenty-seventh chapter; whether small or great, in every case they are the equivalent of the tactical effect which the position is capable of producing but which has not been realised, and in common with it constitute the object of the position.

From the preceding observations, therefore, two strategic properties of the defensive position have resulted:

1. That it cannot be passed round.

2. That in the struggle for the lines of communication it gives the defender advantages.

Here we have to add two other strategic properties, namely—

3. That the relation of the lines of communication may also have a favourable influence on the form of combat; and

4. That the general influence of the country is advantageous.

For the relation of the lines of communication has an influence not only upon the possibility or impossibility of passing by a position or of cutting off the enemy's supplies, but also on the whole course of the battle. An oblique line of retreat facilitates a tactical turning movement on the part of the assailant, and paralyses our own tactical movements during the battle. But an oblique position in relation to the lines of communication is often not the fault of tactics but a consequence of a defective strategic point; it is, for example, not to be avoided when the road changes direction in the vicinity of the position (Borodino, 1812); the assailant is then in such a position that he can turn our line *without deviating from his own perpendicular disposition.*

Further, the aggressor has much greater freedom for tactical movement if he commands several roads for his retreat whilst we are limited to one. In such cases the tactical skill of the defensive will be exerted in vain to overcome the disadvantageous influence resulting from the strategic relations.

Lastly as regards the fourth point, such a disadvantageous general influence may predominate in the other characteristics of ground, that the most careful choice, and the best use of tactical means, can do nothing to combat them. Under such circumstances the chief points are as follows:

1. The defensive must particularly seek for the advantage of being able to overlook his adversary, so that he may be able swiftly to throw himself upon him inside the limits of his position. It is only when the local difficulties of approach combine with these two conditions that the ground is really favourable to the defensive.

On the other hand, those points which are under the influence of commanding ground are disadvantageous to him; also most positions in mountains (of which we shall speak more particularly in the chapters on mountain warfare). Further, positions which rest one flank on mountains, for such a position certainly makes the *passing by* more difficult, but facilitates a *turning movement.* Of the same kind are all positions which have a mountain immediately in their front, and generally all those which bear relation to the description of ground above specified.

As an example of the opposite of these disadvantageous properties, we shall only instance the case of a position which has a mountain in rear; from this so many advantages result that it may be assumed in general to be one of the most favourable of all positions for the defensive.

2. A country may correspond more or less to the character and composition of an Army. A very numerous cavalry is a proper reason for seeking an open country. Want of this arm, perhaps also of artillery, while we have at command a courageous infantry inured to War, and acquainted with the country, make it advisable to take advantage of a difficult, close country.

We do not here enter into particulars respecting the tactical relation which the local features of a defensive position bear to the force which is to occupy it. We only speak of the total result, as that only is a strategic quantity.

Undoubtedly a position in which an Army is to await the full force of the hostile attack, should give the troops such an important advantage of ground as may be considered a multiplier of its force. Where nature does much, but not to the full as much as we want, the art of entrenchment comes to our help. In this way it happens not unfrequently that some parts become *unassailable,* and not unusually the whole is made so: plainly in this last case, the whole nature of the measure is changed. It is then no longer a battle under advantageous conditions which we seek, and in this battle the issue of the campaign, but an issue without a battle. Whilst we occupy with our force an unassailable position, we directly refuse the battle, and oblige our enemy to seek for a solution in some other way.

We must, therefore, completely separate these two cases, and shall speak of the latter in the following chapter, under the title of a *strong position.*

But the defensive position with which we have now to do is nothing more than a field of battle with the addition of advantages in our favour; and that it should become a field of battle, the advantages in our favour must not be *too great.* But now what degree of strength may such a position have? Plainly more in proportion as our enemy is more determined on the attack, and that depends on the nature of the individual case. Opposed to a Buonaparte, we may and should withdraw behind stronger ramparts than before a Daun or a Schwartzenburg.

If certain portions of a position are unattackable, say the front, then that is to be taken as a separate factor of its whole strength, for the forces not required at that point are available for employment elsewhere; but we must not omit to observe that whilst the enemy is kept completely off such impregnable points, the form of his attack assumes quite a different character, and we must ascertain, in the first instance, how this alteration will suit our situation.

For instance, to take up a position, as has often been done, so close behind a great river that it is to be looked upon as covering the front, is nothing else but to make the river a point of support for the right or left flank; for the enemy is naturally obliged to cross further to the right or left, and cannot attack without changing his front: the chief question, therefore, is what advantages or disadvantages does that bring to us?

According to our opinion, a defensive position will come the nearer to the true ideal of such a position the more its strength is hid from observation, and the more it is favourable to our surprising the enemy by our combinations in the battle. Just as we advisedly endeavour to conceal from the enemy the whole strength of our forces and our real intentions, so in the same way we should seek to conceal from the enemy the advantages which we expect to derive from the form of the ground. This of course can only be done to a certain degree, and requires, perhaps, a peculiar mode of proceeding, hitherto but little attempted.

The vicinity of a considerable fortress, in whatever direction it may be, confers on every position a great advantage over the enemy in the movement and use of the forces belonging to it. By suitable field-works, the want of natural strength at particular points may be remedied, and in that manner the great features of the battle may be settled beforehand at will; these are the means of strengthening by art; if with these we combine a good selection of those natural obstacles of ground which impede the effective action of the enemy's forces without making action absolutely impossible, if we turn to the best account the advantage we have over the enemy in knowing the ground, which he does not, so that we succeed in concealing our movements better than he does his, and that we have a general superiority over him in unexpected movements in the course of the battle, then from these advantages united, there may result in our favour an overpowering and decisive influence in connection with the ground, under the power of which the enemy will succumb, without knowing the real cause of his defeat. This is what we understand under *defensive position,* and we consider it one of the greatest advantages of defensive War.

Leaving out of consideration particular circumstances, we may assume that an undulating, not too well, but still not too little, cultivated country affords the most positions of this kind.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XIII

STRONG POSITIONS AND ENTRENCHED CAMPS

We have said in the preceding chapter that a position so strong through nature, assisted by art, that it is unassailable, does not come under the meaning of an advantageous field of battle, but belongs to a peculiar class of things. We shall in this chapter take a review of what constitutes the nature of this peculiarity, and on account of the analogy between such positions and fortresses, call them *strong positions.*

Merely by entrenchments alone they can hardly be made, except as entrenched camps resting on fortresses; but still less are they to be found ready formed entirely by natural obstacles. Art usually lends a hand to assist nature, and therefore they are frequently designated as *entrenched* camps or positions. At the same time, that term may really be applied to any position strengthened more or less by field works, which need have nothing in common with the nature of the position we are now considering.

The object of a strong position is to make the force there stationed in point of fact unattackable, and by that means, either really to cover a certain space directly, or only the troops which occupy that space in order then, through them, in another way to effect the covering of the country indirectly. The first was the signification of the *lines* of former times, for instance, those on the French frontier; the latter, is that of *entrenched camps* laid out near fortresses, and showing a front in every direction.

If, for instance, the front of a position is so strong by works and hindrances to approach that an attack is impossible, then the enemy is compelled to turn it, to make his attack on a side of it or in rear. Now to prevent this being easily done, *points d'appui* were sought for these lines, which should give them a certain degree of support on the flanks, such as the Rhine and the Vosges give the lines in Alsace. The longer the front of such a line the more easily it can be protected from being turned, because every movement to turn it is attended with danger to the side attempting the movement, the danger increasing in proportion as the required movement causes a greater deviation from the normal direction of the attacking force. Therefore, a considerable length of front, which can be made unassailable, and good flank-supports, ensure the possibility of protecting a large space of territory directly from hostile invasion: at least, that was the view in which works of this class originated; that was the object of the lines in Alsace, with their right flank on the Rhine and the left on the Vosges; and the lines in Flanders seventy-five miles long, resting their right on the Scheldt and the fortress of Tournay, their left on the sea.

But when we have not the advantages of such a long well-defended front, and good flank-supports, if the country is to be held generally by a force well entrenched, then that force (and its position) must be protected against being turned by such an arrangement that it can show a front in every direction. But then the idea of *a thoroughly covered tract of country* vanishes, for such a position is only strategically

a point which covers the force occupying it, and thus secures to that force the power of keeping the field, that is to say, *maintaining itself in the country.* Such a camp cannot be *turned,* that is, cannot be attacked in flank or rear by reason of those parts being weaker than its front, for it can show front in all directions, and is equally strong everywhere. But such a camp can be *passed by,* and that much easier than a fortified line, because its extent amounts to nothing.

Entrenched camps connected with fortresses are in reality of this second kind, for the object of them is to protect the troops assembled in them; but their further strategic meaning, that is, the application of this protected force, is somewhat different from that of other fortified camps.

Having given this explanation of the origin of these three different defensive means, we shall now proceed to consider the value of each of them separately, under the heads of *strong lines, strong positions,* and *entrenched camps resting on fortresses.*

1. *Lines.*—These lead to the worst kind of cordon war: the obstacle which they present to the aggressor is of no value at all unless they are defended by a powerful fire; in themselves they are simply worthless. But now the extent to which an Army can furnish an effective fire is generally very small in proportion to the extent of country to be defended; the lines can, therefore, only be short, and consequently cover only a small extent of country, or the Army will not be able really to defend the lines at all points. In consequence of this, the idea was started of not occupying all points in the line, but only watching them, and defending them by means of strong reserves, in the same way as a small river may be defended; but this procedure is in opposition to the nature of the means. If the natural obstacles of the ground are so great that such a method of defence could be applied, then the entrenchments were needless, and entail danger, for that method of defence is not local, and entrenchments are only suited to a strictly local defence; but if the entrenchments themselves are to be considered the chief impediments to approach, then we may easily conceive that an *undefended* line will not have much to say as an obstacle to approach. What is a twelve or fifteen feet ditch, and a rampart ten or twelve feet high, against the united efforts of many thousands, if these efforts are not hindered by the fire of an enemy? The consequence, therefore, is, that if such lines are short and tolerably well defended by troops, they can be *turned;* but if they are extensive, and not sufficiently occupied, they can be attacked in front, and taken without much difficulty.

Now as lines of this description tie the troops down to a local defence, and take away from them all mobility, they are a bad and senseless means to use against an enterprising enemy. If we find them long retained in modern Wars in spite of these objections, the cause lies entirely in the low degree of energy impressed on the conduct of War, one consequence of which was, that seeming difficulties often effected quite as much as real ones. Besides, in most campaigns these lines were used merely for a secondary defence against irregular incursions; if they have been found not wholly inefficacious for that purpose, we must only keep in view, at the same time, how much more usefully the troops required for their defence might have been employed at other points. In the latest Wars such lines have been out of the question, nowhere do we find any trace of them; and it is doubtful if they will ever reappear.[1]

2. *Positions.*—The defence of a tract of country continues (as we shall show more plainly in the 27th chapter) as long as the force designated for it maintains itself there, and only ceases if that force removes and abandons it.

If a force is to maintain itself in any district of country which is attacked by very superior forces, the means of protecting this force against the power of the sword by a position which is unassailable is a first consideration.

Now such a position, as before said, must be able to show a front in all directions; and in conformity with the *usual* extent of tactical positions, if the force is not *very large* (and a large force would be contrary to the nature of the supposed case) it would take up a very small space, which, in the course of the combat, would be exposed to so many disadvantages that, even if strengthened in every possible way by entrenchments, we could hardly expect to make a successful defence. Such a camp, showing front in every direction, must therefore necessarily have an extent of sides proportionably great; but these sides must likewise be as good as unassailable; to give this requisite strength, notwithstanding the required extension, is not within the compass of the art of field fortification; it is therefore a fundamental condition that such a camp must derive part of its strength from natural impediments of ground which render many places impassable and others difficult to pass. In order, therefore, to be able to apply this defensive means, it is necessary to find such a spot, and when that is wanting, the object cannot be attained merely by field works. These considerations relate more immediately to tactical results in order that we may first establish the existence of this strategic means; we mention as examples for illustration, Pirna, Bunzelwitz, Colberg, Torres Vedras, and Drissa.

Now, as respects the strategic properties and effects. The first condition is naturally that the force which occupies this camp shall have its subsistence secured for some time, that is, for as long as we think the camp will be required, and this is only possible when the position has behind it a port, like Colberg and Torres Vedras, or stands in connection with a fortress like Bunzelwitz and Pirna, or has large depôts within itself or in the immediate vicinity, like Drissa.

It is only in the first case that the provisioning can be ensured for any time we please; in the second and third cases, it can only be so for a more or less limited time, so that in this point there is always danger. From this appears how the difficulty of subsistence debars the use of many strong points which otherwise would be suitable for entrenched positions, and, therefore, makes those that are eligible *scarce.*

In order to ascertain the eligibility of a position of this description, its advantages and defects, we must ask ourselves what the aggressor can do against it.

a. The assailant can pass by this strong position, pursue his enterprise, and watch the position with a greater or less force.

We must here make a distinction between the cases of a position which is occupied by the main body, and one only occupied by an inferior force.

In the first case the passing by the position can only benefit the assailant, if, besides the principal force of the defendant, there is also some other attainable and *decisive object of attack,* as, for instance, the capture of a fortress or a capital city, &c. But even if there is such an object, he can only follow it if the strength of his base and the direction of his lines of communication are such that he has no cause to fear operations against his strategic flanks.

The conclusions to be drawn from this with respect to the admissibility and eligibility of a strong position for the main body of the defender's Army are, that it is only an advisable position when either the possibility of operating against the strategic flank of the aggressor is so decisive that we may be sure beforehand of being able in that way to keep him at a point where his Army can effect nothing, or in a case where there is no object attainable by the aggressor for which the defence need be uneasy. If there is such an object, and the strategic flank of the assailant cannot be seriously menaced, then such position should not be taken up, or if it is it should only be as a feint to see whether the assailant can be imposed upon respecting its value; this is always attended with the danger, in case of failure, of being too late to reach the point which is threatened.

If the strong position is only held by an inferior force, then the aggressor can never be at a loss for a further object of attack, because he has it in the main body itself of the enemy's Army; in this case, therefore, the value of the position is entirely limited to the means which it affords of operating against the enemy's strategic flank, and depends upon that condition.

b. If the assailant does not venture to pass by a position, he can invest it and reduce it by famine. But this supposes two conditions beforehand: first, that the position is not open in rear, and secondly, that the assailant is sufficiently strong to be able to make such an investment. If these two conditions are united then the assailant's Army certainly would be neutralised for a time by this strong position, but at the same time, the defensive pays the price of this advantage by a loss of his defensive force.

From this, therefore, we deduce that the occupation of such a strong position with the main body is a measure only to be taken,—

aa. When the rear is perfectly safe (Torres Vedras).

bb. When we foresee that the enemy's force is not strong enough formally to invest us in our camp. Should the enemy attempt the investment with insufficient means, then we should be able to sally out of the camp and beat him in detail.

cc. When we can count upon relief like the Saxons at Pirna, 1756, and as took place in the main at Prague, because Prague could only be regarded as an entrenched camp in which Prince Charles would not have allowed himself to be shut up if he had not known that the Moravian army could liberate him.

One of these three conditions is therefore absolutely necessary to justify the choice of a strong position for the main body of an Army; at the same time we must add that the two last are bordering on a great danger for the defensive.

But if it is a question of exposing an inferior corps to the risk of being sacrificed for the benefit of the whole, then these conditions disappear, and the only point to decide is whether by such a sacrifice a greater evil may be avoided. This will seldom happen; at the same time it is certainly not inconceivable. The entrenched camp at Pirna prevented Frederick the Great from attacking Bohemia, as he would have done, in the year 1756. The Austrians were at that time so little prepared, that the loss of that kingdom appears beyond doubt; and perhaps, a greater loss of men would have been connected with it than the 17,000 allied troops who capitulated in the Pirna camp.

c. If none of those possibilities specified under *a* and *b* are in favour of the aggressor; if, therefore, the conditions which we have there laid down for the defensive are fulfilled, then there remains certainly nothing to be done by the assailant but to fix himself before the position, like a setter before a covey of birds, to spread himself, perhaps, as much as possible by detachments over the country, and contenting himself with these small and indecisive advantages to leave the real decision as to the possession of territory to the future. In this case the position has fulfilled its object.

3. *Entrenched camps near fortresses.*—They belong, as already said, to the class of entrenched positions generally, in so far, as they have for their object to cover not a tract of territory, but an armed force against a hostile attack, and only differ in reality from the other in this, that with the fortress they make up an inseparable whole, by which they naturally acquire much greater strength.

But there follows further from the above the undermentioned special points.

a. That they may also have the particular object of rendering the siege of the fortress either impossible or extremely difficult. This object may be worth a great sacrifice of troops if the place is a port which cannot be blockaded, but in any other case we have to take care lest the place is one which may be reduced by hunger so soon that the sacrifice of any considerable number of troops is not justifiable.

b. Entrenched camps can be formed near fortresses for smaller bodies of troops than those in the open field. Four or five thousand men may be invincible under the walls of a fortress, when, on the contrary, in the strongest camp in the world, formed in the open field, they would be lost.

c. They may be used for the assembly and organisation of forces which have still too little solidity to be trusted in contact with the enemy, without the support afforded by the works of the place, as for example, recruits, militia, national levies, &c.

They might, therefore, be recommended as a very useful measure, in many ways, if they had not the immense disadvantage of injuring the fortress, more or less, when they cannot be occupied; and to provide the fortress always with a garrison, in some measure sufficient to occupy the camp also, would be much too onerous a condition.

We are, therefore, very much inclined to consider them only advisable for places on a sea coast, and as more injurious than useful in all other cases.

If, in conclusion, we should summarise our opinion in a general view, then strong and entrenched positions are—

1. The more requisite the smaller the country, the less the space afforded for a retreat.

2. The less dangerous the more surely we can reckon on succouring or relieving them by other forces, or by the inclemency of season, or by a rising of the nation, or by want, &c.

3. The more efficacious, the weaker the elementary force of the enemy's attack.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XIV

FLANK POSITIONS

We have only allotted to this prominent conception, in the world of ordinary military theory, a special chapter in dictionary fashion, that it may the more easily be found; for we do not believe that anything independent in itself is denoted by the term.

Every position which is to be held, even if the enemy passes by it, is a flank position; for from the moment that he does so it can have no other efficacy but that which it exercises on the enemy's strategic flank. Therefore, necessarily, all *strong positions* are flank positions as well; for as they cannot be attacked, the enemy accordingly is driven to pass them by, therefore they can only have a value by their influence on his strategic flank. The direction of the proper front of a strong position is quite immaterial, whether it runs parallel with the enemy's strategic flank, as Colberg, or at right angles as Bunzelwitz and Drissa, for a strong position must front every way.

But it may also be desirable still to maintain a position which is *not* unassailable, even if the enemy passes by it, should its situation, for instance, give us such a preponderating advantage in the comparative relations of the lines of retreat and communication, that we cannot only make an efficacious attack on the strategic flank of the advancing enemy, but also that the enemy alarmed for his own retreat is unable to seize ours entirely; for if that last is not the case, then because our position is not a strong, that is, not an *unassailable one,* we should run the risk of being obliged to fight without having the command of any retreat.

The year 1806 affords an example which throws a light on this. The disposition of the Prussian Army, on the right bank of the Saal, might in respect to Buonaparte's advance by Hof, have become in every sense a flank position, if the Army had been drawn up with its front parallel to the Saal, and there, in that position, waited the progress of events.

If there had not been here such a disproportion of moral and physical powers, if there had only been a Daun at the head of the French Army, then the Prussian position might have shown its efficacy by a most brilliant result To pass it by was quite impossible; that was acknowledged by Buonaparte, by his resolution to attack it; in severing from it the line of retreat even Buonaparte himself did not *completely* succeed, and if the disproportion in physical and moral relations had not been quite so great, that would have been just as little practicable as the passing it by, for the Prussian Army was in much less danger from its left wing being overpowered than the French Army would have been by the defeat of their left wing. Even with the disproportion of physical and moral power as it existed, a resolute and sagacious exercise of the command would still have given great hopes of a victory. There was nothing to prevent the Duke of Brunswick from making arrangements on the 13th, so that on the morning of the 14th, at daybreak, he might have opposed 80,000 men to

the 60,000 with which Buonaparte passed the Saal, near Jena and Dornburg. Had even this superiority in numbers, and the steep valley of the Saal behind the French not been sufficient to procure a decisive victory, still it was a fortunate concurrence of circumstances, and if with such advantages no successful decision could be gained, no decision was to be expected in that district; and we should, therefore, have retreated further, in order to gain reinforcements and weaken the enemy.

The Prussian position on the Saal, therefore, although assailable, might have been regarded as a flank position in respect to the great road through Hof; but like every position which can be attacked, that property is not to be attributed to it absolutely, because it would only have become so if the enemy had not attempted to attack it.

Still less would it bespeak a clear idea if those positions which *cannot* be maintained after the enemy has passed by them, and from which, in consequence of that, the defensive seeks to attack the assailant's flank, were called *flank positions* merely because his attack is directed against a flank; for this flank attack has hardly anything to do with the position itself, or, at least, is not mainly produced by its properties, as is the case in the action against a strategic flank.

It appears from this that there is nothing new to establish with regard to the properties of a flank position. A few words only on the character of the measure may properly be introduced here; we set aside, however, completely strong positions in the true sense, as we have said enough about them already.

A flank position which is not assailable is an extremely efficacious instrument, but certainly just on that account a dangerous one. If the assailant is checked by it, then we have obtained a great effect by a small expenditure of force; it is the pressure of the finger on the long lever of a sharp bit. But if the effect is too insignificant, if the assailant is not stopped, then the defensive has more or less imperilled his retreat, and must seek to escape either in haste and by a detour—consequently under very unfavourable circumstances, or he is in danger of being compelled to fight without any line of retreat being open to him. Against a bold adversary, having the moral superiority, and seeking a decisive solution, this means is therefore extremely hazardous and entirely out of place, as shown by the example of 1806 above quoted. On the other hand, when used against a cautious opponent in a War of mere observation, it may be reckoned one of the best means which the defensive can adopt. The Duke Ferdinand's defence of the Weser by his position on the left bank, and the well-known positions of Schmotseifen and Landshut are examples of this; only the latter, it is true, by the catastrophe which befell Fouqué's corps in 1760, also shows the danger of a false application.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XV

DEFENCE OF MOUNTAINS

The influence of mountains on the conduct of War is very great; the subject, therefore, is very important for theory. As this influence introduces into action a retarding principle, it belongs chiefly to the defensive. We shall therefore discuss it here in a wider sense than that conveyed by the simple conception, defence of mountains. As we have discovered in our consideration of the subject results which run counter to general opinion in many points, we shall therefore be obliged to enter into rather an elaborate analysis of it.

We shall first examine the tactical nature of the subject, in order to gain the point where it connects itself with strategy.

The endless difficulty attending the march of large columns on mountain roads, the extraordinary strength which a small post obtains by a steep scarp covering its front, and by ravines right and left supporting its flanks, are unquestionably the principal causes why such efficacy and strength are universally attributed to the defence of mountains, so that nothing but the peculiarities in armament and tactics at certain periods has prevented large masses of combatants from engaging in it.

When a column, winding like a serpent, toils its way through narrow ravines up to the top of a mountain, and passes over it at a snail's pace, artillery and train-drivers with oaths and shouts, flogging their over-driven cattle through the narrow rugged roads, each broken waggon has to be got out of the way with indescribable trouble, whilst all behind are detained, cursing and blaspheming, every one then thinks to himself, Now if the enemy should appear with only a few hundred men, he might disperse the whole. From this has originated the expression used by historical writers, when they describe a narrow pass as a place where "a handful of men might keep an army in check." At the same time, every one who has had any experience in War knows, or ought to know, that such a march through mountains has little or nothing in common with *the attack* of these same mountains, and that therefore to infer from the *difficulty* of marching through mountains that the difficulty of attacking them must be much greater is a false conclusion.

It is natural enough that an inexperienced person should thus argue, and it is almost as natural that the Art of War itself for a certain time should have been entangled in the same error, for the fact which it related to was almost as new at that time to those accustomed to War as to the uninitiated. Before the Thirty Years' War, owing to the deep order of battle, the numerous cavalry, the rude firearms, and other peculiarities, it was quite unusual to make use of formidable obstacles of ground in War, and a formal defence of mountains, at least by regular troops, was almost impossible. It was not until a more extended order of battle was introduced, and that infantry and their arms became the chief part of an Army, that the use which might be made of hills and

valleys occurred to men's minds. But it was not until a hundred years afterwards, or about the middle of the eighteenth century, that the idea became fully developed.

The second circumstance, namely, the great defensive capability which might be given to a small post planted on a point difficult of access, was still more suited to lead to an exaggerated idea of the strength of mountain defences. The opinion arose that it was only necessary to multiply such a post by a certain number to make an Army out of a battalion, a chain of mountains out of a mountain.

It is undeniable that a small post acquires an extraordinary strength by selecting a good position in a mountainous country. A small detachment, which would be driven off in the level country by a couple of squadrons, and think itself lucky to save itself from rout or capture by a hasty retreat, can in the mountains stand up before a whole Army, and, as one might say, with a kind of tactical effrontery exact the military honour of a regular attack, of having its flank turned, &c., &c. How it obtains this defensive power, by obstacles to approach, *points d'appui* for its flanks, and new positions which it finds on its retreat, is a subject for tactics to explain; we accept it as an established fact.

It was very natural to believe that a number of such posts placed in a line would give a very strong, almost unassailable front, and all that remained to be done was to prevent the position from being turned by extending it right and left until either flank-supports were met with commensurate with the importance of the whole, or until the extent of the position itself gave security against turning movements. A mountainous country specially invites such a course by presenting such a succession of defensive positions, each one apparently better than another, that one does not know where to stop; and therefore it ended in all and every approach to the mountains within a certain distance being guarded, with a view to defence, and ten or fifteen single posts, thus spread over a space of about fifty miles or more, were supposed to bid defiance to that odious turning movement. Now as the connection between these posts was considered sufficiently secure by the intervening spaces, being ground of an impassable nature (columns at that time not being able to quit the regular roads), it was thought a wall of brass was thus presented to the enemy. As an extra precaution, a few battalions, some horse artillery, and a dozen squadrons of cavalry, formed a reserve to provide against the event of the line being unexpectedly burst through at any point.

No one will deny that the prevalence of this idea is shown by history, and it is not certain that at this day we are completely emancipated from these errors.

The course of improvement in tactics since the Middle Ages, with the ever increasing strength of Armies, likewise contributed to bring mountainous districts in this sense more within the scope of military action.

The chief characteristic of mountain defence is its complete passivity; in this light the tendency towards the defence of mountains was very natural before Armies attained to their present capability of movement. But Armies were constantly becoming greater, and on account of the effect of firearms began to extend more and more into long thin lines connected with a great deal of art, and on that account very difficult,

often almost impossible, to move. To dispose, in order of battle, such an artistic machine, was often half a day's work, and half the battle; and almost all which is now attended to in the preliminary plan of the battle was included in this first disposition or drawing up. After this work was done it was therefore difficult to make any modifications to suit new circumstances which might spring up; from this it followed that the assailant, being the last to form his line of battle, naturally adapted it to the order of battle adopted by the enemy, without the latter being able in turn to modify his in accordance. The attack thus acquired a general superiority, and the defence had no other means of reinstating the balance than that of seeking protection from the impediments of ground, and for this nothing was so favourable in general as mountainous ground. Thus it became an object to couple, as it were, the Army with a formidable obstacle of ground, and the two united then made common cause. The battalion defended the mountain, and the mountain the battalion; so the passive defence through the aid of mountainous ground became highly efficacious, and there was no other evil in the thing itself except that it entailed a greater loss of freedom of movement, but of that quality they did not understand the particular use at that time.

When two antagonistic systems act upon each other, the exposed, that is, the weak point on the one side always draws upon itself the blows from the other side. If the defensive becomes fixed, and as it were, spell-bound in posts, which are in themselves strong, and can not be taken, the aggressor then becomes bold in turning movements, because he has no apprehension about his own flanks. This is what took place—The *turning,* as it was called, soon became the order of the day: to counteract this, positions were extended more and more; they were thus weakened in front, and the offensive suddenly turned upon that part: instead of trying to outflank by extending, the assailant now concentrated his masses for attack at some one point, and the line was broken. This is nearly what took place in regard to mountain defences according to the latest modern history.

The offensive had thus again gained a preponderance through the greater mobility of troops; and it was only through the same means that the defence could seek for help. But mountainous ground by its nature is opposed to mobility, and thus the whole theory of mountain defence experienced, if we may use the expression, a defeat like that which the Armies engaged in it in the Revolutionary War so often suffered.

But that we may not reject the good with the bad, and allow ourselves to be carried along by the stream of commonplace to assertions which, in actual experience, would be refuted a thousand times by the force of circumstances, we must distinguish the effects of mountain defence according to the nature of the cases.

The principal question to be decided here, and that which throws the greatest light over the whole subject is, whether the resistance which is intended by the defence of mountains is to be *relative* or *absolute*—whether it is only intended to last for a time, or is meant to end in a decisive victory. For a resistance of the first kind mountainous ground is in a high degree suitable, and introduces into it a very powerful element of strength; for one of the latter kind, on the contrary, it is in general not at all suitable, or only so in some special cases.

In mountains every movement is slower and more difficult, costs therefore more time, and more men as well, if within the sphere of danger. But the loss of the assailant in time and men is the standard by which the defensive resistance is measured. As long as the movement is all on the side of the offensive so long the defensive has a marked advantage; but as soon as the defensive resorts to this principle of movement also, that advantage ceases. Now from the nature of the thing, that is to say, on tactical grounds, a relative resistance allows of a much greater degree of passivity than one which is intended to lead to a decisive result, and it allows this passivity to be carried to an extreme, that is, to the end of the combat, which in the other case can never happen. The impeding element of mountain ground, which as a medium of greater density weakens all positive activity, is, therefore, completely suited to the passive defence.

We have already said that a small post acquires an extraordinary strength by the nature of the ground; but although this tactical result in general requires no further proof, we must add to what we have said some explanation. We must be careful here to draw a distinction between what is relatively and what is absolutely small. If a body of troops, let its size be what it may, isolates a portion of itself in a position, this portion may possibly be exposed to the attack of the whole body of the enemy's troops, therefore of a superior force, in opposition to which it is itself small. There, as a rule, no absolute but only a relative defence can be the object. The smaller the post in relation to the whole body from which it is detached and in relation to the whole body of the enemy, the more this applies.

But a post also which is small in an absolute sense, that is, one which is not opposed by an enemy superior to itself, and which, therefore, may aspire to an absolute defence, a real victory, will be infinitely better off in mountains than a large Army, and can derive more advantage from the ground as we shall show further on.

Our conclusion, therefore, is, that a small post in mountains possesses great strength. How this may be of decisive utility in all cases which depend entirely on a *relative* defence is plain of itself; but will it be of the same decisive utility for the *absolute* defence by a whole Army? This is the question which we now propose to examine.

First of all we ask whether a front line composed of several posts has, as has hitherto been assumed, the same strength proportionally as each post singly. This is certainly not the case, and to suppose so would involve one of two errors.

In the first place, a country *without roads* is often confounded with one which is *quite impassable.* Where a column, or where artillery and cavalry cannot *march,* infantry may still, in general, be able to pass, and even artillery may often be brought there as well, for the movements made in a battle by excessive efforts of short duration are not to be judged of by the same scale as marches. The secure connection of the single posts with one another rests therefore on an illusion, and the flanks are in reality in danger.

Or next it is supposed, a line of small posts, which are very strong in front, are also equally strong on their flanks, because a ravine, a precipice, &c., &c., form excellent supports for a small post. But why are they so?—not because they make it impossible

to turn the post, but because they cause the enemy an expenditure of time and of force, which gives scope for the effectual action of the post. The enemy who, in spite of the difficulty of the ground, wishes, and in fact is obliged, to turn such a post, because the front is unassailable requires, perhaps, half-a-day to execute his purpose, and cannot after all accomplish it without some loss of men. Now if such a post can be succoured, or if it is only designed to resist for a certain space of time, or lastly, if it is able to cope with the enemy, then the flank supports have done their part, and we may say the position had not only a strong front, but strong flanks as well. But it is not the same if it is a question of a line of posts, forming part of an extended mountain position. None of these three conditions are realised in that case. The enemy attacks one point with an overwhelming force, the support in rear is perhaps slight, and yet it is a question of absolute resistance. Under such circumstances the flank supports of such posts are worth nothing.

Upon a weak point like this the attack usually directs its blows. The assault with concentrated, and therefore very superior forces, upon a point in front, may certainly *be met by a resistance, which is very violent as regards that point, but which is unimportant as regards the whole.* After it is overcome, the line is pierced, and the object of the attack attained.

From this it follows that the *relative* resistance in mountain warfare is, in general, greater than in a level country, that it is comparatively greatest in small posts, and does not increase in the same measure as the masses increase.

Let us now turn to the real object of great battles generally—to the *positive victory* which may also be the object in the defence of mountains. If the whole mass, or the principal part of the force, is employed for that purpose, then *the defence of mountains* changes itself *eo ipso* into a *defensive battle in the mountains.* A battle, that is the application of all our powers to the destruction of the enemy is now the form, a victory the object of the combat. The defence of mountains which takes place in this combat, appears now a subordinate consideration, for it is no longer the object, it is only the means. Now in this view, how does the ground in mountains answer to the object?

The character of a defensive battle is a passive reaction in front, and an increased active reaction in rear; but for this the ground in mountains is a paralysing principle. There are two reasons for this: first, want of roads affording means of rapidly moving in all directions, from the rear towards the front, and even the sudden tactical attack is hampered by the unevenness of ground; secondly, a free view over the country, and the enemy's movements is not to be had. The ground in mountains, therefore, ensures in this case to the enemy the same advantages which it gave to us in the front, and deadens all the better half of the resistance. To this is to be added a third objection, namely the danger of being cut off. Much as a mountainous country is favourable to a retreat, made under a pressure exerted along the whole front, and great as may be the loss of time to an enemy who makes a turning movement in such a country, still these again are only advantages in the case of a *relative defence,* advantages which have no connection with the decisive battle, the resistance to the last extremity. The resistance will last certainly somewhat longer, that is until the enemy has reached a point with

his flank-columns which menaces or completely bars our retreat. Once he has gained such a point then relief is a thing hardly possible. No act of the offensive which we can make from the rear can drive him out again from the *points which threaten us;* no desperate assault with our whole mass can clear the passage *which he blocks.* Whoever thinks he discovers in this a contradiction, and believes that the advantages which the assailant has in mountain warfare, must also accrue to the defensive in an attempt to cut his way through, forgets the difference of circumstances. The corps which opposes the passage is not engaged in an *absolute* defence, a few hours' resistance will probably be sufficient; it is, therefore, in the situation of a small post. Besides this, its opponent is no longer in full possession of all his fighting powers; he is thrown into disorder, wants ammunition, &c. Therefore, in any view, the chance of cutting through is small, and this is the danger that the defensive fears above all; this fear is at work even during the battle, and enervates every fibre of the struggling athlete. A nervous sensibility springs up on the flanks, and every small detachment which the aggressor makes a display of on any wooded eminence in our rear, is for him a new lever, helping on the victory.

These disadvantages will, for the most part, disappear, leaving all the advantages, if the defence of a mountain district consists in the concentrated disposition of the Army on an extensive mountain plateau. There we may imagine a very strong front; flanks very difficult of approach, and yet the most perfect freedom of movement, both within and in rear of the position. Such a position would be one of the strongest that there can be, but it is little more than an illusion, for although most mountains are more easily traversed along their crests than on their declivities, yet most plateaux of mountains are either too small for such a purpose, or they have no proper right to be called plateaux, and are so termed more in a geological, than in a geometrical sense.

For smaller bodies of troops, the disadvantages of a defensive position in mountains diminish as we have already remarked. The cause of this is, that such bodies take up less space, and require fewer roads for retreat, &c., &c. A single hill is not a mountain system, and has not the same disadvantages. The smaller the force, the more easily it can establish itself on a single ridge or hill, and the less will be the necessity for it to get entangled in the intricacies of countless steep mountain gorges.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XVI

DEFENCE OF MOUNTAINS (*Continued*)

We now proceed to the strategic use of the tactical results developed in the preceding chapter.

We make a distinction between the following points:—

1. A mountainous district as a battle-field.

2. The influence which the possession of it exercises on other parts of the country.

3. Its effect as a strategic barrier.

4. The attention which it demands in respect to the supply of the troops.

The first and most important of these heads, we must again subdivide as follows:—

a. A general action.
b. Inferior combats.

1.

A MOUNTAIN SYSTEM AS A BATTLE-FIELD.

We have shown in the preceding chapter how unfavourable *mountain ground* is to the defensive in a *decisive battle,* and, on the other hand, how much it favours the assailant. This runs exactly counter to the generally received opinion; but then how many other things there are which general opinion confuses; how little does it draw distinctions between things which are of the most opposite nature! From the powerful resistance which small bodies of troops may offer in a mountainous country, common opinion becomes impressed with an idea that all mountain defence is extremely strong, and is astonished when any one denies that this great strength is communicated to the greatest act of all defence, the defensive battle. On the other hand, it is instantly ready, whenever a battle is lost by the defensive in mountain warfare, to point out the inconceivable error of a system of cordon war, without any regard to the fact that in the nature of things such a system is unavoidable in mountain warfare. We do not hesitate to put ourselves in direct opposition to such an opinion, and at the same time we must mention, that to our great satisfaction, we have found our views supported in the works of an author whose opinion ought to have great weight in this matter; we allude to the history of the campaigns of 1796 and 1797, by the Archduke Charles, himself a good historical writer, a good critic, and above all, a good General.

We can only characterise it as a lamentable position when the weaker defender, who has laboriously, by the greatest effort, assembled all his forces, in order to make the assailant feel the effect of his love of Fatherland, of his enthusiasm and his ability, in a decisive battle—when he on whom every eye is fixed in anxious expectation, having betaken himself to the obscurity of thickly veiled mountains, and hampered in every movement by the obstinate ground, stands exposed to the thousand possible forms of attack which his powerful adversary can use against him. Only towards one single side is there still left an open field for his intelligence, and that is in making all possible use of every obstacle of ground; but this leads close to the borders of the disastrous war of cordons, which, under all circumstances, is to be avoided. Very far therefore from seeing a refuge for the defensive, in a mountainous country, when a decisive battle is sought, we should rather advise a General in such a case to avoid such a field by every possible means.

It is true, however, that this is sometimes impossible; but the battle will then necessarily have a very different character from one in a level country: the disposition of the troops will be much more extended—in most cases twice or three times the length; the resistance more passive, the counter blow much less effective. These are influences of mountain ground which are inevitable; still, in such a battle the defensive is not to be converted into a mere defence of mountains; the predominating character must be a concentrated order of battle in the mountains, in which everything unites into *one* battle, and passes as much as possible under the eye of *one* Commander, and in which there are sufficient reserves to make the decision something more than a mere warding off, a mere holding up of the shield. This condition is indispensable, but difficult to realise; and the drifting into the pure defence of mountains comes so naturally, that we cannot be surprised at its often happening; the danger in this is so great that theory cannot too urgently raise a warning voice.

Thus much as to a decisive battle with the main body of the Army.—

For combats of minor significance and importance, a mountainous country, on the other hand, may be very favourable, because the main point in them is not absolute defence, and because no decisive results are coupled with them. We may make this plainer by enumerating the objects of this reaction.

a. Merely to gain time. This motive occurs a hundred times: always in the case of a defensive line formed with the view of observation; besides that, in all cases in which a reinforcement is expected.

b. The repulse of a mere demonstration or minor enterprise of the enemy. If a province is guarded by mountains which are defended by troops, then his defence, however weak, will always suffice to prevent partisan attacks and expeditions intended to plunder the country. Without the mountains, such a weak chain of posts would be useless.

c. To make demonstrations on our own part. It will be some time yet before general opinion with respect to mountains will be brought to the right point; until then an

enemy may at any time be met with who is afraid of them, and shrinks back from them in his undertakings. In such a case, therefore, the principal body may also be used for the defence of a mountain system. In Wars carried on with little energy or movement, this state of things will often happen; but it must always be a condition then that we neither design to accept a general action in this mountain position, nor can be compelled to do so.

d. In general, a mountainous country is suited for all positions in which we do not intend to accept any great battle, for each of the separate parts of the Army is stronger there, and it is only the whole that is weaker; besides, in such a position, it is not so easy to be suddenly attacked and forced into a decisive battle.

e. Lastly, a mountainous country is the true region for the efforts of a people in arms. But while national risings should always be supported by small bodies of regular troops, on the other hand, the proximity of a great Army seems to have an unfavourable effect upon movements of this kind; this motive, therefore, as a rule, will never give occasion for transferring the whole Army to the mountains.

Thus much for mountains in connection with the positions which may be taken up there for battle.

2.

THE INFLUENCE OF MOUNTAINS ON OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY.

Because, as we have seen, it is so easy in mountainous ground to secure a considerable tract of territory by small posts, so weak in numbers that in a district easily traversed they could not maintain themselves, and would be continually exposed to danger; because every step forward in mountains which have been occupied by the enemy must be made much more slowly than in a level country, and therefore cannot be made at the same rate with him—therefore the question, Who is in possession?—is also much more important in reference to mountains than to any other tract of country of equal extent. In an open country, the possession may change from day to day. The mere advance of strong detachments compels the enemy to give up the country we want to occupy. But it is not so in mountains; there a very stout resistance is possible by much inferior forces, and for that reason, if we require a portion of country which includes mountains, enterprises of a special nature, formed for the purpose, and often necessitating a considerable expenditure of time as well as of men, are always required in order to obtain possession. If, therefore, the mountains of a country are not the theatre of the principal operations of a War, we cannot, as we should were it the case of a district of level country, look upon the possession of the mountains as dependent on and a necessary consequence of our success at other parts.

A mountainous district has therefore much more independence, and the possession of it is much firmer and less liable to change. If we add to this that a ridge of mountains from its crests affords a good view over the adjacent open country, whilst it hides the

district behind it, we may therefore conceive that when we are close to mountains, without being in actual possession of them, they are to be regarded as a constant source of disadvantage—a sort of laboratory of hostile forces; and this will be the case in a still greater degree if the mountains are not only occupied by the enemy, but also form part of his territory. The smallest bodies of adventurous partisans always find shelter there if pursued, and can then sally forth again with impunity at other points; the largest bodies, under their cover, can approach unperceived, and our forces must, therefore, always keep at a sufficient distance if they would avoid getting within reach of their dominating influence—if they would not be exposed to disadvantageous combats and sudden attacks which they cannot return.

In this manner every mountain system exercises a very great influence over the lower and more level country adjacent to it, up to a certain distance. Whether this influence shall take effect momentarily, for instance in a battle (as at Maltsch on the Rhine, 1796) or only after some time upon the lines of communication, depends on the local relations;—whether or not it shall be overcome through some decisive event happening in the valley or level country, depends on the relations of the armed forces to each other respectively.

Buonaparte, in 1805 and 1809, advanced upon Vienna without troubling himself much about the Tyrol; but Moreau had to leave Swabia in 1796, chiefly because he was not master of the more elevated parts of the country, and too many troops were required to watch them. In campaigns, in which there is an evenly balanced series of alternate successes on each side, we shall not expose ourselves to the constant disadvantage of the mountains remaining in possession of the enemy: we need, therefore, only endeavour to seize and retain possession of that portion of them which is required on account of the direction of the principal lines of our attack; this generally leads to the mountains being the arena of the separate minor combats which take place between forces on each side. But we must be careful of overrating the importance of this circumstance, and being led to consider a mountain-chain as the key to the whole in all cases, and its possession as the main point. When a victory is the object sought; then it is the principal object; and if the victory is gained, other things can be regulated according to the paramount requirement of the situation.

3.

MOUNTAINS CONSIDERED IN THEIR ASPECT OF A STRATEGIC BARRIER.

We must divide this subject under two heads.

The first is again that of a decisive battle. We can, for instance, consider the mountain chain as a river, that is, as a barrier with certain points of passage, which may afford us an opportunity of gaining a victory, because the enemy will be compelled by it to divide his forces in advancing, and is tied down to certain roads, which will enable us with our forces concentrated behind the mountains to fall upon fractions of his force. As the assailant on his march through the mountains, irrespective of all other

considerations, cannot march in a single column because he would thus expose himself to the danger of getting engaged in a decisive battle with only one line of retreat, therefore, the defensive method recommends itself certainly on substantial grounds. But as the conception of mountains and their outlets is very undefined, the question of adopting this plan depends entirely on the nature of the country itself, and it can only be pointed out as possible whilst it must also be considered as attended with two disadvantages, the first is, that if the enemy receives a severe blow, he soon finds shelter in the mountains; the second is, that he is in possession of the higher ground, which, although not decisive, must still always be regarded as a disadvantage for the pursuer.

We know of no battle given under such circumstances unless the battle with Alvinzi in 1796 can be so classed. But that the case *may* occur is plain from Buonaparte's passage of the Alps in the year 1800, when Melas might and should have fallen on him with his whole force before he had united his columns.

The second influence which mountains may have as a barrier is that which they have upon the lines of communication if they cross those lines. Without taking into account what may be done by erecting forts at the points of passage and by arming the people, the bad roads in mountains at certain seasons of the year may of themselves alone prove at once destructive to an Army; they have frequently compelled a retreat after having first sucked all the marrow and blood out of the Army. If, in addition, troops of active partisans hover round, or there is a national rising to add to the difficulties, then the enemy is obliged to make large detachments, and at last driven to form strong posts in the mountains and thus gets engaged in one of the most disadvantageous situations that can be in an offensive War.

4.

MOUNTAINS IN THEIR RELATION TO THE PROVISIONING AN ARMY.

This is a very simple subject, easy to understand. The opportunity to make the best use of them in this respect is when the assailant is either obliged to remain in the mountains, or at least to leave them close in his rear.

These considerations on the defence of mountains, which, in the main, embrace all mountain warfare, and, by their reflection, throw also the necessary light on offensive War, must not be deemed incorrect or impracticable because we can neither make plains out of mountains, nor hills out of plains, and the choice of a theatre of War is determined by so many other things that it appears as if there was little margin left for considerations of this kind. In affairs of magnitude it will be found that this margin is not so small. If it is a question of the disposition and effective employment of the principal force, and that, even in the moment of a decisive battle, by a few marches more to the front or rear an Army can be brought out of mountain ground into the level country, then a resolute concentration of the chief masses in the plain will neutralise the adjoining mountains.

We shall now once more collect the light which has been thrown on the subject, and bring it to a focus in one distinct picture.

We maintain and believe we have shown, that mountains, both tactically and strategically, are in general unfavourable to the defensive, meaning thereby, that kind of defensive which is *decisive,* on the result of which the question of the possession or loss of the country depends. They limit the view and prevent movements in every direction; they force a state of passivity, and make it necessary to stop every avenue or passage, which always leads more or less to a war of cordons. We should therefore, if possible, avoid mountains with the principal mass of our force, and leave them on one side, or keep them before or behind us.

At the same time, we think that, for minor operations and objects, there is an element of increased strength to be found in mountain ground; and after what has been said, we shall not be accused of inconsistency in maintaining that such a country is the real place of refuge for the weak, that is, for those who dare not any longer seek an absolute decision. On the other hand again, the advantages derived from a mountainous country by troops acting an inferior rôle cannot be participated in by large masses of troops.

Still all these considerations will hardly counteract the impressions made on the senses. The imagination not only of the inexperienced but also of all those accustomed to bad methods of War will still feel in the concrete case such an overpowering dread of the difficulties which the inflexible and retarding nature of mountainous ground oppose to all the movements of an assailant, that they will hardly be able to look upon our opinion as anything but a most singular paradox. Then again, with those who take a general view, the history of the last century (with its peculiar form of War) will take the place of the impression of the senses, and therefore there will be but few who will not still adhere to the belief that Austria, for example, should be better able to defend her states on the Italian side than on the side of the Rhine. On the other hand, the French who carried on War for twenty years under a leader both energetic and indifferent to minor considerations, and have constantly before their eyes the successful results thus obtained, will, for some time to come, distinguish themselves in this as well as in other cases by the tact of a practised judgment.

Does it follow from this that a State would be better protected by an open country than by mountains, that Spain would be stronger without the Pyrenees; Lombardy more difficult of access without the Alps, and a level country such as North Germany more difficult to conquer than a mountainous country? To these false deductions we shall devote our concluding remarks.

We do not assert that Spain would be stronger *without* the Pyrenees than *with* them, but we say that a Spanish Army, feeling itself strong enough to engage in a decisive battle, would do better by concentrating itself in a position behind the Ebro, than by distributing itself amongst the fifteen passes of the Pyrenees. But the influence of the Pyrenees on War is very far from being set aside on that account. We say the same respecting an Italian Army. If it divided itself in the High Alps it would be vanquished by each resolute Commander it encountered, without even the alternative of victory or

defeat; whilst in the plains of Turin it would have the same chance as every other Army. But still no one can on that account suppose that it is desirable for an aggressor to have to march over masses of mountains such as the Alps, and to leave them behind. Besides, a determination to accept a great battle in the plains, by no means excludes a preliminary defence of the mountains by subordinate forces, an arrangement very advisable in respect to such masses as the Alps and Pyrenees. Lastly, it is far from our intention to argue that the conquest of a mountainous country is easier than that of a level* one, unless a single victory sufficed to prostrate the enemy completely. After this victory ensues a state of defence for the conqueror, during which the mountainous ground must be as disadvantageous to the assailant as it was to the defensive, and even more so. If the War continues, if foreign assistance arrives, if the people take up arms, this reaction will gain strength from a mountainous country.

It is here as in dioptrics, the image represented becomes more luminous when moved in a certain direction, not, however, as far as one pleases, but only until the focus is reached, beyond that the effect is reversed.

If the defensive is weaker in the mountains, that would seem to be a reason for the assailant to prefer a line of operations in the mountains. But this will seldom occur, because the difficulties of supporting an Army, and those arising from the roads, the uncertainty as to whether the enemy will accept battle in the mountains, and even whether he will take up a position there with his principal force, tend to neutralise that possible advantage.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XVII

DEFENCE OF MOUNTAINS (*Continued*)

In the fifteenth chapter we spoke of the nature of combats in mountains, and in the sixteenth of the use to be made of them by Strategy, and in so doing we often came upon the idea of *mountain defence,* without stopping to consider the form and details of such a measure. We shall now examine it more closely.

As mountain systems frequently extend like streaks or belts over the surface of the earth, and form the division between streams flowing in different directions, consequently the separation between whole water systems, and as this general form repeats itself in the parts composing that whole, inasmuch as these parts diverge from the main chain in branches or ridges, and then form the separation between lesser water systems; hence the idea of a system of mountain defence has naturally founded itself in the first instance, and afterwards developed itself, upon the conception of the general form of mountains, that of an obstacle, like a great barrier, having greater length than breadth. Although geologists are not yet agreed as to the origin of mountains and the laws of their formation, still in every case the course of the waters indicates in the shortest and surest manner the general form of the system, whether the action of the water has contributed to give that general form (according to the aqueous theory) or that the course of the water is a consequence of the form of the system itself. It was, therefore, very natural again, in devising a system of mountain defence, to take the course of the waters as a guide, as those courses form a natural series of levels, from which we can obtain both the general height and the general profile of the mountain, while the valleys formed by the streams present also the best means of access to the heights, because so much of the effect of the erosive and alluvial action of the water is permanent, that the inequalities of the slopes of the mountain are smoothed down by it to one regular slope. Hence, therefore, the idea of mountain defence would assume that, when a mountain ran about parallel with the front to be defended, it was to be regarded as a great obstacle to approach, as a kind of rampart, the gates of which were formed by the valleys. The real defence was then to be made on the crest of this rampart (that is, on the edge of the plateau which crowned the mountain) and cut the valleys transversely. If the line of the principal mountain-chain formed somewhat of a right angle with the front of defence, then one of the principal branches would be selected to be used instead; thus the line chosen would be parallel to one of the principal valleys, and run up to the principal ridge, which might be regarded as the extremity.

We have noticed this scheme for mountain defence founded on the geological structure of the earth, because it really presented itself in theory for some time, and in the so-called “theory of ground” the laws of the process of aqueous action have been mixed up with the conduct of War.

But all this is so full of false hypotheses and incorrect substitutions, that when these are abstracted, nothing in reality remains to serve as the basis of any kind of a system.

The principal ridges of real mountains are far too impracticable and inhospitable to place large masses of troops upon them; it is often the same with the adjacent ridges, they are often too short and irregular. Plateaux do not exist on all mountain ridges, and where they are to be found they are mostly narrow, and therefore unfit to accommodate many troops; indeed, there are few mountains which, closely examined, will be found surmounted by an uninterrupted ridge, or which have their sides at such an angle that they form in some measure practicable slopes, or, at least, a succession of terraces. The principal ridge winds, bends, and splits itself; immense branches launch into the adjacent country in curved lines, and lift themselves often just at their termination to a greater height than the main ridge itself; promontories then join on, and form deep valleys which do not correspond with the general system. Thus it is that, when several lines of mountains cross each other, or at those points from which they branch out, the conception of a small band or belt is completely at an end, and gives place to mountain and water lines radiating from a centre in the form of a star.

From this it follows, and it will strike those who have examined mountain-masses in this manner the more forcibly, that the idea of a systematic disposition is out of the question, and that to adhere to such an idea as a fundamental principle for our measures would be wholly impracticable. There is still one important point to notice belonging to the province of practical application.

If we look closely at mountain warfare in its tactical aspects, it is evident that these are of two principal kinds, the first of which is the defence of steep slopes, the second is that of narrow valleys. Now this last, which is often, indeed almost generally, highly favourable to the action of the defence, is not very compatible with the disposition on the principal ridge, for the occupation of the valley *itself* is often required and that at its outer extremity nearest to the open country, not at its commencement, because there its sides are steeper. Besides, this defence of valleys offers a means of defending mountainous districts, even when the ridge itself affords no position which can be occupied; the rôle which it performs is, therefore, generally greater in proportion as the masses of the mountains are higher and more inaccessible.

The result of all these considerations is, that we must entirely give up the idea of a defensible line more or less regular, and coincident with one of the geological lines, and must look upon a mountain range as merely a surface intersected and broken with inequalities and obstacles strewed over it in the most diversified manner, the features of which we must try to make the best use of which circumstances permit; that therefore, although a knowledge of the geological features of the ground is indispensable to a clear conception of the form of mountain masses, it is of little value in the organisation of defensive measures.

Neither in the War of the Austrian Succession, nor in the Seven Years' War, nor in those of the French Revolution, do we find military dispositions which comprehended a whole mountain system, and in which the defence was systematised in accordance with the leading features of that system. Nowhere do we find Armies on the principal

ridges always in position on the slopes. Sometimes at a greater, sometimes at a lower elevation; sometimes in one direction, sometimes in another; parallel, at right angles, and obliquely; with and against the watercourse; in lofty mountains, such as the Alps, frequently extended along the valleys; amongst mountains of an inferior class, like the Sudetics (and this is the strangest anomaly), at the middle of the declivity, as it sloped towards the defender, therefore with the principal ridge in front, like the position in which Frederick the Great, in 1762, covered the siege of Schwednitz, with the "hohe Eule" before the front of his camp.

The celebrated positions, Schmotseifen and Landshut, in the Seven Years' War, are for the most part in the bottoms of valleys. It is the same with the position of Feldkirch, in the Vorarlsberg. In the campaigns of 1799 and 1800, the chief posts, both of the French and Austrians, were always quite in the valleys, not merely across them so as to close them, but also parallel with them, whilst the ridges were either not occupied at all, or merely by a few single posts.

The crests of the higher Alps in particular are so difficult of access, and afford so little space for the accommodation of troops, that it would be impossible to place any considerable bodies of men there. Now if we must positively have Armies in mountains to keep possession of them, there is nothing to be done but to place them in the valleys. At first sight this appears erroneous, because, in accordance with the prevalent theoretical ideas, it will be said, the heights command the valleys. But that is really not the case. Mountain ridges are only accessible by a few paths and rude tracks, with a few exceptions only passable for infantry, whilst the carriage roads are in the valleys. The enemy can only appear there at certain points with infantry; but in these mountain masses the distances are too great for any effective fire of small arms, and therefore a position in the valleys is less dangerous than it appears. At the same time, the valley defence is exposed to another great danger, that of being cut off. The enemy can, it is true, only descend into the valley with infantry, at certain points, slowly and with great exertion; he cannot, therefore, take us by surprise; but none of the positions we have in the valley defend the outlets of such paths into the valley. The enemy can, therefore, bring down large masses gradually, then spread out, and burst through the thin, and from that moment, weak line, which, perhaps, has nothing more for its protection than the rocky bed of a shallow mountain-stream. But now retreat, which must always be made piecemeal in a valley, until the outlet from the mountains is reached, is impossible for many parts of the line of troops; and that was the reason that the Austrians in Switzerland almost always lost a third, or a half of their troops taken prisoners.—

Now a few words on the usual way of dividing troops in such a method of defence.

Each of the subordinate positions is in relation with a position taken up by the principal body of troops, more or less in the centre of the whole line, on the principal road of approach. From this central position, other bodies are detached right and left to occupy the most important points of approach, and thus the whole is disposed in a line, as it were, of three, four, five, six posts, &c. How far this fractioning and extension of the line shall be carried, must depend on the requirements of each individual case. An extent of a couple of marches, that is, fifty to sixty miles is of

moderate length, and we have seen it carried as far as one hundred or one hundred and fifty miles.

Between each of these separate posts, which are one or two leagues from each other, there will probably be some approaches of inferior importance, to which afterwards attention must be directed. Some very good posts for a couple of battalions each are selected, which form a good connection between the chief posts, and they are occupied. It is easy to see that the distribution of the force may be carried still further, and go down to posts occupied only by single companies and squadrons; and this has often happened. There are, therefore, in this no general limits to the extent of fractioning. On the other hand, the strength of each post must depend on the strength of the whole; and therefore we can say nothing as to the possible or natural degree which should be observed with regard to the strength of the principal posts. We shall only append, as a guide, some maxims which are drawn from experience and the nature of the case.

1. The more lofty and inaccessible the mountains are, so much the further this separation of divisions of the force not only may be, *but also must be,* carried; for the less any portion of a country can be kept secure by combinations dependent on the movement of troops, so much the more must the security be obtained by direct covering. The defence of the Alps requires a much greater division of force, and therefore approaches nearer to the cordon system, than the defence of the Vosges or the Giant mountains.

2. Hitherto, wherever defence of mountains has taken place, such a division of the force employed has been made that the chief posts have generally consisted of only one line of infantry, and in a second line, some squadrons of cavalry; at all events, only the chief post established in the centre has perhaps had some battalions in a second line.

3. A strategic reserve, to reinforce any point attacked has very seldom been kept in rear, because the extension of front made the line feel too weak already in all parts. On this account the support which a post attacked has received, has generally been furnished from other posts in the line not themselves attacked.

4. Even when the division of the forces has been relatively moderate, and the strength of each single post considerable, the principal resistance has been always confined to a local defence; and if once the enemy succeeded in wresting a post, it has been impossible to recover it by any supports afterwards arriving.

How much, according to this, may be expected from mountain defence, in what cases this means may be used, how far we can and may go in the extension and fractioning of the forces—these are all questions which theory must leave to the tact of the General. It is enough if it tells him what these means really are, and what rôle they can perform in the active operations of the Army.

A General who allows himself to be beaten in an extended mountain position deserves to be brought before a court-martial.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XVIII

DEFENCE OF STREAMS AND RIVERS

Streams and large rivers, in so far as we speak of their defence, belong, like mountains, to the category of strategic barriers. But they differ from mountains in two respects. The one concerns their relative, the other their absolute defence.

Like mountains, they strengthen the relative defence; but one of their peculiarities is, that they are like implements of hard and brittle metal, they either stand every blow without bending, or their defence breaks and then ends altogether. If the river is very large, and the other conditions are favourable, then the passage may be absolutely impossible. But if the defence of any river is forced at one point, then there cannot be, as in mountain warfare, a persistent defence afterwards; the affair is finished with that one act, unless that the river itself runs between mountains.

The other peculiarity of rivers in relation to War is, that in many cases they admit of very good, and in general of better combinations than mountains for a decisive battle.

Both again have this property in common, that they are dangerous and seductive objects which have often led to false measures, and placed Generals in awkward situations. We shall notice these results in examining more closely the defence of rivers.

Although history is rather bare in examples of rivers defended with success, and therefore the opinion is justified that rivers and streams are no such formidable barriers as was once supposed, when an absolute defensive system seized all means of strengthening itself which the country offered, still the influence which they exercise to the advantage of the battle, as well as of the defence of a country, cannot be denied.

In order to look over the subject in a connected form, we shall specify the different points of view from which we propose to examine it.

First and foremost, the strategic results which streams and rivers produce through their defence, must be distinguished from the influence which they have on the defence of a country, even when not themselves specially defended.

Further, the defence itself may take three different forms:—

1. An absolute defence with the main body.

2. A mere demonstration of resistance.

3. A relative resistance by subordinate bodies of troops, such as outposts, covering lines, flanking detachments &c.

Lastly, we must distinguish three different degrees or kinds of defence, in each of its forms, namely—

1. A direct defence by opposing the passage.

2. A rather indirect one, by which the river and its valley are only used as a means towards a better combination for the battle.

3. A completely direct one, by holding an unassailable position on the enemy's side of the river.

We shall subdivide our observations, in conformity with these three degrees, and after we have made ourselves acquainted with each of them in its relation to the first, which is the most important of the forms, we shall then proceed to do the same in respect to their relations to the other two. Therefore, first, the direct defence, that is, such a defence as is to prevent the passage of the enemy's Army itself.

This can only come into the question in relation to large rivers, that is, great bodies of water.

The combinations of space, time, and force, which require to be looked into as elements of this theory of defence, make the subject somewhat complicated, so that it is not easy to gain a sure point from which to commence. The following is the result at which every one will arrive on full consideration.

The time required to build a bridge determines the distance from each other at which the detachments charged with the defence of the river should be posted. If we divide the whole length of the line of defence by this distance, we get the number of bodies required for the defence; if with that number we divide the mass of troops disposable, we shall get the strength of each detachment. If we now compare the strength of each single body with the number of troops which the enemy, by using all the means in his power, can pass over during the construction of his bridge, we shall be able to judge how far we can expect a successful resistance. For we can only assume the forcing of the passage to be impossible when the defender is able to attack the troops passed over with a *considerable numerical superiority,* say *the double,* before the bridge is completed. An illustration will make this plain.

If the enemy requires twenty-four hours for the construction of a bridge, and if he can by other means only pass over 20,000 men in those twenty-four hours, whilst the defender within twelve hours can appear at any point whatever with 20,000 men, in such case the passage cannot be forced; for the defender will arrive when the enemy engaged in crossing has only passed over the half of 20,000. Now as in twelve hours, the time for conveying intelligence included, we can march twenty miles, therefore every forty miles 20,000 men would be required, which would make 60,000 for the defence of a length of one hundred and twenty miles of river. These would be sufficient for the appearance of 20,000 men at any point, even if the enemy attempted the passage at two points at the same time; if at only one point twice 20,000 men could be brought to oppose him at that single point.

Here, then, there are three circumstances exercising a decisive influence: (1) the breadth of the river; (2) the means of passage, for the two determine both the time required to construct the bridge, and the number of troops that can cross during the time the bridge is being built; (3) the strength of the defender's Army. The strength of the enemy's force itself does not as yet come into consideration. According to this theory we may say that there is a point at which the possibility of crossing completely stops, and that no numerical superiority on the part of the enemy would enable him to force a passage.

This is the simple theory of the direct defence of a river, that is, of a defence intended to prevent the enemy from finishing his bridge and from making the passage itself; in this there is as yet no notice taken of the effect of demonstrations which the enemy may use. We shall now bring into consideration particulars in detail, and measures requisite for such a defence.

Setting aside, in the first place, geographical peculiarities, we have only to say that the detachments as proposed by the present theory, must be posted close to the river, and each detachment concentrated in itself. It must be close to the river, because every position further back lengthens unnecessarily and uselessly the distance to be gone over to any point menaced; for as the waters of the river give security against any important movement on the part of the enemy, a reserve in rear is not required, as it is for an ordinary line of defence, where there is no river in front. Besides, the roads running parallel to and near a river up and down, are generally better than transverse roads from the interior leading to any particular points on the river. Lastly, the river is unquestionably better watched by bodies thus placed than by a mere chain of posts, more particularly as the Commanders are all close at hand.—Each of these bodies must be concentrated in itself, because otherwise all the calculation as to time would require alteration. He who knows the loss of time in effecting a concentration, will easily comprehend that just in this concentrated position lies the great efficacy of the defence. No doubt, at first sight, it is very tempting to make the crossing, even in boats, impossible for the enemy by a line of posts; but with a few exceptions of points, specially favourable for crossing, such a measure would be extremely prejudicial. To say nothing of the objection that the enemy can generally drive off such a post by bringing a superior force to bear on it from the opposite side, it is, as a rule, a waste of strength, that is to say, the most that can be obtained by any such post, is to compel the enemy to choose another point of passage. If, therefore, we are not so strong that we can treat and defend the river like a ditch of a fortress, a case for which no new precept is required, such a method of directly defending the bank of a river leads necessarily away from the proposed object. Besides these general principles for positions, we have to consider—first, the examination of the special peculiarities of the river; second, the removal of all means of passage; third, the influence of any fortresses situated on the river.

A river, considered as a line of defence, must have at the extremities of the line, right and left, *points d'appui,* such as, for instance, the sea, or a neutral territory; or there must be other causes which make it impracticable for the enemy to turn the line of defence by crossing beyond its extremities. Now, as neither such flank supports nor such impediments are to be found, unless at considerable distances, we see at once

that the defence of a river must embrace a considerable portion of its length, and that, therefore, the possibility of a defence by placing a large body of troops behind a relatively short length of the river vanishes from the class of possible facts (to which we must always confine ourselves). We say *a relatively short length of the river,* by which we mean a length which does not very much exceed that which the same number of troops would usually occupy on an ordinary position in line without a river. Such cases, we say, do not occur, and every direct defence of a river always becomes a kind of cordon system, at least as far as regards the extension of the troops, and therefore is not at all adapted to oppose a turning movement on the part of the enemy in the same manner which is natural to an Army in a concentrated position. Where, therefore, such turning movement is possible, the direct defence of the river, however promising its results in other respects, is a measure in the highest degree dangerous.

Now, as regards the portion of the river between its extreme points, of course we may suppose that all points within that portion are not equally well suited for crossing. This subject admits of being somewhat more precisely determined in the abstract, but not positively fixed, for the very smallest local peculiarity often decides more than all which looks great and important in books. Besides, it is wholly unnecessary to lay down any rules on this subject, for the appearance of the river, and the information to be obtained from those residing near it, will always amply suffice, without referring back to books.

As matters of detail, we may observe that roads leading down upon a river, its affluents, the great towns through which it passes, and lastly above all, its islands, generally favour a passage the most; that on the other hand, the elevation of one bank over another, and the bend in the course of the river at the point of passage, which usually act such a prominent rôle in books, are seldom of any consequence. The reason of this is, that the presumed influence of these two things rests on the limited idea of an absolute defence of the river bank—a case which seldom or never happens in connection with great rivers.

Now, whatever may be the nature of the circumstances which make it easier to cross a river at particular points, they must have an influence on the position of the troops, and modify the general geometrical law; but it is not advisable to deviate too far from that law, relying on the difficulties of the passage at many points. The enemy would choose exactly those spots which are the least favourable by nature for crossing, if he knew that these are the points where there is the least likelihood of meeting us.

In any case the strongest possible occupation of islands is a measure to be recommended, because a serious attack on an island indicates in the surest way the intended point of passage.

As the troops stationed close to the river must be able to move either up or down along its banks according as circumstances require, therefore if there is no road parallel to the river, one of the most essential preparatory measures for the defence of the river is to put the nearest small roads running in a parallel direction into suitable order, and to construct such short roads of connection as may be necessary.

The second point on which we have to speak, is the removal of the means of crossing.—On the river itself the thing is no easy matter, at least requires considerable time; but on the affluents which fall into the river, particularly those on the enemy's side, the difficulties are almost insurmountable, as these branch rivers are generally already in the hands of the enemy. For that reason it is important to close the mouths of such rivers by fortifications.

As the equipment for crossing rivers which an enemy brings with him, that is his pontoons, are rarely sufficient for the passage of great rivers, much depends on the means to be found on the river itself, its affluents, and in the great towns adjacent, and lastly, on the timber for building boats and rafts in forests near the river. There are cases in which all these circumstances are so unfavourable, that the crossing of a river is by that means almost an impossibility.

Lastly, the fortresses, which lie on both sides, or on the enemy's side of the river, serve both to prevent any crossing at any points near them, up or down the river, and as a means of closing the mouths of affluents, as well as to receive immediately all craft or boats which may be seized.

So much as to the direct defence of a river, on the supposition that it is one containing a great volume of water. If a deep valley with precipitous sides or marshy banks, are added to the barrier of the river itself, then the difficulty of passing and the strength of the defence are certainly increased; but the volume of water is not made up for by such obstacles, for they constitute no absolute severance of the country, which is an *indispensable* condition of direct defence.

If we are asked what rôle such a direct river defence can play in the strategic plan of the campaign, we must admit that it can never lead to a decisive victory, partly because the object is not to let the enemy pass over to our side at all, or to crush the first mass of any size which passes; partly because the river prevents our being able to convert the advantages gained into a decisive victory by sallying forth in force.

On the other hand, the defence of a river in this way may produce a great gain of time, which is generally all important for the defensive. The collecting the means of crossing takes up often much time; if several attempts fail a good deal more time is gained. If the enemy, on account of the river, gives his forces an entirely different direction, then still further advantages may be gained by that means. Lastly, whenever the enemy is not in downright earnest about advancing, a river will occasion a stoppage in his movements and thereby afford a durable protection to the country.

A direct defence of a river, therefore, when the masses of troops engaged are considerable, the river, large, and other circumstances favourable, may be regarded as a very good defensive means, and may yield results to which Commanders in modern times (influenced only by the thought of unfortunate attempts to defend rivers, which failed from insufficient means), have paid too little attention. For if, in accordance with the supposition just made (which may easily be realised in connection with such rivers as the Rhine or the Danube), an efficient defence of one hundred and twenty

miles of river is possible by 60,000 men in face of a very considerably superior force, we may well say that such a result deserves consideration.

We say, in opposition to a *considerably superior force,* and must again recur to that point. According to the theory we have propounded, all depends on the means of crossing, and nothing on the numerical strength of the force seeking to cross, always supposing it is not less than the force which defends the river. This appears very extraordinary, and yet it is true. But we must take care not to forget that most defences of rivers, or, more properly speaking, the whole, have no absolute *points d'appui,* therefore, may be turned, and this turning movement will be very much easier if the enemy has very superior numbers.

If now we reflect that such a direct defence of a river, even if overcome by the enemy, is by no means to be compared to a lost battle, and can still less lead to a complete defeat, since only a part of our force has been engaged, and the enemy, detained by the tedious crossing over of his troops on a single bridge, cannot immediately follow up his victory, we shall be the less disposed to despise this means of defence.

In all the practical affairs of human life it is important to hit the right point; and so also, in the defence of a river, it makes a great difference whether we rightly appreciate our situation in all its relations; an apparently insignificant circumstance may essentially alter the case, and make a measure which is wise and effective in one instance, a disastrous mistake in another. This difficulty of forming a right judgment and of avoiding the notion that "a river is a river" is perhaps greater here than anywhere else, therefore we must especially guard against false applications and interpretations; but having done so, we have also no hesitation in plainly declaring that we do not think it worth while to listen to the cry of those who, under the influence of some vague feeling, and without any fixed idea, expect everything from attack and movement, and think they see the most true picture of War in a hussar at full gallop brandishing his sword over his head.

Such ideas and feelings are not always all that is required (we shall only instance here the once famous dictator Wedel, at Zullichau, in 1759); but the worst of all is that they are seldom durable, and they forsake the General at the last moment if great complex cases branching out into a thousand relations bear heavily upon him.

We therefore believe that a direct defence of a river with large bodies of troops, under favourable conditions, can lead to successful results if we content ourselves with a moderate negative: but this does not hold good in the case of smaller masses. Although 60,000 men on a certain length of river could prevent an army of 100,000 or more from passing, a body of 10,000 on the same length would not be able to oppose the passage of an equal number of men, indeed, probably, not of one half that strength if such a body chose to run the risk of placing itself on the same side of the river with an enemy so much superior in numbers. The case is clear, as the means of passing do not alter.

We have as yet said little about feints or demonstrations of crossing, as they do not essentially come into consideration in the direct defence of a river, for partly such

defence is not a question of concentration of the Army at one point, but each Corps has the defence of a portion of the river distinctly allotted to it: partly such simulated intentions of crossing are also very difficult under the circumstances we have supposed. If, for instance, the means of crossing in themselves are already limited, that is, not in such abundance as the assailant must desire to ensure the success of his undertaking, he will then hardly be able or willing to apply a large share to a mere demonstration: at all events the mass of troops to be passed over at the true point of crossing must be so much the less, and the defender gains again in time what through uncertainty he may have lost.

This direct defence, as a rule, seems only suitable to large rivers, and on the last half of their course.

The second form of defence is suitable for smaller rivers with deep valleys, often also for very unimportant ones. It consists in a position taken up further back from the river at such a distance that the enemy's Army may either be caught in detail after the passage (if it passes at several points at the same time) or if the passage is made by the whole at one point, then near the river, hemmed in upon one bridge and road. An Army with the rear pressed close against a river or a deep valley, and confined to one line of retreat, is in a most disadvantageous position for battle; in the making proper use of this circumstance, consists precisely the most efficacious defence of rivers of moderate size, and running in deep valleys.

The disposition of an Army in large detachments close to a river which we consider the best in a direct defence, supposes that the enemy cannot pass the river unexpectedly and in great force, because otherwise, by making such a disposition, there would be great danger of being beaten in detail. If, therefore, the circumstances which favour the defence are not sufficiently advantageous, if the enemy has already in hand ample means of crossing, if the river has many islands or fords, if it is not broad enough, if we are too weak, &c., &c., then the idea of that method may be dismissed: the troops for the more secure connection with each other must be drawn back a little from the river, and all that then remains to do is to ensure the most rapid concentration possible upon that point where the enemy attempts to cross, so as to be able to attack him before he has gained so much ground that he has the command of several passages. In the present case the river or its valley must be watched and partially defended by a chain of outposts whilst the Army is disposed in several Corps at suitable points and at a certain distance (usually a few leagues) from the river.

The most difficult point lies here in the passage through the narrow way formed by the river and its valley. It is not now only the volume of water in the river with which we are concerned, but the whole of the defile, and, as a rule, a deep rocky valley is a greater impediment to pass than a river of considerable breadth. The difficulty of the march of a large body of troops through a long defile is in reality much greater than appears at first consideration. The time required is very considerable; and the danger that the enemy during the march may make himself master of the surrounding heights must cause disquietude. If the troops in front advance too far, they encounter the enemy too soon, and are in danger of being overpowered; if they remain near the point of passage then they fight in the worst situation. The passage across such an

obstacle of ground with a view to measure strength with the enemy on the opposite side is, therefore, a bold undertaking, or it implies very superior numbers and great confidence in the commander.

Such a defensive line cannot certainly be extended to such a length as in the direct defence of a great river, for it is intended to fight with the whole force united, and the passages, however difficult, cannot be compared in that respect with those over a large river; it is, therefore, much easier for the enemy to make a turning movement against us. But at the same time, such a movement carries him out of his natural direction (for we suppose, as is plain in itself, that the valley crosses that direction at about right angles), and the disadvantageous effect of a confined line of retreat only disappears gradually, not at once, so that the defender will still always have some advantage over the advancing foe, although the latter is not caught exactly at the crisis of the passage, but by the detour he makes is enabled to get a little more room to move.

As we are not speaking of rivers in connection only with the mass of their waters, but have rather more in view the deep cleft or channel formed by their valleys, we must explain that under the term we do not mean any regular mountain gorge, because then all that has been said about mountains would be applicable. But, as every one knows, there are many level districts where the channels of even the smallest streams have deep and precipitous sides; and, besides these, such as have marshy banks, or whose banks are otherwise difficult of approach, belong to the same class.

Under these conditions, therefore, an Army on the defensive, posted behind a large river or deep valley with steep sides, is in a very excellent position, and this sort of river defence is a strategic measure of the best kind.

Its defect (the point on which the defender is very apt to err) is the over-extension of the defending force. It is so natural in such a case to be drawn on from one point of passage to another, and to miss the right point where we ought to stop; but then, if we do not succeed in fighting with the whole Army united, we miss the intended effect; a defeat in battle, the necessity of retreat, confusion in many ways and losses reduce the Army nearly to ruin, even although the resistance has not been pushed to an extremity.

In saying that the defensive, under the above conditions, should not extend his forces widely, that he should be in any case able to assemble all his forces on the evening of the day on which the enemy passes, enough is said, and it may stand in place of all combinations of time, power, and space, things which, in this case, must depend on many local points.

The battle to which these circumstances lead must have a special character—that of the greatest impetuosity on the side of the defender. The feigned passages by which the enemy will keep him for some time in uncertainty—will, in general, prevent his discovering the real point of crossing a moment too soon. The peculiar advantages of the situation of the defender consist in the disadvantageous situation of the enemy's troops just immediately in his front; if other Corps, having passed at other points,

menace his flank, he cannot, as in a defensive battle, counteract such movements by vigorous blows from his rear, for that would be to sacrifice the above-mentioned advantage of his situation; he must, therefore, decide the affair in his front before such other Corps can arrive and become dangerous, that is, he must attack what he has before him as swiftly and vigorously as possible, and decide all by its defeat.

But the object of *this* form of river defence can never be the repulse of a very greatly superior force, as is conceivable in the direct defence of a large river; for as a rule we have really to deal with the bulk of the enemy's force, and although we do so under favourable circumstances, still it is easy to see the relation between the forces must soon be felt.

This is the nature of the defence of rivers of a moderate size and deep valleys when the principal masses of the Armies are concerned, for in respect to them the considerable resistance which can be offered on the ridges or scarps of the valley stands no comparison with the disadvantages of a scattered position, and to them a decisive victory is a matter of necessity. But if nothing more is wanted but the reinforcement of a secondary line of defence which is intended to hold out for a short time, and which can calculate on support, then certainly a direct defence of the scarps of the valley, or even of the river bank, may be made; and although the same advantages are not to be expected here as in mountain positions, still the resistance will always last longer than in an ordinary country. Only one circumstance makes this measure very dangerous, if not impossible: it is when the river has many windings and sharp turnings, which is just what is often the case when a river runs in a deep valley. Only look at the course of the Mosel. In a case of its defence, the Corps in advance on the salients of the bends would almost inevitably be lost in the event of a retreat.

That a great river allows the same defensive means, the same form of defence, which we have pointed out as best suited for rivers of a moderate size, in connection with the mass of an Army, and also under much more favourable circumstances, is plain of itself. It will come into use more especially when the point with the defender is to gain a decisive victory (Aspern).

The case of an Army drawn up with its front close on a river, or stream, or deep valley, in order by that means to command a tactical obstacle to the approach to its position, or to strengthen its front, is quite a different one, the detailed examination of which belongs to tactics. Of the effect of this we shall only say this much, that it is founded on a delusion.—If the cleft in the ground is very considerable, the front of the position becomes absolutely unassailable. Now, as there is no more difficulty in passing round such a position than any other, it is just the same as if the defender had himself gone out of the way of the assailant, yet that could hardly be the object of the position. A position of this kind can, therefore, only be advisable when, as a consequence of its position, it threatens the communications of the assailant, so that every deviation by him from the direct road is fraught with consequences altogether too serious to be risked.

In this second form of defence, feigned passages are much more dangerous, for the assailant can make them more easily, while, on the other hand, the proposition for the defender is, to assemble his whole Army at the right point. But the defender is certainly not quite so much limited for time here, because the advantage of his situation lasts until the assailant has massed his whole force, and made himself master of several crossings; moreover, also, the simulated attack has not the same degree of effect here as in the defence of a cordon, where all must be held, and where, therefore, in the application of the reserve, it is not merely a question, as in our proposition, where the enemy has his principal force, but the much more difficult one, Which is the point he will first seek to force?

With respect to both forms of defence of large and small rivers, we must observe generally, that if they are undertaken in the haste and confusion of a retreat, without preparation, without the removal of all means of passage, and without an exact knowledge of the country, they cannot certainly fulfil what has been here supposed; in most such cases, nothing of the kind is to be calculated upon; and therefore it will be always a great error for an Army to divide itself over extended positions.

As everything usually miscarries in War, if it is not done upon clear convictions and with the whole will and energy, so a *river defence* will generally end badly when it is only resorted to because we have not the heart to meet the enemy in the open field, and hope that the broad river or the deep valley will stop him. When that is the case, there is so little confidence in the actual situation that both the General and his Army are usually filled with anxious forebodings, which are almost sure to be realised quick enough. A battle in the open field does not suppose a perfectly equal state of circumstances beforehand, like a duel; and the defender who does not know how to gain for himself any advantages, either through the special nature of the defence, through rapid marches, or by knowledge of the country and freedom of movement, is one whom nothing can save, and least of all will a river or its valley be able to help him.

The third form of defence—by a strong position taken up on the enemy's side of the river—founds its efficacy on the danger in which it places the enemy of having his communications cut by the river, and being thus limited to a few bridges only. It follows, as a matter of course, that we are only speaking of great rivers with a great volume of water, as these alone can lead to such results, whilst a river which is merely in a deep ravine usually affords such a number of passages that all danger of the above disappears.

But the position of the defensive must be very strong, almost unassailable; otherwise he would just meet the enemy half way, and give up his advantages. But if it is of such strength that the enemy resolves not to attack it, he will, under certain circumstances, be confined thereby to the same bank with the defender. If the assailant crosses, he exposes his communications; but certainly, at the same time, he threatens ours. Here, as in all cases in which one Army passes by another, the great point is, whose communications, by their number, situation, and other circumstances, are the best secured, and which has also, in other respects, most to lose, therefore can be outbid by his opponent; lastly, which possesses still in his Army the most power of

victory upon which he can depend in an extreme case. The influence of the river merely amounts to this, that it augments the danger of such a movement for both parties, as both are dependent on bridges. Now, in so far as we can assume that, according to the usual course of things, the passage of the defender, as well as of his depôts of all kinds, are better secured by fortresses than those of the offensive, in so far is such a defence conceivable, and one which might be substituted for the direct defence when circumstances are not favourable to that form. Certainly then the river is not defended by the Army, nor the Army by the river, but by the connection between the two the country is defended, which is the main point.

At the same time it must be granted that this mode of defence, without a decisive blow, and resembling the state of tension of two electric currents, of which the atmospheres only are as yet in contact, cannot stop any very powerful impulsive force. It might be applicable against even a great superiority of force on the side of the enemy, if their Army is commanded by a cautious General, wanting in decision, and never disposed to push forward with energy; it might also answer when a kind of oscillation towards equality between the contending forces has previously arisen, and nothing but small advantages are looked for on either side. But if we have to deal with superior forces, led by a bold General, we are upon a dangerous course, very close to an abyss.

This form of defence looks so bold, and at the same time so scientific, that it might be called the elegant; but as elegance easily merges into folly, and as it is not so easily excused in War as in society, therefore we have had as yet few instances of this elegant art. From this third mode a special means of assistance for the first two forms is developed, that is, by the permanent occupation of a bridge and a *tête du pont* to keep up a constant threat of crossing.

Besides the object of an absolute defence with the main body, each of the three modes of defence may also have that of a *feigned defence.*

This show of a resistance, which it is not intended really to offer, is an act which is combined with many other measures, and fundamentally with every position which is anything more than a camp of route; but the feigned defence of a great river becomes a complete stratagem in this way, that it is necessary to adopt actually more or less a number of measures of detail, and that its action is usually on a greater scale and of longer duration than that of any other; for the act of passing a great river in sight of an Army is always an important step for the assailant, one over which he often ponders long, or which he postpones to a more favourable moment.

For such a feigned defence it is therefore requisite that the main Army should divide and post itself along the river (much in the same manner as for a real defence); but as the intention of a mere demonstration shows that circumstances are not favourable enough for a real defence, therefore, from that measure as it always occasions a more or less extended and scattered disposition, the danger of serious loss may very easily arise if the detachments should get engaged in a real resistance, even if not carried to an extremity; it would then be in the true sense a half measure. In a demonstration of defence, therefore, arrangement must be made for a sure concentration of the Army at

a point considerably (perhaps several days' march) in rear, and the defence should not be carried beyond what is consistent with this arrangement.

In order to make our views plainer, and to show the importance of such a defensive demonstration, let us refer to the end of the campaign of 1813. Buonaparte repassed the Rhine with forty or fifty thousand men. To attempt to defend this river with such a force at all points where the Allies, according to the direction of their forces, might easily pass, that is, between Manheim and Nimeguen, would have been to attempt an impossibility. The only idea which Buonaparte could therefore entertain was to offer his first real resistance somewhere on the French Meuse, where he could make his appearance with his Army in some measure reinforced. Had he at once withdrawn his forces to that point, the Allies would have followed close at his heels; had he placed his Army in cantonments for rest behind the Rhine, the same thing must have taken place almost as soon, for at the least show of desponding caution on his part, the Allies would have sent over swarms of Cossacks and other light troops in pursuit, and, if that measure produced good results, other Corps would have followed. The French Corps had therefore nothing for it but to take steps to defend the Rhine in earnest. As Buonaparte could foresee that this defence must end in nothing whenever the Allies seriously undertook to cross the river, it may therefore be regarded in the light of a mere demonstration, in which the French Corps incurred hardly any danger, as their point of concentration lay on the Upper Moselle. Only Macdonald, who, as is known, was at Nimeguen with twenty thousand men, committed a mistake in deferring his retreat till fairly compelled to retire, for this delay prevented his joining Buonaparte before the battle of Brienne, as the retreat was not forced on him until after the arrival of Winzingerode's Corps in January. This defensive demonstration on the Rhine, therefore, produced the result of checking the Allies in their advance, and induced them to postpone the crossing of the river until their reinforcements arrived, which did not take place for six weeks. These six weeks were of infinite value to Buonaparte. Without this defensive demonstration on the Rhine, Paris would have become the next immediate object after the victory of Leipsic, and it would have been impossible for the French to have given battle on that side of their capital.

In a river defence of the second class, therefore, in that of rivers of a smaller size, such demonstrations may also be used, but they will generally be less effectual, because mere attempts to cross are in such a case easier, and therefore the spell is sooner broken.

In the third kind of river defence, a demonstration would in all probability be still less effectual, and produce no more result than that of the occupation of any other temporary position.

Lastly, the two first forms of defence are very well suited to give a chain of outposts, or any other defensive line (cordon) established for a secondary object, or to a corps of observation, much greater and more reliable strength than it would have without the river. In all these cases the question is limited to a relative resistance and that must naturally be considerably strengthened by such a great natural obstacle. At the same time, we must not think only of the relative quantity of time gained by the resistance in fight in a case of this sort, but also of the many anxieties which such undertakings

usually excite in the mind of the enemy, and which in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred lead to his giving up his plans if not urged or pressed by necessity.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XIX

DEFENCE OF STREAMS AND RIVERS (*Continued*)

We have still to add something respecting the influence of streams and rivers on the defence of a country, even when they are not themselves defended.

Every important river, with its main valley and its adjacent valleys, forms a very considerable obstacle in a country, and in that way it is, therefore, advantageous to defence in general; but its peculiar influence admits of being more particularly specified in its principal effects.

First we must distinguish whether it flows parallel to the frontier, that is, the general strategical front, or at an oblique or a right angle to it. In the case of the parallel direction we must observe the difference between having our own Army or that of the enemy behind it, and in both cases again the distance between it and the Army.

An Army on the defensive, having behind it a large river within easy reach (but not less than a day's march), and on that river an adequate number of secure crossings, is unquestionably in a much stronger situation than it would be without the river; for if it loses a little in freedom of movement by the requisite care for the security of the crossings, still it gains much more by the security of its strategic rear, that means chiefly of its lines of communication. In all this we allude to a defence in *our own country;* for in the enemy's country, although his Army might be before us, we should still have always more or less to apprehend his appearance behind us on the other side of the river, and then the river, involving as it does narrow defiles in roads, would be more disadvantageous than otherwise in its effect on our situation. The further the river is behind the Army, the less useful it will be, and at certain distances its influence disappears altogether.

If an advancing Army has to leave a river in its rear, the river cannot be otherwise than prejudicial to its movements, for it restricts the communications of the Army to a few single passages. When Prince Henry marched against the Russians on the right bank of the Oder near Breslau, he had plainly a *point d'appui* in the Oder flowing behind him at a day's march; on the other hand, when the Russians under Cznermtschef passed the Oder subsequently, they were in a very embarrassing situation, just through the risk of losing their line of retreat, which was limited to one bridge.

If a river crosses the theatre of War more or less at a right angle with the strategic front, then the advantage is again on the side of the defensive; for, in the first place, there are generally a number of good positions leaning on the river, and covered in front by the transverse valleys connected with the principal valley (like the Elbe for the Prussians in the Seven Years' War); secondly, the assailant must leave one side of the river or the other unoccupied, or he must divide his forces; and such division

cannot fail to be in favour again of the defensive, because he will be in possession of more well secured passages than the assailant. We need only cast a glance over the whole Seven Years' War, to be convinced that the Oder and Elbe were very useful to Frederick the Great in the defence of his theatre of War (namely Silesia, Saxony and the Mark), and consequently a great impediment to the conquest of these provinces by the Austrians and Russians, although there was no real defence of those rivers in the whole Seven Years' War, and their course is mostly, as connected with the enemy, at an oblique or a right angle rather than parallel with the front.

It is only the convenience of a river as a means of transport, when its course is more or less in a perpendicular direction, which can, in general, be advantageous to the assailant; in that respect it may be so for this reason, that as he has the longer line of communication, and, therefore, the greater difficulty in the transport of all he requires, water carriage may relieve him of a great deal of trouble and prove very useful. The defender, on his side, certainly has it in his power to close the navigation within his own frontier by fortresses; still even by that means the advantage, which the river affords the assailant will not be lost so far as regards its course up to that frontier. But if we reflect upon the fact that many rivers are often not navigable, even where they are of no unimportant breadth as respects other military relations, that others are not navigable at all seasons, that the ascent against the stream is tedious, that the winding of a river often doubles its length, that the chief communications between countries now are high roads, and that now more than ever the wants of an Army are supplied from the country adjacent to the scene of its operations, and not by carriage from distant parts,—we can well see that the use of a river does not generally play such a prominent part in the subsistence of troops as is usually represented in books, and that its influence on the march of events is therefore very remote and uncertain.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XX

A.—

DEFENCE OF SWAMPS

Very large wide swamps, such as the Bourtang Moor in North Germany, are so uncommon that it is not worth while to lose time over them; but we must not forget that certain lowlands and marshy banks of small rivers are more common, and form very considerable obstacles of ground which may be, and often have been, used for defensive purposes.

Measures for their defence are certainly very like those for the defence of rivers, at the same time there are some peculiarities to be specially noticed. The first and principal one is, that a marsh which except on the causeway is impracticable for infantry is much more difficult to cross than any river; for, in the first place, a causeway is not so soon built as a bridge; secondly, there are no means at hand by which the troops to cover the construction of the dyke or causeway can be sent across. No one would begin to build a bridge without using some of the boats to send over an advance guard in the first instance; but in the case of a morass no similar assistance can be employed; the easiest way to make a crossing for infantry over a morass is by means of planks, but when the morass is of some width, this is a much more tedious process than the crossing of the first boats on a river. If now, besides, there is in the middle of the morass a river which cannot be passed without a bridge, the crossing of the first detachment of troops becomes a still more difficult affair, for although single passengers may get across on boards, the heavy material required for bridge building cannot be so transported. This difficulty on many occasions may be insurmountable.

A second peculiarity of a swamp is, that the means used to cross cannot be completely removed like those used for passing a river; bridges may be broken, or so completely destroyed that they can never be used again; the most that can be done with dykes is to cut them, which is not doing much. If there is a river in the middle, the bridge can of course be taken away, but the whole passage will not by that means be destroyed in the same degree as that of a large river by the destruction of a bridge. The natural consequence is that dykes which exist must always be occupied in force and strenuously defended if we desire to derive any general advantage from the morass.

On the one hand, therefore, we are compelled to adopt a local defence, and on the other, such a defence is favoured by the difficulty of passing at other parts. From these two peculiarities the result is, that the defence of a swamp must be more local and passive than that of a river.

It follows from this that we must be stronger in a relative degree than in the direct defence of a river, consequently that the line of defence must not be of great length,

especially in cultivated countries, where the number of passages, even under the most favourable circumstances for defence, is still very great.

In this respect, therefore, swamps are inferior to great rivers, and this is a point of great importance, for all local defence is illusory and dangerous to an extreme. But if we reflect that such swamps and low grounds generally have a breadth with which that of the largest rivers in Europe bears no comparison, and that consequently a post stationed for the defence of a passage is never in danger of being overpowered by the fire from the other side, that the effects of its own fire over a long narrow dyke is greatly increased, and that the time required to pass such a defile, perhaps miles long, is much greater than would suffice to pass an ordinary bridge: if we consider all this, we must admit that such low lands and morasses, if means of crossing are not too numerous, belong to the strongest lines of defence which can be formed.

An indirect defence, such as we made ourselves acquainted with in the case of streams and rivers, in which obstacles of ground are made use of to bring on a great battle under advantageous circumstances, is generally quite as applicable to morasses.

The third method of a river-defence by means of a position on the enemy's side would be too hazardous on account of the toilsome nature of the crossing.

It is extremely dangerous to venture on the defence of such morasses, soft meadows, bogs, &c., as are not quite impassable beyond the dykes. One single line of crossing discovered by the enemy is sufficient to pierce the whole line of defence which, in case of a serious resistance, is always attended with great loss to the defender.

B.—

INUNDATIONS

We have still to consider inundations. As defensive means and also as phenomena in the natural world they have unquestionably the nearest resemblance to morasses.

They are not common certainly; perhaps Holland is the only country in Europe where they constitute a phenomenon which makes them worth notice in connection with our object; but just that country, on account of the remarkable campaigns of 1672 and 1787, as well as on account of its important relation in itself to both France and Germany, obliges us to devote some consideration to this matter.

The character of these Dutch inundations differs from ordinary swampy and impassable wet low lands in the following respects:—

1. The soil itself is dry and consists either of dry meadows or of cultivated fields.

2. For purposes of irrigation or of drainage, a number of small ditches of greater or less depth and breadth intersect the country in such a way that they may be seen running in lines in parallel directions.

3. Larger canals, enclosed by dykes and intended for irrigation, drainage, and transit of vessels, run through the country in all possible directions and are of such a size that they can only be passed on bridges.

4. The level of the ground throughout the whole district subject to inundation, lies perceptibly under the level of the sea, therefore, of course, under that of the canals.

5. The consequence of this is, that by means of cutting the dams, closing and opening the sluices, the whole country can be laid under water, so that there are no dry roads except on the tops of the dykes, all others being either entirely under water or, at least, so soaked that they become no longer fit for use. Now, if even the inundation is only three or four feet deep, so that, perhaps, for short distances it might be waded through, still even that is made impossible on account of the smaller ditches mentioned under No. 2, which are not visible. It is only where these ditches have a corresponding direction, so that we can move between two of them without crossing either, that the inundation does not constitute in effect an absolute bar to all communication. It is easy to conceive that this exception to the general obstruction can only be for short distances, and, therefore, can only be used for tactical purposes of an entirely special character.

From all this we deduce—

1. That the assailant's means of moving are limited to a more or less small number of practicable lines, which run along very narrow dykes, and usually have a wet ditch on the right and left, consequently form very long defiles.

2. That every defensive preparation upon such a dam may be easily strengthened to such a degree as to become impregnable.

3. But that, because the defensive is so hemmed in, he must confine himself to the most passive resistance as respects each isolated point, and consequently must look for his safety entirely from passive resistance.

4. That in such a country it is not a system of a single defensive line, closing the country like a simple barrier, but that as in every direction the same obstacle to movement exists, and the same security for flanks may be found, new posts may incessantly be formed, and in this manner any portion of the first defensive line, if lost, may be replaced by a new piece. We may say that the number of combinations here, like those on a chessboard, are infinite.

5. But while this general condition of a country is only conceivable along with the supposition of a high degree of cultivation and a dense population, it follows of itself that the number of passages, and therefore the number of posts required for their defence, must be very great in comparison to other strategetic dispositions; from which again we have, as a consequence, that such a defensive line must not be long.

The principal line of defence in Holland is from Naarden on the Zuyder Zee (the greater part of the way behind the Vecht), to Gorcum on the Waal, that is properly to the Biesbosch, its extent being about forty miles. For the defence of this line a force of

25,000 to 30,000 was employed in 1672, and again in 1787. If we could reckon with certainty upon an invincible resistance, the results would certainly be very great, at least for the provinces of Holland lying behind that line.

In 1672 the line actually withstood very superior forces led by great Generals, first Condé, and afterwards Luxembourg, who had under their command 40,000 to 50,000 men, and yet would not assault, preferring to wait for the winter which did not prove severe enough. On the other hand, the resistance which was made on this first line in 1787 amounted to nothing, and even that which was made by a second line much shorter, between the Zuyder Zee and the lake of Haarlem, although somewhat more effective, was overcome by the Duke of Brunswick in one day, through a very skilful tactical disposition well adapted to the locality, and this although the Prussian force actually engaged in the attack was little, if at all, superior in numbers to the troops guarding the lines.

The different result in the two cases is to be attributed to the difference in the supreme command. In the year 1672 the Dutch were surprised by Louis XIV., while everything was on a peace establishment, in which, as is well known, there breathed very little military spirit as far as concerned land forces. For that reason the greater number of the fortresses were deficient in all articles of material and equipment, garrisoned only by weak bodies of hired troops, and defended by governors who were either native-born incapables, or treacherous foreigners. Thus all the Brandenburg fortresses on the Rhine, garrisoned by Dutch, as well as all their own places situated to the east of the line of defence above described, except Groningen, very soon fell into the hands of the French, and for the most part without any real defence. And in the conquest of this great number of places consisted the chief exertions of the French army, 150,000 strong, at that time.

But when, after the murder of the brothers De Witt, in August 1672, the Prince of Orange came to the head of affairs, bringing unity to the measures for national defence, there was still time to close the defensive line above mentioned, and all the measures then adopted harmonised so well with each other that neither Condé nor Luxembourg, who commanded the French forces left in Holland after the departure of the two Armies under Turenne and Louis in person, would venture to attempt anything against the separate posts.

In the year 1787 all was different. It was not the Republic of seven united provinces, but only the province of Holland which had to resist the invasion. The conquest of all the fortresses, which had been the principal object in 1672, was therefore not the question; the defence was confined at once to the line we have described. But the assailant this time, instead of 150,000 men, had only 25,000 and was no mighty sovereign of a great country adjoining Holland, but the subordinate General of a distant Prince, himself by no means independent in many respects. The people in Holland, like those everywhere else at that time, were divided into two parties, but the republican spirit in Holland was decidedly predominant, and had at the same time attained even to a kind of enthusiastic excitement. Under these circumstances the resistance in the year 1787 ought to have ensured at least as great results as that of 1672. But there was one important difference, which is, that in the year 1787 unity of

command was entirely wanting. What in 1672 had been left to the wise, skilful, and energetic guidance of the Prince of Orange, was entrusted to a so-called Defence Commission in 1787, which although it included in its number men of energy, was not in a position to infuse into its work the requisite unity of measures, and to inspire others with that confidence which was wanted to prevent the whole instrument from proving imperfect and inefficient in use.

We have dwelt for a moment on this example, in order to give more distinctness to the conception of this defensive measure, and at the same time to show the difference in the effects produced, according as more or less unity and sequence prevail in the direction of the whole.

Although the organisation and method of defence of such a defensive line are tactical subjects, still, in connection with the latter, which is the nearest allied to Strategy, we cannot omit to make an observation to which the campaign of 1787 gives occasion.

We think, namely, that however passive the defence must naturally be at each point in a line of this kind, still an offensive action from some one point of the line is not impossible, and may not be unproductive of good results if the enemy, as was the case in 1787, is not decidedly very superior. For although such an attack must be executed by means of dykes, and on that account cannot certainly have the advantage of much freedom of movement or of any great impulsive force, nevertheless, it is impossible for the offensive side to occupy all the dykes and roads which he does not require for his own purposes, and therefore the defensive with his better knowledge of the country, and being in possession of the strong points, should be able by some of the unoccupied dykes to effect a real flank attack against the columns of the assailant, or to cut them off from their sources of supply. If now, on the other hand, we reflect for a moment on the constrained position in which the assailant is placed, how much more dependent he is on his communications than in almost any other conceivable case, we may well imagine that every sally on the part of the defensive side which has the remotest possibility of success must at once as a demonstration be most effective. We doubt very much if the prudent and cautious Duke of Brunswick would have ventured to approach Amsterdam if the Dutch had only made such a demonstration, from Utrecht for instance.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XXI

DEFENCE OF FORESTS

Above all things we must distinguish thick tangled and impassable forests from extensive woods under a certain degree of culture, which are partly quite clear, partly intersected by numerous roads.

Whenever the object is to form a defensive line, the latter should be left in rear or avoided as much as possible. The defensive requires more than the assailant to see clearly round him, partly because, as a rule, he is the weaker, partly because the natural advantages of his position cause him to develop his plans later than the assailant. If he should place a woody district before him he would be fighting like a blind man against one with his eyesight. If he should place himself in the middle of the wood then both would be blind, but that equality of condition is just what would not answer the natural requirements of the defender.

Such a wooded country can therefore not be brought into any favourable connection with the defensive unless it is kept in rear of the defender's Army, so as to conceal from the enemy all that takes place behind that Army, and at the same time to be available as an assistance to cover and facilitate the retreat.

At present we only speak of forests in level country, for where the decided mountain character enters into combination, its influence becomes predominant over tactical and strategic measures, and we have already treated of those subjects elsewhere.

But impassable forests, that is, such as can only be traversed on certain roads, afford advantages in an indirect defence similar to those which the defence derives from mountains for bringing on a battle under favourable circumstances; the Army can await the enemy behind the wood in a more or less concentrated position with a view to falling on him the moment he debouches from the road defiles. Such a forest resembles a mountain in its effects more than a river; for it affords, it is true, only one very long and difficult defile, but it is in respect to the retreat rather advantageous than otherwise.

But a direct defence of forests, let them be ever so impracticable, is a very hazardous piece of work for even the thinnest chain of outposts; for abattis are only imaginary barriers, and no wood is so completely impassable that it cannot be penetrated in a hundred places by small detachments, and these, in their relation to a chain of defensive posts, may be likened to the first drops of water which ooze through a roof and are soon followed by a general rush of water.

Much more important is the influence of great forests of every kind in connection with the arming of a Nation; they are undoubtedly the true element for such levies; if, therefore, the strategic plan of defence can be so arranged that the enemy's

communications pass through great forests, then, by that means, another mighty lever is brought into use in support of the work of defence.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XXII

THE CORDON

The term cordon is used to denote every defensive plan which is intended directly to cover a whole district of country by a line of posts in connection with each other. We say *directly,* for several Corps of a great Army posted in line with each other might protect a large district of country from invasion without forming a cordon; but then this protection would not be direct, but through the effect of combinations and movements.

It is evident at a glance that a defensive line long enough to cover an extensive district of country directly, can only have a very small degree of defensive strength. Even when very large bodies of troops occupy the lines this would be the case if they were attacked by corresponding masses. The object of a cordon can therefore only be to resist a weak blow, whether that the weakness proceeds from a feeble will or the smallness of the force employed.

With this view the wall of China was built: a protection against the inroads of Tartars. This is the intention of all lines and frontier defences of the European States bordering on Asia and Turkey. Applied in this way the cordon system is neither absurd nor does it appear unsuitable to its purpose. Certainly it is not sufficient to stop all inroads, but it will make them more difficult and therefore of less frequent occurrence, and this is a point of considerable importance where relations subsist with people like those of Asia, whose passions and habits have a perpetual tendency to war.

Next to this class of cordons come the lines, which, in the Wars of modern times have been formed between European States, such as the French lines on the Rhine and in the Netherlands. These were originally formed only with a view to protect a country against inroads made for the purpose of levying contributions or living at the expense of the enemy. They are, therefore, only intended to check minor operations, and consequently it is also meant that they should be defended by small bodies of troops. But, of course, in the event of the enemy's principal force taking its direction against these lines, the defender must also use his principal force in their defence, an event by no means conducive to the best defensive arrangements. On account of this disadvantage, and because the protection against incursions in temporary War is quite a minor object, by which through the very existence of these lines an excessive expenditure of troops may easily be caused, their formation is looked upon in our day as a pernicious measure. The more power and energy thrown into the prosecution of the War, the more useless and dangerous this means becomes.

Lastly, all very extended lines of outposts covering the quarters of an Army, and intended to offer a certain amount of resistance come under the head of cordons.

This defensive measure is chiefly designed as an impediment to raids, and other such minor expeditions directed against single cantonments, and for this purpose it may be quite sufficient if favoured by the country. Against an advance of the main body of the enemy the opposition offered can be only relative, that is, intended to gain time: but as this gain of time will be but inconsiderable in most cases, this object may be regarded as a very minor consideration in the establishment of these lines. The assembling and advance of the enemy's Army itself can never take place so unobservedly that the defender gets his first information of it through his outposts; when such is the case he is much to be pitied.

Consequently, in this case also, the cordon is only intended to resist the attack of a weak force, and the object, therefore, in this and in the other two cases is not at variance with the means.

But that an Army formed for the defence of a country should spread itself out in a long line of defensive posts opposite to the enemy, that it should disperse itself in a cordon form, seems to be so absurd that we must seek to discover the circumstances and motives which lead to and accompany such a proceeding.

Every position in a mountainous country, even if taken up with the view of a battle with the whole force united, is and must necessarily be more extended than a position in a level country. It *may be* because the aid of the ground augments very much the force of the resistance; it *must be* because a wider basis of retreat is required, as we have shown in the chapter on mountain defences. But if there is no near prospect of a battle, if it is probable that the enemy will remain in his position opposite to us for some time without undertaking anything unless tempted by some very favourable opportunity which may present itself (the usual state of things in most Wars formerly), then it is also natural not to limit ourselves merely to the occupation of so much country as is absolutely necessary, but to hold as much right or left as is consistent with the security of the Army, by which we obtain many advantages, as we shall presently show. In open countries, with plenty of communications, this object may be effected to a greater extent than in mountains, through the principle of *movement,* and for that reason the extension and dispersion of the troops is less necessary in an open country; it would also be much more dangerous there on account of the inferior capability of resistance of each part.

But in mountains, where all occupation of ground is more dependent on local defence, where relief cannot so soon be afforded to a point menaced, and where, when once the enemy has got possession of a point, it is more difficult to dislodge him by a force slightly superior—in mountains, under these circumstances, we shall always come to a form of position which, if not strictly speaking a cordon, still approaches very near to it, being a line of defensive posts. From such a disposition, consisting of several detached posts, to the cordon system, there is still certainly a considerable step, but it is one which Generals, nevertheless, often take without being aware of it, being drawn on from one step to another. First, the covering and the possession of the country is the object of the dispersion; afterwards it is the security of the Army itself. Every commander of a post calculates the advantage which may be derived from this or that

point connected with the approach to his position on the right or the left, and thus the whole progresses insensibly from one degree of subdivision to another.

A cordon War, therefore, carried on by the principal force of an Army, is not to be considered a form of War designedly chosen with a view to stopping every blow which the enemy's forces might attempt, but a situation which the Army is drawn into in the pursuit of a very different object, namely, the holding and covering the country against an enemy who has no decisive undertaking in view. Such a situation must always be looked upon as a mistake; and the motives through which Generals have been lured by degrees into allowing one small post after another, are contemptible in connection with the object of a large Army; this point of view shows, at all events, the possibility of such a mistake. That it is really an error, namely, a mistaken appreciation of our own position, and that of the enemy is sometimes not observed, and it is spoken of as an erroneous *system.* But this same system, when it is pursued with advantage, or, at all events, without causing damage, is quietly approved. Every one praises the *faultless* campaigns of Prince Henry in the Seven Years' War, because they have been pronounced so by the King, although these campaigns exhibit the most decided and most incomprehensible examples of chains of posts so extended that they may just with as much propriety be called cordons as any that ever were. We may completely justify these positions by saying, the Prince knew his opponent; he knew that he had no enterprises of a decisive character to apprehend from that quarter, and as the object of his position besides was always to occupy as much territory as possible, he therefore carried out that object as far as circumstances in any way permitted. If the Prince had once been unfortunate with one of these cobwebs, and had met with a severe loss, we should not say that he had pursued a faulty system of Warfare, but that he had been mistaken about a measure and had applied it to a case to which it was not suited.

While we thus seek to explain how the cordon system, as it is called, may be resorted to by the principal force in a theatre of War, and how it may even be a judicious and useful measure, and, therefore, far from being an absurdity, we must, at the same time, acknowledge that there appear to have been instances where Generals or their staff have overlooked the real meaning or object of a cordon system, and assumed its relative value to be a general one; conceiving it to be really suited to afford protection of every kind of attack, instances, therefore, where there was no mistaken application of the measure but a complete misunderstanding of its nature; we shall further allow that this very absurdity amongst others seems to have taken place in the defence of the Vosges by the Austrian and Prussian armies in 1793 and 1794.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XXIII

KEY OF THE COUNTRY

There is no theoretical idea in the Art of War which has played such a part in criticism as that we are now entering upon. It is the "great war steed" in all accounts of battles and campaigns; the most frequent point of view in all arguments, and one of those fragments of scientific form with which critics make a show of learning. And yet the conception embodied in it has never yet been established, nor has it ever been clearly explained.

We shall try to ascertain its real meaning, and then see how far it can be made available for practical use.

We treat of it here because the defence of mountains, river defences, as well as the conceptions of strong and entrenched camps with which it closely connects itself, required to have precedence.

The indefinite confused conception which is concealed behind this ancient military metaphor has sometimes signified the most exposed part of a country at other times the strongest.

If there is any spot without the *possession of which no one dare venture to penetrate into an enemy's country* that may, with propriety, be called the key of that country. But this simple, though certainly at the same time also, barren notion has not satisfied theorists, and they have amplified it, and under the term key of a country imagined *points* which *decide upon the possession of the whole country.*

When the Russians wanted to advance into the Crimean peninsula, they were obliged to make themselves masters of the isthmus of Perekop and its lines, not so much to gain an entrance generally—for Lascy turned it twice (1737 and 1738)—but to be able to establish themselves with tolerable security in the Crimea. That is very simple, but we gain very little in this through the conception of a key-point. But if it might be said, Whoever has possession of the district of Langres commands all France as far as Paris—that is to say, it only rests with himself to take possession—that is plainly a very different thing, something of much higher importance. According to the first kind of conception the possession of the country cannot be thought of without the possession of the point which we have called key; that is a thing which is intelligible to the most ordinary capacity: but according to the second kind of conception, the possession of the point which we have called key, cannot be imagined without the possession of the country following as a necessary consequence; that is plainly, something marvellous, common sense is no longer sufficient to grasp this, the magic of the occult sciences must be called into requisition. This cabala came into existence in works published fifty years ago, and reached its zenith at the end of the last century; and notwithstanding the irresistible force, certainty, and distinctness with

which Buonaparte's method of conducting War carried conviction generally, this cabala has, nevertheless, still managed, we say, to spin out the thread of its tenacious existence through the medium of books.

(Setting aside for a moment *our* conception of the key-point) it is self-evident that in every country there are points of *commanding* importance, where several roads meet, where our means of subsistence may be conveniently collected, which have the advantage of being centrally situated with reference to other important points, the possession of which in short meets many requirements and affords many advantages. Now, if Generals wishing to express the importance of such a point by one word have called it the *key of the land,* it would be pedantic affectation to take offence at their using that term; on the contrary we should rather say the term is very expressive and pleasing. But if we try to convert this mere flower of speech into the germ of a system branching out like a tree into many ramifications, common sense rises in opposition, and demands that the expression should be restricted to its true value.

In order to develop a system out of the expression, it was necessary to resort to something more distinct and absolute than the practical, but certainly very indefinite, meaning attaching to the term in the narrations of Generals when speaking of their military enterprises. And from amongst all its various relations, that of high ground was chosen.

Where a road traverses a mountain ridge, we thank heaven when we get to the top and have only to descend. This feeling so natural to a single traveller is still more so in the case of an Army. All difficulties seem to be overcome, and so they are indeed in most instances; we find that the descent is easy, and we are conscious of a kind of feeling of superiority over any one who would stop us; we have an extensive view over the country, and command it with a look beforehand. Thus the highest point on a road over a mountain is always considered to possess a decisive importance, and it does in fact in the majority of cases, but by no means in all. Such points are very often described in the despatches of Generals by the name of key-points; but certainly again in a somewhat different and generally in a more restricted sense. This idea has been the starting-point of a false theory (of which, perhaps, Lloyd may be regarded as the founder); and on this account, elevated points from which several roads descend into the adjacent country, came to be regarded as the key-points of the country—as points which *command* the country. It was natural that this view should amalgamate itself with one very nearly connected with it, that of a *systematic defence of mountains,* and that the matter should thus be driven still further into the regions of the illusory; added to which many tactical elements connected with the defence of mountains came into play, and thus the idea of the highest *point in the road* was soon abandoned, and the highest point generally of the whole mountain system, that is the point of the *watershed,* was substituted for it as the key of the country.

Now just at that time, that is the latter half of the preceding century, more definite ideas on the forms given to the surface of the earth through aqueous action became current; thus natural science lent a hand to the theory of War by this geological system, and then every barrier of practical truth was broken through, and reasoning floated in the illusory system of a geological analogy. In consequence of this, about

the end of the eighteenth century we heard, or rather we *read,* of nothing but the sources of the Rhine and Danube. It is true that this nuisance prevailed mostly in books, for only a small portion of book wisdom ever reaches the real world, and the more foolish a theory the less it will attain to practice; but this of which we are now speaking has not been unproductive of injury to Germany by its practical effects, therefore we are not fighting with a windmill, in proof of which we shall quote two examples: first, the important but very scientific campaigns of the Prussian Army, 1793 and 1794 in the Vosges, the theoretical key to which will be found in the works of Gravert and Massenbach; secondly, the campaign of 1814, when, on the principle of the same theory, an Army of 200,000 men was led by the nose through Switzerland on to the plateau of Langres as it is called.

But a high point in a country from which all its waters flow, is generally nothing more than a high point; and all that in exaggeration and false application of ideas, true in themselves, was written at the end of the eighteenth and commencement of the nineteenth centuries, about its influence on military events, is completely imaginary. If the Rhine and Danube and all the six rivers of Germany had their common source on the top of *one* mountain, that mountain would not on that account have any claim to any greater military value than being suited for the position of a trigonometrical point. For a signal tower it would be less useful, still less so for a vidette, and for a whole Army worth just nothing at all.

To seek for a *key-position* therefore in the so-called *key country,* that is, where the different branches of the mountains diverge from a common point, and at the highest source of its waters, is merely an idea in books, which is overthrown by nature itself, because nature does not make the ridges and valleys so easy to descend as is assumed by the hitherto so-called theory of ground, but distributes peaks and gorges, in the most irregular manner, and not unfrequently the lowest water level is surrounded by the loftiest masses of mountain. If any one questions military history on the subject, he will soon convince himself that the leading geological points of a country exercise very little regular influence on the use of the country for the purposes of War, and that little is so over-balanced by other local circumstances, and other requirements, that a line of positions may often run quite close to one of the points we are discussing without having been in any way attracted there by that point.

We have only dwelt so long upon this false idea because a whole—and very pretentious—system has built itself upon it. We now leave it, and turn back to our own views.

We say, then, that if the expression, *key-position,* is to represent an independent conception in strategy, it must only be that of a locality the possession of which is indispensable before daring to enter the enemy's country. But if we choose to designate by that term every convenient point of entrance to a country, or every advantageous central point in the country, then the term loses its real meaning (that is, its value), and denotes something which may be found anywhere more or less. It then becomes a mere pleasing figure of speech.

But positions such as the term conveys to our mind are very rarely indeed to be found. In general, the best key to the country lies in the enemy's Army; and when the idea of country predominates over that of the armed force, some very specially advantageous circumstances must prevail. These, according to our opinion, may be recognised by their tending to two principal results: first, that the force occupying the position, through the help of the ground, obtains extraordinary capability of tactical resistance; second, that the enemy's lines of communication can be sooner effectively threatened from this position than he can threaten ours.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XXIV

OPERATING AGAINST A FLANK

We need hardly observe that we speak of the strategic flank, that is, a side of the theatre of War, and that the attack from one side in battle, or the tactical movement against a flank, must not be confounded with it; and even in cases in which the strategic operation against a flank, in its last stage, ends in the tactical operation, they can quite easily be kept separate, because the one never follows necessarily out of the other.

These flanking movements, and the flanking positions connected with them, belong also to the mere useless pageantry of theory, which is seldom met with in actual War. Not that the means itself is either ineffectual or illusory, but because both sides generally seek to guard themselves against its effects; and cases in which this is impossible are rare. Now in these uncommon cases this means has often also proved highly efficacious, and for this reason, as well as on account of the constant watching against it which is required in War, it is important that it should be clearly explained in theory. Although the strategic operation against a flank can naturally be imagined, not only on the part of the defensive, but also on that of the offensive, still it has much more affinity with the first, and therefore finds its place under the head of defensive means.

Before we enter into the subject, we must establish the simple principle, which must never be lost sight of afterwards in the consideration of the subject, that troops which are to act against the rear or flank of the enemy cannot be employed against his front, and that, therefore, whether it be in tactics or strategy, it is a completely false kind of notion to consider that *coming on the rear* of the enemy is at once an advantage in itself. In itself, it is as yet nothing; but it will become something in connection with other things, and something either advantageous or the reverse, according to the nature of these things, the examination of which now claims our attention.

First, in the action against the strategic flank, we must make a distinction between two objects of that measure—between the action merely against the *communications,* and that against the *line of retreat,* with which, at the same time, an effect upon the communications may also be combined.

When Daun, in 1758, sent a detachment to seize the convoys on their way to the siege of Olmütz, he had plainly no intention of impeding the King's retreat into Silesia; he rather wished to bring about that retreat, and would willingly have opened the line to him.

In the campaign of 1812, the object of all the expeditionary corps that were detached from the Russian Army in the months of September and October, was only to intercept the communications, not to stop the retreat; but the latter was quite plainly

the design of the Moldavian Army which, under Tschitschagof, marched against the Beresina, as well as of the attack which General Wittgenstein was commissioned to make on the French troops stationed on the Dwina.

These examples are merely to make the explanation clearer.

The action against the lines of communication is directed against the enemy's convoys, against small detachments following in rear of the Army, against couriers and travellers, small depôts, &c.; in fact, against all the means which the enemy requires to keep his Army in a vigorous and healthy condition; its object is, therefore, to weaken the condition of the enemy in this respect, and by this means to cause him to retreat.

The action against the enemy's line of retreat is to cut his Army off from that line. It cannot effect this object unless the enemy really determines to retreat; but it may certainly cause him to do so by threatening his line of retreat, and, therefore, it may have the same effect as the action against the line of communication, by working as a demonstration. But as already said, none of these effects are to be expected from the mere turning which has been effected, from the mere geometrical form given to the disposition of the troops, they only result from the conditions suitable to the same.

In order to learn more distinctly these conditions, we shall separate completely the two actions against the flank, and first consider that which is directed against the communications.

Here we must first establish two principal conditions, one or other of which must always be forthcoming.

The first is, that the forces used for this action against the flank of the enemy must be so insignificant in numbers that their absence is not observed in front.

The second, that the enemy's Army has run its career, and therefore can neither make use of a fresh victory over our Army, nor can he pursue us if we evade a combat by moving out of the way.

This last case, which is by no means so uncommon as might be supposed, we shall lay aside for the moment, and occupy ourselves with the accessory conditions of the first.

The first of these is, that the communications have a certain length, and cannot be protected by a few good posts; the second point is, that the situation of the line is such as exposes it to our action.

This weakness of the line may arise in two ways—either by its direction, if it is not perpendicular to the strategic front of the enemy's Army, or because his lines of communication pass through our territory; if both these circumstances exist, the line is so much the more exposed. These two relations require a closer examination.

One would think that when it is a question of covering a line of communication 200 or 250 miles long, it is of little consequence whether the position occupied by an Army

standing at one extremity of this line forms an oblique angle or a right angle in reference to it, as the breadth of the position is little more than a mere point in comparison to the line; and yet it is not so unimportant as it may seem. When an Army is posted at a right angle with its communications, it is difficult, even with a considerable superiority, to interrupt the communications by any detachments or partisans sent out for the purpose. If we think only of the difficulty of covering absolutely a certain space, we should not believe this, but rather suppose, on the contrary, that it must be very difficult for an Army to protect its rear (that is, the country behind it) against all expeditions which an enemy superior in numbers may undertake. Certainly, if we could look at everything in war as it is on a sheet of paper! Then the party covering the line, in his uncertainty as to the point where light troops or partisans may appear, would be in a certain measure blind, and only the partisans would see. But if we think of the uncertainty and insufficiency of intelligence gained in War, and know that both parties are incessantly groping in the dark, then we easily perceive that a detached corps sent round the enemy's flank to gain his rear is in the position of a man engaged in a fray with numbers in a dark room. In the end he must fall; and so must it also be with bands who get round an Army occupying a perpendicular position, and who therefore place themselves near to the enemy, but widely separated from their own people. Not only is there danger of losing numbers in this way; there is also a risk of the whole instrument itself being blunted immediately; for the very first misfortune which happens to one such party will make all the others timid, and instead of bold attacks and insolent dodging, the only play will be constant running away.

Through this difficulty, therefore, an Army occupying a perpendicular position covers the nearest points on its line of communications for a distance of two or three marches, according to the strength of the Army; but those nearest points are just those which are most in danger, as they are the nearest to the enemy.

On the other hand, in the case of a decidedly oblique position, no such part of the line of communication is covered; the smallest pressure, the most insignificant attempt on the part of the enemy, leads at once to a vulnerable point.

But now, what is it which determines the front of a position, if it is not just the direction perpendicular to the line of communication? The front of the enemy; but then, again, this may be equally as well supposed as dependent on our front. Here there is a reciprocal effect, for the origin of which we must search.

If we suppose the lines of communication of the assailant, *a b,* so situated with respect to those of the enemy, *c d,* that the two lines form a considerable angle with each other, it is evident that if the defensive wishes to take up a position at *e,* where the two lines intersect, the assailant from *b,* by the mere geometrical relation, could compel him to form front opposite to him, and thus to lay bare his communications. The case would be reversed if the defensive took up his position on this side of the point of junction, about *d;* then the assailant must make front towards him, if so be that his line of operations, which closely depends on geographical conditions, cannot be arbitrarily

changed, and moved, for instance, to the direction *a d.* From this it would seem to follow that the defender has an advantage in this system of reciprocal action, because he only requires to take a position on this side of the intersection of the two lines. But very far from attaching any importance to this geometrical element, we only brought it into consideration to make ourselves the better understood; and we are rather of opinion that local and generally individual relations have much more to do with determining the position of the defender; that, therefore, it is quite impossible to lay down in general which of two belligerents will be obliged soonest to expose his communications.

If the lines of communication of both sides lie in one and the same direction, then whichever of the two parties takes up an oblique position will certainly compel his adversary to do the same. But then there is nothing gained geometrically by this, and both parties attain the same advantages and disadvantages.

In the continuation of our considerations, we shall, therefore, confine ourselves to the case of the line of communication of one side only being exposed.

Now as regards the second disadvantageous relation of a line of communication, that is to say, when it runs through an enemy's country, it is clear in itself how much the line is compromised by that circumstance, if the inhabitants of the country have taken up arms; and consequently the case must be looked at as if a body of the enemy was posted all along the line; this body, it is true, is in itself weak without solidity or intensive force; but we must also take into consideration what the close contact and influence of such a hostile force may nevertheless effect through the number of points which offer themselves one after another on long lines of communication. That requires no further explanation. But even if the enemy's subjects have *not* taken up arms, and even if there is no militia in the country, or other military organisation, indeed if the people are even very unwarlike in spirit, still the mere relation of the people as subjects to a hostile Government is a disadvantage for the lines of communication of the other side which is always felt. The assistance which expeditionary forces and partisans derive merely through a better understanding with the people, through a knowledge of the country and its inhabitants, through good information, through the support of official functionaries, is, for them, of decided value; and this support every such body will enjoy without any special effort on its own part. Added to this, within a certain distance there will not be wanting fortresses, rivers, mountains, or other places of refuge, which of ordinary right belong to the enemy, if they have not been formally taken possession of and occupied by our troops.

Now in such a case as is here supposed, especially if attended with other favourable circumstances, it is possible to act against the communications of an Army, although their direction is perpendicular to the position of that Army; for the detachments employed for the purpose do not then require to fall back always on their own Army, because being in their own country they are safe enough if they only make their escape.

We have, therefore, now ascertained that—

1. A considerable length,
2. An oblique direction,
3. An enemy's province,

are the principal circumstances under which the lines of communication of an Army may be interrupted by a relatively small proportion of armed forces on the side of the enemy; in order to make this interruption effectual, a fourth condition is still requisite, which is a certain duration of time. Respecting this point, we beg attention to what has been said in the fifteenth chapter of the fifth book.

But these four conditions are only the chief points which relate to the subject; a number of local and special circumstances attach themselves to these, and often attain to an influence more decisive and important than that of the principal ones themselves. Selecting only the most essential, we mention the state of the roads, the nature of the country through which they pass, the means of cover which are afforded by rivers, mountains, and morasses, the seasons and weather, the importance of particular convoys, such as siege trains, the number of light troops, &c., &c.

On all these circumstances, therefore, will depend the effect with which a General can act on his opponent's communications; and by comparing the result of the whole of these circumstances on the one side with the result of the whole on the other, we obtain a just estimate of the relative advantages of both systems of communication, on which will depend which of the two Generals can play the highest game.

What here seems so prolix in the explanation is often decided in the concrete case at first sight; but still, the tact of a practised judgment is required for that, and a person must have thought over every one of the cases now developed in order to see in its true light the absurdity of those critical writers who think they have settled something by the mere words "turning" and "acting on a flank," without giving their reasons.

We now come to the *second chief condition,* under which the strategic action against the enemy's flank may take place.

If the enemy is hindered from advancing by any other cause but the resistance which our Army opposes, let that cause be what it may, then our Army has no reason to be apprehensive about weakening itself by sending out detachments to harass the enemy; for if the enemy should attempt to chastise us by an attack, we have only to yield some ground and decline the combat. This is what was done by the chief Russian Army at Moscow in 1812. But it is not at all necessary that everything should be again on the same great scale as in that campaign for such a case to happen again. In the first Silesian War, Frederick the Great was each time in this situation, on the frontiers of Bohemia and Moravia, and in the complex affairs relating to Generals and their Armies, many causes of different kinds, particularly political ones, may be imagined, which make further advance an impossibility.

As in the case now supposed more forces may be spared to act against the enemy's flank, the other conditions need not be quite so favourable: even the nature of our communications in relation to those of the enemy need not give us the advantage in

that respect, as an enemy who is not in a condition to make any particular use of our further retreat is not likely to use his right to retaliate, but will rather be anxious about the direct covering of his own line of retreat.

Such a situation is therefore very well suited to obtain for us, by means less brilliant and complete but less dangerous than a victory, those results which it would be too great a risk to seek to obtain by a battle.

As in such a case we feel little anxiety about exposing our own line of communications, by taking up a position on one or other flank, and as the enemy by that means may always be compelled to form front obliquely to his line of communications, therefore *this one* of the conditions above named will seldom fail to occur. The more the rest of the conditions, as well as other circumstances, co-operate, so much the more certain are we of success from the means now in question; but the fewer favourable circumstances exist, the more will all depend on superior skill in combination, and promptitude and precision in the execution.

Here is the proper field for strategic manœuvres, such as are to be found so frequently in the Seven Years' War, in Silesia and Saxony, and in the campaigns of 1760 and 1762. If, in many Wars in which only a moderate amount of elementary force is displayed, such strategic manœuvring very often appears, this is not because the Commander on each occasion found himself at the end of his tether, but because want of resolution and courage, and of an enterprising spirit, and dread of responsibility, have often supplied the place of real impediments; for a case in point, we have only to call to mind Field-Marshal Daun.

As a summary of the results of our considerations, we may say, that the action against a flank is most effectual—

1. In the defensive;
2. Towards the end of a campaign;
3. Above all, in a retreat into the heart of the country; and
4. In connection with a general arming of the people.

On the mode of executing this action against the communications, we have only a few words to say.

The enterprises must be conducted by skilful detachment leaders, who, at the head of small bodies, by bold marches and attacks, fall upon the enemy's weak garrisons, convoys, and small detachments on the march here and there, encourage the national levies (*landsturm*), and sometimes join with them in particular undertakings. These parties must be more numerous than strong individually, and so organised that it may be possible to unite several of them for any greater undertaking without any obstacle from the vanity or caprice of any of the single leaders.

We have now to speak of the action against the enemy's line of retreat.

Here we must keep in view, above all things, the principle with which we commenced, that forces destined to operate in rear cannot be used in front; that,

therefore, the action against the rear or flanks is not an increase of force in itself; it is only to be regarded as a more powerful application (or employment) of the same; increasing the degree of success in prospect, but also increasing the degree of risk.

Every opposition offered with the sword which is not of a direct and simple nature, has a tendency to raise the result at the cost of its certainty. An operation against the enemy's flank, whether with one compact force, or with separate bodies converging from several quarters, belongs to this category.

But now, if cutting off the enemy's retreat is not to be a mere demonstration, but is seriously intended, the real solution is a decisive battle, or, at least, the conjunction of all the conditions for the same; and just in this solution we find again the two elements above-mentioned—the greater result and the greater danger. Therefore, if a General is to stand justified in adopting this method of action, his reasons must be—favourable conditions.

In this method of resistance we must distinguish the two forms already mentioned. The first is, if a General with his whole force intends to attack the enemy in rear, either from a position taken up on the flank for that purpose, or by a formal turning movement; the second is, if he divides his forces, and, by an enveloping position with one part, threatens the enemy's rear, with the other part his front.

The result is intensified in both cases alike, that is—either there is a real interception of the retreat, and consequently the enemy's Army taken prisoners, or the greater part scattered, or there may be a long and hasty retreat of the enemy's force to escape the danger.

But the intensified risk is different in the two cases.

If we turn the enemy with our whole force, the danger lies in the laying open our own rear; and hence the question depends on the relation of the mutual lines of retreat, just as in the action against the lines of communication, it depended on the relation of those lines.

Now certainly the defender, if he is in his own country, is less restricted than the assailant, both as to his lines of retreat and communication, and in so far is therefore in a better position to turn his adversary strategically; but this general relation is not of a sufficiently decisive character to be used as the foundation of a practical method; therefore, nothing but the whole of the relations in each individual case can decide.

Only so much we may add, that favourable conditions are naturally more common in wide spheres of action than in small; more common, also, on the side of independent States than on that of weak ones, dependent on foreign aid, and whose Armies must, therefore, constantly have their attention bent on the point of junction with the auxiliary Army; lastly, they become most favourable for the defender towards the close of the campaign, when the impulsive force of the assailant is somewhat spent; very much, again, in the same manner as in the case of the lines of communication.

Such a flank position as the Russians took up with advantage on the road from Moscow to Kaluga, when Buonaparte's aggressive force was spent, would have brought them into a scrape at the commencement of the campaign at the camp of Drissa, if they had not been wise enough to change their plan in good time.

The other method of turning the enemy, and cutting off his retreat by dividing our force, entails the risk attending a division of our own force, whilst the enemy, having the advantage of interior lines, retains his forces united, and therefore has the power of acting with superior numbers against one of our divisions. This is a disadvantage which nothing can remove, and in exposing ourselves to it, we can only be justified by one of three principal reasons:—

1. The original division of the force which makes such a method of action necessary, unless we incur a great loss of time.

2. A great moral and physical superiority, which justifies the adoption of a decisive method.

3. The want of impulsive force in the enemy as soon as he has arrived at the culminating point of his career.

When Frederick the Great invaded Bohemia, 1757, on converging lines, he had not in view to combine an attack in front with one on the strategic rear; at all events, this was by no means his principal object, as we shall more fully explain elsewhere, but in any case it is evident that there never could have been any question of a concentration of forces in Silesia or Saxony before the invasion, as he would thereby have sacrificed all the advantages of a surprise.

When the Allies formed their plan for the second part of the campaign of 1813, looking to their great superiority in numbers, they might very well at that time entertain the idea of attacking Buonaparte's right on the Elbe with their main force, and of thus shifting the theatre of War from the Oder to the Elbe. Their ill-success at Dresden is to be ascribed not to this general plan but to their faulty dispositions both strategic and tactical. They could have concentrated 220,000 men at Dresden against Buonaparte's 130,000, a proportion of numbers eminently favourable (at Leipsic, at least, the proportion was as 285: 157). It is true that Buonaparte had distributed his forces too evenly for the particular system of a defence upon one line (in Silesia 70,000 against 90,000, in the Mark—Brandenburg—70,000 against 110,000), but at all events it would have been difficult for him, without completely abandoning Silesia, to assemble on the Elbe a force which could have contended with the principal Army of the Allies in a decisive battle. The Allies could also have easily called up the Army of Wrede to the Maine, and employed it to try to cut Buonaparte off from the road to Mayence.

Lastly, in 1812, the Russians might have directed their Army of Moldavia upon Volhynia and Lithuania in order to move it forward afterwards against the rear of the principal French Army, because it was quite certain that Moscow must be the extreme point of the French line of operations. For any part of Russia beyond Moscow there

was nothing to fear in that campaign, therefore the Russian main Army had no cause to consider itself too weak.

This same scheme formed part of the disposition of the forces laid down in the first defensive plan proposed by General Phul, according to which the Army of Barclay was to occupy the camp at Drissa, whilst that under Bagration was to press forward against the rear of the main French Army. But what a difference of circumstances in the two cases! In the first of them the French were three times as strong as the Russians; in the second, the Russians were decidedly superior. In the first, Buonaparte's great Army had in it an impulsive force which carried it to Moscow four hundred miles beyond Drissa: in the second, it is unfit to make a day's march beyond Moscow; in the first, the line of retreat on the Niemen did not exceed one hundred and fifty miles: in the second it was five hundred and sixty. The same action against the enemy's retreat therefore, which was so successful in the second case, would, in the first, have been the wildest folly.

As the action against the enemy's line of retreat, if it is more than a demonstration, becomes a formal attack from the rear, there remains therefore still a good deal to be said on the subject, but it will come in more appropriately in the book upon the attack; we shall therefore break off here and content ourselves with having given the conditions under which this kind of reaction may take place.

Very commonly the design of causing the enemy to retreat by menacing his line of retreat, is understood to imply rather a mere demonstration than the actual execution of the threat. If it was necessary that every efficacious demonstration should be founded on the actual practicability of real action, which seems a matter of course at first sight, then it would accord with the same in all respects. But this is not the case: on the contrary, in the chapter on demonstrations we shall see that they are connected with conditions somewhat different, at all events in some respects, we therefore refer our readers to that chapter.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XXV

RETREAT INTO THE INTERIOR OF THE COUNTRY

We have considered the voluntary retreat into the heart of the country as a particular indirect form of defence through which it is expected the enemy will be destroyed, not so much by the sword as by exhaustion from his own efforts. In this case, therefore, a great battle is either not supposed, or it is assumed to take place when the enemy's forces are considerably reduced.

Every assailant in advancing diminishes his military strength by the advance; we shall consider this more in detail in the seventh book; here we must assume that result, which we may the more readily do, as it is clearly shown by military history in every campaign in which there has been a considerable advance.

This loss in the advance is increased if the enemy has not been beaten, but withdraws of his own accord with his forces intact, and offering a steady continuous resistance, sells every step of ground at a bloody price, so that the advance is a continuous combat for ground and not a mere pursuit.

On the other hand, the losses which a party on the defensive suffers on a retreat, are much greater if his retreat has been preceded by a defeat in battle than if his retreat is voluntary. For if he is able to offer the pursuer the daily resistance which we expect on a voluntary retreat, his losses would be *at least* the same in that way, over and above which those sustained in the battle have still to be added. But how contrary to the nature of the thing such a supposition as this would be! The best Army in the world, if obliged to retire far into the country after the loss of a battle, will suffer losses on the retreat, *beyond measure out of proportion;* and if the enemy is considerably superior, as we suppose him, in the case of which we are now speaking, if he pursues with great energy as has almost always been done in modern Wars, then there is the highest probability that a regular flight takes place by which the Army is usually completely ruined.

A *regularly measured* daily resistance, that is, one which each time only lasts as long as the balance of success in the combat can be kept wavering, and in which we secure ourselves from defeat by giving up the ground which has been contested at the right moment, will cost the assailant at least as many men as the defender in these combats, for the loss which the latter by retiring now and again must unavoidably suffer in prisoners, will be balanced by the losses of the other under fire, as the assailant must always fight against the advantages of the ground. It is true that the retreating side loses entirely all those men who are badly wounded, but the assailant likewise loses all his in the same case for the present, as they usually remain several months in the hospitals.

The result will be that the two Armies will wear each other away in nearly equal proportions in these perpetual collisions.

It is quite different in the pursuit of a beaten army. Here the troops lost in battle, the general disorganisation, the broken courage, the anxiety about the retreat, make such a resistance on the part of the retreating Army very difficult, in many cases impossible; and the pursuer who, in the former case, advances extremely cautiously, even hesitatingly, like a blind man, always groping about, presses forward in the latter case with the firm tread of the conqueror, with the overweening spirit which good fortune imparts, with the confidence of a demi-god, and the more daringly he urges the pursuit so much the more he hastens on things in the direction which they have already taken, because here is the true field for the moral forces which intensify and multiply themselves without being restricted to the rigid numbers and measures of the physical world.

It is therefore very plain how different will be the relations of two Armies according as it is by the first or the second of the above ways, that they arrive at that point which may be regarded as the end of the assailant's course.

This is merely the result of the mutual destruction; to this must now be added the reductions which the advancing party suffers otherwise in addition, and respecting which, as already said, we refer to the seventh book; further, on the other hand, we have to take into account reinforcements which the retreating party receives in the great majority of cases, by forces subsequently joining him either in the form of help from abroad or through persistent efforts at home.

Lastly, there is, in the means of subsistence, such a disproportion between the retreating side and the advancing, that the first not uncommonly lives in superfluity when the other is reduced to want.

The Army in retreat has the means of collecting provisions everywhere, and he marches towards them, whilst the pursuer must have everything brought after him, which, as long as he is in motion, even with the shortest lines of communication, is difficult, and on that account begets scarcity from the very first.

All that the country yields will be taken for the benefit of the retreating Army first, and will be mostly consumed. Nothing remains but wasted villages and towns, fields from which the crops have been gathered, or which are trampled down, empty wells, and muddy brooks.

The pursuing Army, therefore, from the very first day, has frequently to contend with the most pressing wants. On taking the enemy's supplies he cannot reckon; it is only through accident, or some unpardonable blunder on the part of the enemy, that here and there some little falls into his hands.

Thus there can be no doubt that in countries of vast dimensions, and when there is no extraordinary disproportion between the belligerent powers, a relation may be produced in this way between the military forces, which holds out to the defensive an

immeasurably greater chance of a final result in his favour than he would have had if there had been a great battle on the frontier. Not only does the probability of gaining a victory become greater through this alteration in the proportions of the contending Armies, but the prospects of great results from the victory are increased as well, through the change of position. What a difference between a battle lost close to the frontier of our country and one in the middle of the enemy's country! Indeed, the situation of the assailant is often such at the end of his first start, that even a battle *gained* may force him to retreat, because he has neither enough impulsive power left to complete and make use of a victory, nor is he in a condition to replace the forces he has lost.

There is, therefore, an immense difference between a decisive blow at the commencement and at the end of the attack.

To the great advantage of this mode of defence are opposed two drawbacks. The first is the loss which the country suffers through the presence of the enemy in his advance, the other is the moral impression.

To protect the country from loss can certainly never be looked upon as the object of the whole defence. That object is an advantageous peace. To obtain that as surely as possible is the endeavour, and for it no momentary sacrifice must be considered too great. At the same time, the above loss, although it may not be decisive, must still be laid in the balance, for it always affects our interests.

This loss does not affect our Army directly; it only acts upon it in a more or less roundabout way, whilst the retreat itself directly reinforces our Army. It is, therefore, difficult to draw a comparison between the advantage and disadvantage in this case; they are things of a different kind, the action of which is not directed towards any common point. We must, therefore, content ourselves with saying that the loss is greater when we have to sacrifice fruitful provinces well populated, and large commercial towns; but it arrives at a maximum when at the same time we lose war-means either ready for use or in course of preparation.

The second counterpoise is the moral impression. There are cases in which the Commander must be above regarding such a thing, in which he must quietly follow out his plans, and run the risk of the objections which short-sighted despondency may offer; but nevertheless, this impression is no phantom which should be despised. It is not like a force which acts upon one point: but like a force which, with the speed of lightning, penetrates every fibre, and paralyses all the powers which should be in full activity, both in a Nation and in its Army. There are indeed cases in which the cause of the retreat into the interior of the country is quickly understood by both Nation and Army, and trust, as well as hope, are elevated by the step; but such cases are rare. More usually, the people and the Army cannot distinguish whether it is a voluntary movement or a precipitate retreat, and still less whether the plan is one wisely adopted, with a view to ensure ulterior advantages, or the result of fear of the enemy's sword. The people have a mingled feeling of sympathy and dissatisfaction at seeing the fate of the provinces sacrificed; the Army easily loses confidence in its leaders, or even in itself, and the constant combats of the rear-guard during the retreat, tend

always to give new strength to its fears. *These are consequences* of the retreat about which we must never deceive ourselves. And it certainly is—considered in itself—more natural, simpler, nobler, and more in accordance with the moral existence of a Nation, to enter the lists at once, that the enemy may not cross the frontiers of its people without being opposed by its genius, and being called to a bloody account.

These are the advantages and disadvantages of this kind of defence; now a few words on its conditions and the circumstances which are in its favour.

A country of great extent, or at all events, a long line of retreat, is the first and fundamental condition; for an advance of a few marches will naturally not weaken the enemy seriously. Buonaparte's centre, in the year 1812, at Witepsk, was 250,000 strong, at Smolensk, 182,000, at Borodino it had diminished to 130,000, that is to say, had fallen to about an equality with the Russian centre. Borodino is four hundred and fifty miles from the frontier; but it was not until they came near Moscow that the Russians reached that decided superiority in numbers, which of itself reversed the situation of the combatants so assuredly, that the French victory at Malo Jaroslewetz could not essentially alter it again.

No other European State has the dimensions of Russia, and in very few can a line of retreat five hundred miles long be imagined. But neither will a Power such as that of the French in 1812, easily appear under different circumstances, still less such a superiority in numbers as existed at the commencement of the campaign, when the French Army had more than double the numbers of its adversary, besides its undoubted moral superiority. Therefore, what was here only effected at the end of five hundred miles, may perhaps, in other cases, be attained at the end of two hundred and fifty or three hundred miles.

The circumstances which favour this mode of defence are—

1. A country only little cultivated.
2. A loyal and warlike people.
3. An inclement season.

All these things increase the difficulty of maintaining an Army, render great convoys necessary, many detachments, harassing duties, cause the spread of sickness, and make operations against the flanks easier for the defender.

Lastly, we have yet to speak of the absolute mass alone of the armed force, as influencing the result.

It lies in the nature of the thing itself that, irrespective of the mutual relation of the forces opposed to each other, a small force is sooner exhausted than a larger, and, therefore, that its career cannot be so long, nor its theatre of War so wide. There is, therefore, to a certain extent, a constant relation between the absolute size of an Army and the space which that Army can occupy. It is out of the question to try to express this relation by any figures, and besides, it will always be modified by other

circumstances; it is sufficient for our purpose to say that these things necessarily have this relation from their very nature. We may be able to march upon Moscow with 500,000 but not with 50,000, even if the relation of the invader's army to that of the defender in point of numbers were much more favourable in the latter case.

Now if we assume that there is this relation of absolute power to space in two different cases, then it is certain that the effect of our retreat into the interior in weakening the enemy will increase with the masses.

1. Subsistence and lodging of the troops become more difficult—for, supposing the space which an Army covers to increase in proportion to the size of the Army, still the subsistence for the Army will never be obtainable from this space alone, and everything which has to be brought after an Army is subject to greater loss also; the whole space occupied is never used for covering for the troops, only a small part of it is required, and this does not increase in the same proportion as the masses.

2. The advance is in the same manner more tedious in proportion as the masses increase, consequently, the time is longer before the career of aggression is run out, and the sum total of the daily losses is greater.

Three thousand men driving two thousand before them in an ordinary country, will not allow them to march at the rate of five, ten, or at most fifteen miles a day, and from time to time to make a few days' halt. To come up with them, to attack them, and force them to make a further retreat is the work of a few hours; but if we multiply these masses by 100, the case is altered. Operations for which a few hours sufficed in the first case, require now a whole day, perhaps two. The contending forces cannot remain together near one point; thereby, therefore, the diversity of movements and combinations increases, and, consequently, also the time required. But this places the assailant at a disadvantage, because his difficulty with subsistence being greater, he is obliged to extend his force more than the pursued, and, therefore, is always in danger of being overpowered by the latter at some particular point, as the Russians tried to do at Witepsk.

3. The greater the masses are, the more severe are the exertions demanded from each individual for the daily duties required strategically and tactically. A hundred thousand men who have to march to and from the point of assembly every day, halted at one time, and then set in movement again, now called to arms, then cooking or receiving their rations—a hundred thousand who must not go into their bivouac until the necessary reports are delivered in from all quarters—these men, as a rule, require for all these exertions connected with the actual march, twice as much time as 50,000 would require, but there are only twenty-four hours in the day for both. How much the time and fatigue of the march itself differs according to the size of the body of troops to be moved, has been shown in the ninth chapter of the preceding book. Now, the retreating Army, it is true, partakes of these fatigues as well as the advancing, but they are much greater for the latter:—

1, because the mass of his troops is greater on account of the superiority which we supposed,

2, because the defender, by being always the party to yield ground, purchases by this sacrifice the right of the initiative, and, therefore, the right always to give the law to the other. He forms his plan beforehand, which, in most cases, he can carry out unaltered, but the aggressor, on the other hand, can only make his plans conformably to those of his adversary, which he must in the first instance find out.

We must, however, remind our readers that we are speaking of the pursuit of an enemy who has not suffered a defeat, who has not even lost a battle. It is necessary to mention this, in order that we may not be supposed to contradict what was said in the twelfth chapter of our fourth book.

But this privilege of giving the law to the enemy makes a difference in saving of time, expenditure of force, as well as in respect of other minor advantages which, in the long run, becomes very important,

3, because the retreating force on the one hand does all he can to make his own retreat easy, repairs roads, and bridges, chooses the most convenient places for encampment, &c., and, on the other hand again, does all he can to throw impediments in the way of the pursuer, as he destroys bridges, by the mere act of marching makes bad roads worse, deprives the enemy of good places for encampment by occupying them himself, &c.

Lastly, we must add still, as a specially favourable circumstance, the War made by the people. This does not require further examination here, as we shall allot a chapter to the subject itself.

Hitherto, we have been engaged upon the advantages which such a retreat ensures, the sacrifices which it requires, and the conditions which must exist; we shall now say something of the mode of executing it.

The first question which we have to propose to ourselves is with reference to the direction of the retreat.

It should be made into the *interior* of the country, therefore, if possible, towards a point where the enemy will be surrounded on all sides by our provinces; there he will be exposed to their influence, and we shall not be in danger *of being separated from the principal mass of our territory,* which might happen if we chose a line too near the frontier, as would have happened to the Russians in 1812 if they had retreated to the south instead of the east.

This is the condition which lies in the object of the measure itself. Which point in the country is the best, how far the choice of that point will accord with the design of covering the capital or any other important point directly, or drawing the enemy away from the direction of such important places depends on circumstances.

If the Russians had well considered their retreat in 1812 beforehand, and, therefore, made it completely in conformity with a regular plan, they might easily, from Smolensk, have taken the road to Kaluga, which they only took on leaving Moscow; it

is very possible that under these circumstances Moscow would have been entirely saved.

That is to say, the French were about 130,000 strong at Borodino, and there is no ground for assuming that they would have been any stronger if this battle had been fought by the Russians half way to Kaluga instead; now, how many of these men could they have spared to detach to Moscow? Plainly, very few; but it is not with a few troops that an expedition can be sent a distance of two hundred and fifty miles (the distance from Smolensk to Moscow) against such a place as Moscow.

Supposing Buonaparte when at Smolensk, where he was 160,000 strong, had thought he could venture to detach against Moscow before engaging in a great battle, and had used 40,000 men for that purpose, leaving 120,000 opposite the principal Russian Army, in that case, these 120,000 men would not have been more than 90,000 in the battle, that is 40,000 less than the number which fought at Borodino; the Russians, therefore, would have had a superiority in numbers of 30,000 men. Taking the course of the battle of Borodino as a standard, we may very well assume that with such a superiority they would have been victorious. At all events, the relative situation of the parties would have been more favourable for the Russians than it was at Borodino. But the retreat of the Russians was not the result of a well-matured plan; they retreated as far as they did because each time that they were on the point of giving battle they did not consider themselves strong enough yet for a great action; all their supplies and reinforcements were on the road from Moscow to Smolensk, and it could not enter the head of any one at Smolensk to leave that road. But, besides, a victory between Smolensk and Kaluga would never have excused, in the eyes of the Russians, the offence of having left Moscow uncovered, and exposed it to the possibility of being captured.

Buonaparte, in 1813, would have secured Paris with more certainty from an attack if he had taken up a position at some distance in a lateral direction, somewhere behind the canal of Burgundy, leaving only with the large force of National Guard in Paris a few thousand regular troops. The Allies would never have had the courage to march a corps of 50,000 or 60,000 against Paris whilst Buonaparte was in the field at Auxerre with 100,000 men. If the case is supposed reversed, and the Allies in Buonaparte's place, then no one, indeed, would have advised them to leave the road open to their own capital with *Buonaparte* for their opponent. With such a preponderance he would not have hesitated a moment about marching on the capital. So different is the effect under the same circumstances but under different moral relations.

As we shall have hereafter to return to this subject when treating of the plan of a War, we shall only at present add that, when such a lateral position is taken, the capital or place which it is the object to protect, must, in every case, be capable of making some resistance that it may not be occupied and laid under contribution by every flying column or irregular band.

But we have still to consider another peculiarity in the direction of such a line of retreat, that is, a sudden *change of direction.* After the Russians had kept the same direction as far as Moscow they left that direction which would have taken them to

Vladimir, and after first taking the road to Riazan for some distance, they then transferred their Army to the Kaluga road. If they had been obliged to continue their retreat they could easily have done so in this new direction which would have led them to Kiew, therefore much nearer again to the enemy's frontier. That the French, even if they had still preserved a large numerical superiority over the Russians, could not have maintained their line of communication by Moscow under such circumstances is clear in itself; they must have given up not only Moscow but, in all probability, Smolensk also, therefore have again abandoned the conquests obtained with so much toil, and contented themselves with a theatre of War on this side the Beresina.

Now, certainly, the Russian Army would thus have got into the same difficulty to which it would have exposed itself by taking the direction of Kiew at first, namely, that of being separated from the mass of its own territory; but this disadvantage would now have become almost insignificant, for how different would have been the condition of the French Army if it had marched straight upon Kiew without making the detour by Moscow.

It is evident that such a sudden *change of direction* of a line of retreat, which is very practicable in a spacious country, ensures remarkable advantages.

1. It makes it impossible for the enemy (the advancing force) to maintain his old line of communication: but the organisation of a new one is always a difficult matter, in addition to which the change is made gradually, therefore, probably, he has to try more than one new line.

2. If both parties in this manner approach the frontier again; the position of the aggressor no longer covers his conquests, and he must in all probability give them up.

Russia with its enormous dimensions, is a country in which two Armies might in this manner regularly play at prisoners' base (Zeck jagen).

But such a change of the line of retreat is also possible in smaller countries, when other circumstances are favourable, which can only be judged of in each individual case, according to its different relations.

When the direction in which the enemy is to be drawn into the country is once fixed upon, then it follows of itself that our principal Army should take that direction, for otherwise the enemy would not advance in that direction, and even if he did we should not then be able to impose upon him all the conditions above supposed. The question then only remains whether we shall take this direction with our forces undivided, or whether considerable portions should spread out laterally and therefore give the retreat a divergent (eccentric) form.

To this we answer that this latter form in itself is to be rejected.

1. Because it divides our forces, whilst their concentration on one point is just one of the chief difficulties for the enemy.

2. Because the enemy gets the advantage of operating on interior lines, can remain more concentrated than we are, consequently can appear in so much the greater force at any one point. Now certainly this superiority is less to be dreaded when we are following a system of constantly giving way; but the very condition of this constantly yielding, is always to continue formidable to the enemy and not to allow him to beat us in detail, which might easily happen. A further object of such a retreat, is to bring our principal force by degrees to a superiority of numbers, and with this superiority to give a decisive blow, but that by a partition of forces would become an uncertainty.

3. Because as a general rule the concentric (convergent) action against the enemy is not adapted to the weaker forces.

4. Because many disadvantages of the weak points of the aggression disappear when the defender's Army is divided into separate parts.

The weakest features in a long advance on the part of the aggressor are for instance:—the length of the lines of communication, and the exposure of the strategic flanks. By the divergent form of retreat, the aggressor is compelled to cause a portion of his force to show a front to the flank, and this portion properly destined only to neutralise our force immediately in his front, now effects to a certain extent something else in addition, by covering a portion of the lines of communication.

For the mere strategic effect of the retreat, the divergent form is therefore not favourable; but if it is to prepare an action hereafter against the enemy's line of retreat, then we must refer to what has been said about that in the last chapter.

There is *only one* object which can give occasion to a divergent retreat, that is when we can by that means protect provinces which otherwise the enemy would occupy.

What sections of territory the advancing foe will occupy right and left of his course, can with tolerable accuracy be discerned by the point of assembly of, and directions given to, his forces, by the situation of his own provinces, fortresses, &c., in respect to our own. To place troops in those districts of territory which he will in all probability leave unoccupied, would be dangerous waste of our forces. But now whether *by any disposition of our forces we shall be able to hinder him* from occupying those districts which in all probability he will desire to occupy, is more difficult to decide, and it is therefore a point, the solution of which depends much on tact of judgment.

When the Russians retreated in 1812, they left 30,000 men under Tormassow in Volhynia, to oppose the Austrian force which was expected to invade that province. The size of the province, the numerous obstacles of ground which the country presents, the near proportion between the forces likely to come into conflict justified the Russians in their expectations, that they would be able to keep the upper hand in that quarter, or at least to maintain themselves near to their frontier. By this, very important advantages might have resulted in the sequel, which we shall not stop here to discuss; besides this, it was almost impossible for these troops to have joined the main Army in time if they had wished. For these reasons, the determination to leave these troops in Volhynia to carry on there a distinct War of their own, was right. Now

on the other hand, if according to the proposed plan of campaign submitted by General Phul, only the Army of Barclay (80,000 men), was to retire to Drissa, and Bagration's army (40,000 men) was to remain on the right flank of the French, with a view to subsequently falling on their rear, it is evident at once that this corps could not possibly maintain itself in South Lithuania so near to the rear of the main body of the French Army, and would soon have been destroyed by their overwhelming masses.

That the defender's interest in itself is to give up as few provinces as possible to the assailant is intelligible enough, but this is always a secondary consideration; that the attack is also made more difficult the smaller or rather narrower the theatre of War is to which we can confine the enemy, is likewise clear in itself; but all this is subordinate to the condition that in so doing we have the probability of a result in our favour, and that the main body of the force on the defensive will not be too much weakened; for upon that force we must chiefly depend for the final solution, because the difficulties and distress suffered by the main body of the enemy, first call forth his determination to retreat, and increase in the greatest degree the loss of physical and moral power therewith connected.

The retreat into the interior of the country should therefore as a rule be made directly before the enemy, and as slowly as possible, with an Army which has not suffered defeat and is undivided; and by its incessant resistance it should force the enemy to a constant state of readiness for battle, and to a ruinous expenditure of forces in tactical and strategical measures of precaution.

When both sides have in this manner reached the end of the aggressor's first start, the defender should then dispose his army in a position, if such can be found, forming an oblique angle with the route of his opponent, and operate against the enemy's rear with all the means at his command.

The campaign of 1812 in Russia shows all these measures on a great scale, and their effects, as it were, in a magnifying glass. Although it was not a voluntary retreat, we may easily consider it from that point of view. If the Russians with the experience they now have of the results to be thus produced, had to undertake the defence of their country over again, exactly under the same circumstances, they would do voluntarily and systematically what in great part was done without a definite plan in 1812; but it would be a great mistake to suppose that there neither is nor can be any instance elsewhere of the same mode of action where the dimensions of the Russian empire are wanting.

Whenever a strategic attack, without coming to the issue of a battle, is wrecked merely on the difficulties encountered, and the aggressor is compelled to make a more or less disastrous retreat, there the chief conditions and principal effects of this mode of defence will be found to have taken place, whatever may be the modifying circumstances otherwise with which it is accompanied. Frederick the Great's campaign of 1742 in Moravia, of 1744 in Bohemia, the French campaign of 1743 in Austria and Bohemia, the Duke of Brunswick's campaign of 1792 in France, Massena's winter campaign of 1810-11 in Portugal, are all cases in which this is exemplified, although in smaller proportions and relations; there are besides

innumerable fragmentary operations of this kind, the results of which, although not wholly, are still partly to be ascribed to the principle which we here uphold; these we do not bring forward, because it would necessitate a development of circumstances which would lead us into too wide a field.

In Russia, and in the other cases cited, the crisis or turn of affairs took place without any successful battle, having given the decision at the culminating point; but even when such an effect is not to be expected, it is always a matter of immense importance in this mode of defence to bring about such a relation of forces as makes victory possible, and through that victory, as through a first blow, to cause a movement which usually goes on increasing in its disastrous effects according to the laws applicable to falling bodies.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XXVI

ARMING THE NATION

A people's War in civilised Europe is a phenomenon of the nineteenth century. It has its advocates and its opponents: the latter either considering it in a political sense as a revolutionary means, a state of anarchy declared lawful, which is as dangerous as a foreign enemy to social order at home; or on military grounds, conceiving that the result is not commensurate with the expenditure of the nation's strength. The first point does not concern us here, for we look upon a people's War merely as a means of fighting, therefore, in its connection with the enemy; but with regard to the latter point, we must observe that a people's War in general is to be regarded as a consequence of the outburst which the military element in our day has made through its old formal limits; as an expansion and strengthening of the whole fermentation-process which we call War. The requisition system, the immense increase in the size of Armies by means of that system, and the general liability to military service, the employment of militia, are all things which lie in the same direction, if we make the limited military system of former days our starting-point; and the *levée en masse,* or arming of the people, now lies also in the same direction. If the first named of these new aids to War are the natural and necessary consequences of barriers thrown down; and if they have so enormously increased the power of those who first used them, that the enemy has been carried along in the current, and obliged to adopt them likewise, this will be the case also with people-Wars. In the generality of cases, the people who make judicious use of this means, will gain a proportionate superiority over those who despise its use. If this be so, then the only question is whether this modern intensification of the military element is, upon the whole, salutary for the interests of humanity or otherwise,—a question which it would be about as easy to answer as the question of War itself—we leave both to philosophers. But the opinion may be advanced, that the resources swallowed up in people's Wars might be more profitably employed, if used in providing other military means; no very deep investigation, however, is necessary to be convinced that these resources are for the most part not disposable, and cannot be utilized in an arbitrary manner at pleasure. One essential part, that is the moral element, is not called into existence until this kind of employment for it arises.

We therefore do not ask again: how much does the resistance which the whole Nation in Arms is capable of making, cost that Nation? but we ask: what is the effect which such a resistance can produce? What are its conditions, and how is it to be used?

It follows from the very nature of the thing that defensive means thus widely dispersed, are not suited to great blows requiring concentrated action in time and space. Its operation, like the process of evaporation in physical nature, is according to the surface. The greater that surface and the greater the contact with the enemy's Army, consequently the more that Army spreads itself out, so much the greater will be the effects of arming the Nation. Like a slow gradual heat, it destroys the foundations

of the enemy's Army. As it requires time to produce its effects, therefore whilst the hostile elements are working on each other, there is a state of tension which either gradually wears out if the people's War is extinguished at some points, and burns slowly away at others, or leads to a crisis, if the flames of this general conflagration envelop the enemy's Army, and compel it to evacuate the country to save itself from utter destruction. In order that this result should be produced by a national War alone, we must suppose either a surface-extent of the dominions invaded, exceeding that of any country in Europe, except Russia, or suppose a disproportion between the strength of the invading Army and the extent of the country, such as never occurs in reality. Therefore, to avoid following a phantom, we must imagine a people-War always in combination, with a War carried on by a regular Army, and both carried on according to a plan embracing the operations of the whole.

The conditions under which alone the people's War can become effective are the following—

1. That the War is carried on in the heart of the country.

2. That it cannot be decided by a single catastrophe.

3. That the theatre of War embraces a considerable extent of country.

4. That the national character is favourable to the measure.

5. That the country is of a broken and difficult nature, either from being mountainous, or by reason of woods and marshes, or from the peculiar mode of cultivation in use.

Whether the population is dense or otherwise, is of little consequence, as there is less likelihood of a want of men than of anything else. Whether the inhabitants are rich or poor is also a point by no means decisive, at least it should not be; but it must be admitted that a poor population accustomed to hard work and privations usually shows itself more vigorous and better suited for War.

One peculiarity of country which greatly favours the action of War carried on by the people, is the scattered sites of the dwellings of the country people, such as is to be found in many parts of Germany. The country is thus more intersected and covered; the roads are worse, although more numerous; the lodgement of troops is attended with endless difficulties, but especially that peculiarity repeats itself on a small scale, which a people-War possesses on a great scale, namely, that the principle of resistance exists everywhere, but is nowhere tangible. If the inhabitants are collected in villages, the most troublesome have troops quartered on them, or they are plundered as a punishment, and their houses burnt, &c., a system which could not be very easily carried out with a peasant community of Westphalia.

National levies and armed peasantry cannot and should not be employed against the main body of the enemy's Army, or even against any considerable detachment of the same, they must not attempt to crack the nut, they must only gnaw on the surface and the borders. They should rise in the provinces situated at one of the sides of the theatre of War, and in which the assailant does not appear in force, in order to

withdraw these provinces entirely from his influence. Where no enemy is to be found, there is no want of courage to oppose him, and at the example thus given, the mass of the neighbouring population gradually takes fire. Thus the fire spreads as it does in heather, and reaching at last that part of the surface of the soil on which the aggressor is based, it seizes his lines of communication and preys upon the vital thread by which his existence is supported. For although we entertain no exaggerated ideas of the omnipotence of a people's War, such as that it is an inexhaustible, unconquerable element, over which the mere force of an Army has as little control as the human will has over the wind or the rain; in short, although our opinion is not founded on flowery ephemeral literature, still we must admit that armed peasants are not to be driven before us in the same way as a body of soldiers who keep together like a herd of cattle, and usually follow their noses. Armed peasants, on the contrary, when broken, disperse in all directions, for which no formal plan is required; through this circumstance, the march of every small body of troops in a mountainous, thickly wooded, or even broken country, becomes a service of a very dangerous character, for at any moment a combat may arise on the march; if in point of fact no armed bodies have even been seen for some time, yet the same peasants already driven off by the head of a column, may at any hour make their appearance in its rear. If it is an object to destroy roads or to block up a defile; the means which outposts or detachments from an Army can apply to that purpose, bear about the same relation to those furnished by a body of insurgent peasants, as the action of an automaton does to that of a human being. The enemy has no other means to oppose to the action of national levies except that of detaching numerous parties to furnish escorts for convoys, to occupy military stations, defiles, bridges, &c. In proportion as the first efforts of the national levies are small, so the detachments sent out will be weak in numbers, from the repugnance to a great dispersion of forces; it is on these weak bodies that the fire of the national War usually first properly kindles itself, they are overpowered by numbers at some points, courage rises, the love of fighting gains strength, and the intensity of this struggle increases until the crisis approaches which is to decide the issue.

According to our idea of a people's War, it should, like a kind of nebulous vapoury essence, never condense into a solid body; otherwise the enemy sends an adequate force against this core, crushes it, and makes a great many prisoners; their courage sinks; every one thinks the main question is decided, any further effort useless, and the arms fall from the hands of the people. Still, however, on the other hand, it is necessary that this mist should collect at some points into denser masses, and form threatening clouds from which now and again a formidable flash of lightning may burst forth. These points are chiefly on the flanks of the enemy's theatre of War, as already observed. There the armament of the people should be organised into greater and more systematic bodies, supported by a small force of regular troops, so as to give it the appearance of a regular force and fit it to venture upon enterprises on a larger scale. From these points, the irregular character in the organisation of these bodies should diminish in proportion as they are to be employed more in the direction of the rear of the enemy, where he is exposed to their hardest blows. These better organised masses, are for the purpose of falling upon the larger garrisons which the enemy leaves behind him. Besides, they serve to create a feeling of uneasiness and dread, and increase the moral impression of the whole, without them the total action would be

wanting in force, and the situation of the enemy upon the whole would not be made sufficiently uncomfortable.

The easiest way for a General to produce this more effective form of a national armament, is to support the movement by small detachments sent from the Army. Without the support of a few regular troops as an encouragement, the inhabitants generally want an impulse, and the confidence to take up arms. The stronger these detachments are, the greater will be their power of attraction, the greater will be the avalanche which is to fall down. But this has its limits; partly, first, because it would be detrimental to the Army to cut it up into detachments, for this secondary object, to dissolve it, as it were, into a body of irregulars, and form with it in all directions a weak defensive line, by which we may be sure both the regular Army and national levies alike would become completely ruined; secondly, partly because experience seems to tell us that when there are too many regular troops in a district, the people's War loses in vigour and efficacy; the causes of this are in the first place, that too many of the enemy's troops are thus drawn into the district, and, in the second place, that the inhabitants then rely on their own regular troops, and, thirdly, because the presence of such large bodies of troops makes too great demands on the powers of the people in other ways, that is, in providing quarters, transport, contributions, &c., &c.

Another means of preventing any serious reaction on the part of the enemy against this popular movement constitutes, at the same time, a leading principle in the method of using such levies; this is, that as a rule, with this great strategic means of defence, a tactical defence should seldom or ever take place. The character of a *combat with national levies* is the same as that of all combats of masses of troops of an inferior quality, great impetuosity and fiery ardour at the commencement, but little coolness or tenacity if the combat is prolonged. Further, the defeat and dispersion of a body of national levies is of no material consequence, as they lay their account with that, but a body of this description must not be broken up by losses in killed, wounded, and prisoners; a defeat of that kind would soon cool their ardour. But both these peculiarities are entirely opposed to the nature of a tactical defensive. In the defensive combat a persistent slow systematic action is required, and great risks must be run; a mere attempt, from which we can desist as soon as we please, can never lead to results in the defensive. If, therefore, the national levies are entrusted with the defence of any particular portion of territory, care must be taken that the measure does not lead to a regular great defensive combat; for if the circumstances were ever so favourable to them, they would be sure to be defeated. They may, and should, therefore, defend the approaches to mountains, dykes, over marshes, river-passages, as long as possible; but when once they are broken, they should rather disperse, and continue their defence by sudden attacks, than concentrate and allow themselves to be shut up in some narrow last refuge in a regular defensive position.—However brave a nation may be, however warlike its habits, however intense its hatred of the enemy, however favourable the nature of the country, it is an undeniable fact that a people's War cannot be kept up in an atmosphere too full of danger. If, therefore, its combustible material is to be fanned by any means into a considerable flame it must be at remote points where there is more air, and where it cannot be extinguished by one great blow.

After these reflections, which are more of the nature of subjective impressions than an objective analysis, because the subject is one as yet of rare occurrence generally, and has been but imperfectly treated of by those who have had actual experience for any length of time, we have only to add that the strategic plan of defence can include in itself the co-operation of a general arming of the people in two different ways, that is, either as a last resource after a lost battle, or as a natural assistance before a decisive battle has been fought. The latter case supposes a retreat into the interior of the country, and that indirect kind of reaction of which we have treated in the eighth and twenty-fourth chapters of this book. We have, therefore, here only to say a few words on the mission of the national levies after a battle has been lost.

No State should believe its fate, that is, its entire existence, to be dependent upon one battle, let it be even the most decisive. If it is beaten, the calling forth fresh power, and the natural weakening which every offensive undergoes with time, may bring about a turn of fortune, or assistance may come from abroad. No such urgent haste to die is needed yet; and as by instinct the drowning man catches at a straw, so in the natural course of the moral world a people should try the last means of deliverance when it sees itself hurried along to the brink of an abyss.

However small and weak a State may be in comparison to its enemy, if it foregoes a last supreme effort, we must say there is no longer any soul left in it. This does not exclude the possibility of saving itself from complete destruction by the purchase of peace at a sacrifice; but neither does such an aim on its part do away with the utility of fresh measures for defence; they will neither make peace more difficult nor more onerous, but easier and better. They are still more necessary if there is an expectation of assistance from those who are interested in maintaining our political existence. Any Government, therefore, which, after the loss of a great battle, only thinks how it may speedily place the Nation in the lap of peace, and unmanned by the feeling of great hopes disappointed, no longer feels in itself the courage or the desire to stimulate to the utmost every element of force, completely stultifies itself in such case through weakness, and shows itself unworthy of victory, and, perhaps, just on that account, was incapable of gaining one.

However decisive, therefore, the overthrow may be which is experienced by a State, still by a retreat of the Army into the interior, the efficacy of its fortresses and an arming of the people may be brought into use. In connection with this it is advantageous if the flank of the principal theatre of War is fenced in by mountains, or otherwise very difficult tracts of country, which stand forth as bastions, the strategic enfilade of which is to check the enemy's progress.

If the victorious enemy is engaged in siege works, if he has left strong garrisons behind him everywhere to secure his communications, or detached troops to make himself elbow-room, and to keep the adjacent provinces in subjection, if he is already weakened by his various losses in active means and material of war, then the moment is arrived when the defensive Army should again enter the lists, and by a well-directed blow make the assailant stagger in his disadvantageous position.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XXVII

DEFENCE OF A THEATRE OF WAR

Having treated of the *most important defensive means,* we might perhaps be contented to leave the manner in which these means attach themselves to the plan of defence as a whole to be discussed in the last book, which will be devoted to the *Plan of a War;* for from this every secondary scheme, either of attack or defence, emanates and is determined in its leading features; and moreover in many cases the plan of the War itself is nothing more than the plan of the attack or defence of the principal theatre of operations. But we have not been able to commence with War as a whole, although in War more than in any other phase of human activity, the parts are shaped by the whole, imbued with and essentially altered by its character; instead of that, we have been obliged to make ourselves thoroughly acquainted, in the first instance, with each single subject as a separate part. Without this progress from the simple to the complex, a number of undefined ideas would have overpowered us, and the manifold phases of reciprocal action in particular would have constantly confused our conceptions. We shall therefore still continue towards the whole by one step at a time; that is, we shall consider the defence of a theatre in itself, and look for the thread by which the subjects already treated of connect themselves with it.

The defensive, according to our conception, is nothing *but the stronger form of combat.* The preservation of our own forces and the destruction of those of the enemy—in a word, the *victory*—is the aim of this contest, but at the same time not its ultimate object.

That object is the preservation of our own political state and the subjugation of that of the enemy; or again, in one word, the *desired peace,* because it is only by it that this conflict adjusts itself, and ends in a common result.

But what is the enemy's state in connection with War? Above all things its military force is important, then its territory; but certainly there are also still many other things which, through particular circumstances, may obtain a predominant importance; to these belong, before all, foreign and domestic political relations, which sometimes decide more than all the rest. But although the military force and the territory of the enemy alone are still not the State itself, nor are they the only connections which the State may have with the War, still these two things are always preponderating, mostly immeasurably surpassing all other connections in importance. Military force is to protect the territory of the State, or to conquer that of an enemy; the territory on the other hand, constantly nourishes and renovates the military force. The two, therefore, depend on each other, mutually support each other, are equal in importance one to the other. But still there is a difference in their mutual relations. If the military force is destroyed, that is completely defeated, rendered incapable of further resistance, then the loss of the territory follows of itself; but on the other hand, the destruction of the military force by no means follows from the conquest of the country, because that

force may of its own accord evacuate the territory, in order afterwards to reconquer it the more easily. Indeed, not only does the *complete* destruction of its Army decide the fate of a country, but even every *considerable weakening* of its military force leads regularly to a loss of territory; on the other hand, every considerable loss of territory does not cause a proportionate diminution of military power; in the long run it will do so, but not always within the space of time in which a War is brought to a close.

From this it follows that the preservation of our own military power, and the diminution or destruction of that of the enemy, take precedence in importance over the occupation of territory, and, therefore, is the *first object* which a general should strive for. The possession of territory only presses for consideration *as an object* if that means (diminution or destruction of the enemy's military force) has not effected it.

If the whole of the enemy's military power was united in *one Army,* and if the whole War consisted of *one battle,* then the possession of the country would depend on the issue of that battle; destruction of the enemy's military forces, conquest of his country and security of our own, would follow from that result, and, in a certain measure, be identical with it. Now the question is, what can induce the defensive to deviate from this simplest form of the act of warfare, and distribute his power in space? The answer is, the insufficiency of the victory which he might gain with all his forces united. Every victory has its sphere of influence. If this extends over the whole of the enemy's State, consequently over the whole of his military force and his territory, that is, if all the parts are carried along in the same movement, which we have impressed upon the core of his power, then such a victory is all that we require, and a division of our forces would not be justified by sufficient grounds. But if there are portions of the enemy's military force, and of country belonging to either party, over which our victory would have no effect, then we must give particular attention to those parts; and as we cannot unite territory like a military force in one point, therefore we must divide our forces for the purpose of attacking or defending those portions.

It is only in small, compactly shaped States that it is possible to have such a unity of military force, that probably all depends upon a victory over *that force.* Such a unity is practically impossible when larger tracts of country, having for a great extent boundaries conterminous with our own, are concerned, or in the case of an alliance of several surrounding States against us. In such cases, divisions of force must necessarily take place, giving occasion to different theatres of War.

The effect of a victory will naturally depend on its *greatness,* and that on the mass of the *conquered troops.* Therefore *the blow* which, if successful, will produce the greatest effect, must be made against *that part* of the country where the greatest number of the enemy's forces are collected together; and the greater the mass of our own forces which we use for this blow, so much the surer shall we be of this success. This natural sequence of ideas leads us to an illustration by which we shall see this truth more clearly; it is the nature and effect of the centre of gravity in mechanics.

As a centre of gravity is always situated where the greatest mass of matter is collected, and as a shock against the centre of gravity of a body always produces the

greatest effect, and further, as the most effective blow is struck with the centre of gravity of the power used, so it is also in War. The armed forces of every belligerent, whether of a single State or of an alliance of States, have a certain unity, and in that way, connection; but where connection is there come in analogies of the centre of gravity. There are, therefore, in these armed forces certain centres of gravity, the movement and direction of which decide upon other points, and these centres of gravity are situated where the greatest bodies of troops are assembled. But just as, in the world of inert matter, the action against the centre of gravity has its measure and limits in the connection of the parts, so it is in War, and here as well as there the force exerted may easily be greater than the resistance requires, and then there is a blow in the air, a waste of force.

What a difference there is between the solidity of an Army under *one* standard, led into battle under the personal command of *one* General, and that of an *allied Army* extended over two hundred and fifty or five hundred miles, or it may be even based upon quite different sides (of the theatre of War). There we see coherence in the strongest degree, unity most complete; here unity in a very remote degree often only existing in the political view held in common, and in that also in a miserable and insufficient degree, the cohesion of parts mostly very weak, often quite an illusion.

Therefore, if on the one hand, the violence with which we wish to strike the blow prescribes the greatest concentration of force, so in like manner, on the other hand, we have to fear every undue excess as a real evil, because it entails a waste of power, and that in turn a *deficiency* of power at other points.

To distinguish these "*centra gravitatis*" in the enemy's military power, to discern their spheres of action is, therefore, a supreme act of strategic judgment. We must constantly ask ourselves, what effect the advance or retreat of part of the forces on either side will produce on the rest.

We do not by this lay claim in any way to the discovery of a new method, we have only sought to explain the foundation of the method of all Generals, in every age, in a manner which may place its connection with the nature of things in a clearer light.

How this conception of the centre of gravity of the enemy's force affects the whole plan of the War, we shall consider in the last book, for that is the proper place for the subject, and we have only borrowed it from here to avoid leaving any break in the sequence of ideas. By the introduction of this view we have seen the motives which occasion a partition of forces in general. These consist fundamentally of two interests which are in opposition to each other; the one, *the possession of territory,* strives to divide the forces; the other, *the effort of force against the centre of gravity of the enemy's military power,* combines them again up to a certain point.

Thus it is that theatres of War or particular Army regions originate. These are those boundaries of the area of the country and of the forces thereon distributed, within which every decision given by the principal force of such a region extends itself *directly* over the whole, and carries on the whole with it in its own direction. We say

directly, because a decision on one theatre of War must naturally have also an influence more or less over those adjoining it.

Although it lies quite in the nature of the thing, we must again remind our readers expressly that, here as well as everywhere else, our definitions are only directed at the centres of certain speculative regions, the limits of which we neither desire to, nor can we, define by sharp lines.

We think, therefore, a theatre of War, whether large or small, with its military force, whatever may be the size of that, represents a unity which may be reduced to one centre of gravity. At this centre of gravity the decision must take place, and to be conqueror here means to defend the theatre of War in the widest sense.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XXVIII

DEFENCE OF A THEATRE OF WAR (*Continued*)

[Defence, however, consists of two different elements, these are the *decision* and the *state of expectation.* The combination of these two elements forms the subject of this chapter.

(First we must observe that the state of expectation is not, in point of fact, the complete defence; it is only that province of the same in which it proceeds to its aim. As long as a military force has not abandoned the portion of territory placed under its guardianship, the tension of forces on both sides created by the attack continues, and this lasts until there is a decision.) The decision itself can only be regarded as having actually taken place when either the assailant or defender has left the theatre of War.]

As long as an armed force maintains itself within its theatre, the defence of the same continues, and in this sense the defence of the theatre of War is identical with the defence *in the same.* Whether the enemy in the meantime has obtained possession of much or little of that section of country is not essential, for it is only lent to him until the decision.

But this kind of idea by which we wish to settle the proper relation of the state of expectation to the whole is only correct when a decision is really to take place, and is regarded by both parties as inevitable. For it is only by that decision that the centres of gravity of the respective forces, and the theatre of War determined through them are *effectually* hit. Whenever the idea of a decisive solution disappears, then the centres of gravity are neutralised; indeed, in a certain sense, the whole of the armed forces become so also, and now the possession of territory, which forms the second principal branch of the whole theatre of War, comes forward as the direct object. In other words, the less a decisive blow is sought for by both sides in a War, and the more it is merely a mutual observation of one another, so much the more important becomes the possession of territory, so much the more the defensive seeks to cover all directly, and the assailant seeks to extend his forces in his advance.

Now we cannot conceal from ourselves the fact that the majority of Wars and campaigns approach much more to a state of observation than to a struggle for life or death, that is, a contest in which one at least of the combatants uses every effort to bring about a complete decision. This last character is only to be found in the Wars of the nineteenth century to such a degree that a theory founded on this point of view can be made use of in relation to them. But as all future Wars will hardly have this character, and it is rather to be expected that they will again show a tendency to the observation character, therefore any theory to be practically useful must pay attention to that also. Hence we shall commence with the case in which the desire of a decision permeates and guides the whole, therefore with *real,* or if we may use the expression, *absolute War;* then in another chapter we shall examine those modifications which

arise through the approach, in a greater or less degree, to the state of a War of observation.

In the first case (whether the decision is sought by the aggressor or the defender) the defence of the theatre of War must consist in the defender establishing himself there in such a manner, that in a decision he will have an advantage on his side at any moment. This decision may be either a battle, or a series of great combats, but it may also consist in the resultant of mere relations, which arise from the situation of the opposing forces, that is, *possible combats.*

If the battle were not also the most powerful, the most usual and most effectual means of a decision in War, as we think we have already shown on several occasions, still the mere fact of its being in a general way one of the means of reaching this solution, would be sufficient to enjoin *the greatest concentration of our forces* which circumstances will in any way permit. A great battle upon the theatre of War is the blow of the centre of force against the centre of force; the more forces can be collected in the one or the other, the surer and greater will be the effect. Therefore every separation of forces which is not called for by an object (which either cannot itself be attained by the successful issue of a battle, or which itself is necessary to the successful issue of the battle) is *blameable.*

But the greatest concentration of forces is not the only fundamental condition; it is also requisite that they should have such a position and place that the battle may be fought under favourable circumstances.

The different steps in the defence which we have become acquainted with in the chapter on the methods of defence, are completely homogeneous with these fundamental conditions; there will therefore be no difficulty in connecting them with the same, according to the special requirements of each case. But there is one point which seems at first sight to involve a contradiction in itself, and which, as one of the most important in the defence, requires explanation so much the more. It is the hitting upon the exact centre of gravity of the enemy's force.

If the defender ascertains in time the roads by which the enemy will advance, and upon which in particular the great mass of his force will be found for a certainty, he may march against him on that road. This will be the most usual case, for although the defence precedes the attack in measures of a general nature, in the establishment of strong places, great arsenals, and depôts, and in the peace establishment of his Army, and thus gives a line of direction to the assailant in his preparations, still, when the campaign really opens, the defender, in relation to the aggressor, has the peculiar advantage in general of playing the last hand.

To attack a foreign country with a large Army, very considerable preparations are required. Provisions, stores, and articles of equipment of all kinds must be collected, which is a work of time. While these preparations are going on, the defender has time to prepare accordingly, in regard to which we must not forget that the defensive requires less time, generally speaking, because in every State things are prepared rather for the defensive than the offensive.

But although this may hold good in the majority of cases, there is always a possibility that, in particular cases, the defensive may remain in uncertainty as to the principal line by which the enemy intends to advance; and this case is more likely to occur when the defence is dependent on measures which of themselves take a good deal of time, as for example, the preparation of a strong position. Further, supposing the defender places himself on the line by which the aggressor is advancing, then, unless the defender is prepared to take the initiative by attacking the aggressor, the latter may avoid the position which the defender has taken up, by only altering a little his line of advance, for in the cultivated parts of Europe we can never be so situated that there are not roads to the right or left by which any position may be avoided. Plainly, in such a case the defender could not wait for his enemy in a position, or at least could not wait there in expectation of giving battle.

But before entering on the means available to the defensive in this case, we must inquire more particularly into the nature of such a case, and the probability of its occurrence.

Naturally there are in every State, and also in every theatre of War (of which alone we are at present speaking), objects and points upon which an attack is likely to be more efficacious than anywhere else. Upon this we think it will be better to speak when we come to the attack. Here we shall confine ourselves to observing that, if the most advantageous object and point of attack is the motive for the assailant in the direction of his blow, this motive reacts on the defensive, and must be his guide in cases in which he knows nothing of the intentions of his adversary. If the assailant does not take this direction which is favourable to him, he foregoes part of his natural advantages. It is evident that, if the defender has taken up a position in that direction, the evading his position, or passing round, is not to be done for nothing; it costs a sacrifice. From this it follows that there is not on the side of the defender such a risk of *missing the direction of his enemy;* neither, on the other hand, is it so easy for the assailant *to pass round his adversary* as appears at first sight, because there exists beforehand a very distinct, and in most cases preponderating, motive in favour of one or the other direction, and that consequently the defender, although his preparations are fixed to one spot, will not fail in most cases to come in contact with the mass of the enemy's forces. In other words, *if the defender has put himself in the right position, he may be almost sure that the assailant will march to meet him.*

But by this we shall not and cannot deny the possibility of the defender sometimes not meeting with the assailant after all these arrangements, and therefore the question arises, what he should then do, and how much of the real advantages of his position still remain available to him.

If we ask ourselves what means still remain generally to the defender when the assailant passes by his position, they are the following:—

1. To divide his forces instantly, so as to be certain to find the assailant with one portion, and then to support that portion with the other.

2. To take up a position with his force united, and in case the assailant passes by him, to push on rapidly in front of him by a lateral movement. In most cases there will not be time to make such a movement directly to a flank, it will therefore be necessary to take up the new position somewhat further back.

3. With his whole force to attack the enemy in flank.

4. To operate against his communications.

5. By a counter attack on *his* theatre of War, to do exactly what the enemy has done in passing by us.

We introduce this last measure, because it is possible to imagine a case in which it may be efficacious; but as it is in contradiction to the object of the defence, that is, the grounds on which that form has been chosen, therefore it can only be regarded as an abnormity, which can only take place because the enemy has made some great mistake, or because there are other special features in a particular case.

Operating against the enemy's communications implies that our own are superior, which is also one of the fundamental requisites of a good defensive position. But although on that ground this action may promise the defender a certain amount of advantage, still, in the defence of a theatre of War, it is seldom an operation suited to *lead to a decision,* which we have supposed to be the object of the campaign.

The dimensions of a single theatre of War are seldom so large that the line of communications is exposed to much danger by their length, and even if they were in danger, still the time which the assailant requires for the execution of his blow is usually too short for his progress to be arrested by the slow effects of the action against his communications.

Therefore this means (that is the action against the communications) will prove quite inefficacious in most cases against an enemy determined upon a decision, and also in case the defender seeks such a solution.

The object of the three other means which remain for the defender, is a direct decision—a meeting of centre of force with centre of force; they correspond better, therefore, with the thing required. But we shall at once say that we decidedly prefer the third to the other two, and without quite rejecting the latter, we hold the former to be in the majority of cases the true means of defence.

In a position where our forces are divided, there is always a danger of getting involved in a war of posts, from which, if our adversary is resolute, can follow, under the best of circumstances, only *a relative defence on a large scale,* never a decision such as we desire; and even if by superior tact we should be able to avoid this mistake, still, by the preliminary resistance being with divided forces, the first shock is sensibly weakened, and we can never be sure that the advanced troops first engaged will not suffer disproportionate losses. To this is to be added that the resistance of this force which usually ends in its falling back on the main body, appears to the troops in

the light of a lost combat, or miscarriage of plans, and the moral force suffers accordingly.

The second means, that of placing our whole Army in front of the enemy, in whichever direction he may bend his march, involves a risk of our arriving too late, and thus between two measures, falling short of both. Besides this, a defensive battle requires coolness and consideration, a knowledge, indeed intimate knowledge of the country, which cannot be expected in a hasty oblique movement to a flank. Lastly, positions suitable for a good defensive battle-field are too rarely to be met with to reckon upon them at every point of every road.

On the other hand, the third means, namely to attack the enemy in flank, therefore to give battle with a change of front, is attended with great advantages.

Firstly, there is always in this case, as we know, an exposure of the lines of communication, here the lines of retreat, and in this respect the defender has one advantage in his general relations as defender, and next and chiefly, the advantage which we have claimed for the strategic properties of his position at present.

Secondly, — and this is the principal thing, — every assailant who attempts to pass by his opponent is placed between two opposite tendencies. His first desire is to advance to obtain the object of his attack; but the possibility of being attacked in flank at any moment, creates a necessity for being prepared, at any moment, to deliver a blow in that direction, and that too a blow with the mass of his forces. These two tendencies are contradictory, and beget such a complication in the internal relations (of his army), such a difficulty in the choice of measures, if they are to suit every event, that there can hardly be a more disagreeable position strategically. If the assailant knew with certainty the moment when he would be attacked, he might prepare to receive the enemy with skill and ability; but in his uncertainty on this point, and pressed by the necessity of advancing, it is almost certain that when the moment for battle arrives, it finds him in the midst of hurried and half-finished preparations, and therefore by no means in an advantageous relation to his enemy.

If then there are favourable moments for the defender to deliver an offensive battle, it is surely at such a moment as this, above all others, that we may look for success. If we consider, further, that the knowledge of the country and choice of ground are on the side of the defender, that he can prepare his movements, and can time them, no one can doubt that he possesses in such a situation a decided superiority, strategically, over his adversary.

We think, therefore, that a defender occupying a well chosen position, with his forces united, may quietly wait for the enemy passing by his Army; should the enemy not attack him in his position, and that an operation against the enemy's communications does not suit the circumstances, there still remains for him an excellent means of bringing about a decision by resorting to a flank attack.

If cases of this kind are hardly to be found in military history, the reason is, partly, that the defender has seldom had the courage to remain firm in such a position, but

has either divided his forces, or rashly thrown himself in front of his enemy by a cross or diagonal march, or that no assailant dares to venture past the defender under such circumstances, and in that way his movement usually comes to a stand-still.

The defender is in this case compelled to resort to an offensive battle: the further advantages of *the state of expectation of a strong position, of good entrenchments,* &c., &c., he must give up; in most cases the situation in which he finds the advancing enemy will not quite make up for these advantages, for it is just to evade their influence that the assailant has placed himself in his present situation; still it always offers him *a certain compensation,* and theory is therefore not obliged to see a quantity disappear at once from the calculation, to see the pro and contra mutually cancel each other, as so often happens when critical writers of history introduce a little bit of theory.

It must not, in fact, be supposed that we are now dealing with logical subtleties; the subject is rather one which the more it is practically considered, the more it appears as an idea embracing the whole essence of defensive War, everywhere dominating and regulating it.

It is only by the determination on the part of the defender to assail his opponent with all his force, the moment he passes by him, that he avoids two pitfalls, close to which he is led by the defensive form; that is a division of his force, and a hasty flank march to intercept the assailant in front. In both he accepts the law of the assailant; in both he seeks to aid himself through measures of a very critical nature, and with a most dangerous degree of haste; and wherever a resolute adversary, thirsting for victory and a decision, has encountered such a system of defence, he has knocked it on the head. But when the defender has assembled his forces at the right point to fight a general action, if he is determined with his force, come what will, to attack his enemy in flank, he has done right, and is in the *right* course, and he is supported by all the advantages which the defence can give in his situation; his actions will then bear the *stamp of good preparation, coolness, security, unity, and simplicity.*

We cannot here avoid mentioning a remarkable event in history, which has a close analogy with the ideas now developed; we do so to anticipate its being used in a wrong application.

When the Prussian Army was, in October, 1806, waiting in Thuringia for the French under Buonaparte, the former was posted between the two great roads on which the latter might be expected to advance, that is, the road to Berlin by Erfurt, and that by Hof and Leipsic. The first intention of breaking into Franconia straight through the Thuringian Forest, and afterwards, when that plan was abandoned, the uncertainty as to which of the roads the French would choose for their advance, caused the occupation of this intermediate position. *As such,* it must therefore have led to the adoption of the measure we have been discussing, a hasty interception of the enemy in front by a lateral movement.

This was in fact the idea in case the enemy marched by Erfurt, for the roads in that direction were good; on the other hand, the idea of a movement of this description on

the road by Hof could not be entertained, partly because the Army was two or three marches away from that road, partly because the deep valley of the Saale interposed; neither did this plan ever enter into the views of the Duke of Brunswick, so that there was no kind of preparation made for carrying it into effect, but it was always contemplated by Prince Hohenlohe, that is, by Colonel Massenbach, who exerted all his influence to draw the Duke into this plan. Still less could the idea be entertained of leaving the position which had been taken on the left bank of the Saale to try an offensive battle against Buonaparte on his advance, that is, to such an attack in flank as we have been considering; for if the Saale was an obstacle to intercepting the enemy in the last moment (*â fortiori*) it would be a still greater obstacle to assuming the offensive at a moment when the enemy would be in possession of the opposite side of the river, at least partially. The Duke, therefore, determined to wait behind the Saale to see what would happen, that is to say, if we can call anything a determination which emanated from this many-headed Headquarters' Staff, and in this time of confusion and utter indecision.

Whatever may have been the true condition of affairs during this state of expectation, the consequent situation of the Army was this:—

1. That the enemy might be attacked if he crossed the Saale to attack the Prussian Army.

2. That if he did not march against that Army, operations might be commenced against his communications.

3. If it should be found practicable and advisable, he might be intercepted near Leipsic by a rapid flank march.

In the first case, the Prussian Army possessed a great strategic and tactical advantage in the deep valley of the Saale. In the second, the strategic advantage was just as great, for the enemy had only a very narrow base between our position and the neutral territory of Bohemia, whilst ours was extremely broad; even in the third case, our Army, covered by the Saale, was still by no means in a disadvantageous situation. All these three measures, in spite of the confusion and want of any clear perception at headquarters, *were really discussed;* but certainly we cannot wonder that, although a right idea may have been entertained, it should have entirely failed in the *execution* by the complete want of resolution and the confusion generally prevailing.

In the two first cases, the position on the left bank of the Saale is to be regarded as a real flank position, and it had undoubtedly as such very great qualities; but in truth, against a very superior enemy, *against a Buonaparte,* a flank position with an Army that is not very sure about what it is doing, *is a very bold measure.*

After long hesitation, the Duke on the 13th adopted the last of the plans proposed, but it was too late, Buonaparte had already commenced to pass the Saale, and the battles of Jena and Auerstadt were inevitable. The Duke, through his indecision, had set himself between two stools; he quitted his first position too late *to push his Army in before the enemy,* and too soon for a battle suited to the object. Nevertheless, the

natural strength of this position proved itself so far that the Duke was able to destroy the right wing of the enemy's Army at Auerstadt, whilst Prince Hohenlohe, by a bloody retreat, was still able to back out of the scrape; but at Auerstadt they did not venture to realise the victory, which was *quite certain;* and at Jena they thought they might reckon upon one which was *quite impossible.*

In any case, Buonaparte felt the strategic importance of the position on the Saale so much, that he did not venture to pass it by, but determined on a passage of the Saale in sight of the enemy.

By what we have now said we think we have sufficiently specified the relations between the defence and the attack when a decisive course of action is intended, and we believe we have shown also the threads to which, according to their situation and connection, the different subjects of the plan of defence attach themselves. To go through the different arrangements more in detail does not come within our views, for that would lead us into a boundless field of particular cases. When a General has laid down for his direction a distinct point, he will see how far it agrees with geographical, statistical, and political circumstances, the material and personal relations of his own Army and that of the enemy, and how the one or the other may require that his plans should be modified in carrying them into effect.

But in order more distinctly to connect and look closer at the gradations in the defence specified in the chapter on the different kinds of defence, we shall here lay before our readers what seems to us most important, in relation to the same generally.

1. Reasons for marching against the enemy with a view to an offensive battle, may be as follows:—

(*a*) If we know that the enemy is advancing with his forces very much divided, and therefore we have reason to expect a victory, although we are, upon the whole, much weaker.

But such an advance on the part of the assailant is in itself very improbable, and consequently, unless we know of it upon certain information, the plan is not good; for to reckon upon it, and rest all our hopes on it through a *mere supposition,* and without sufficient motive, leads generally to a very dangerous situation. We do not, then, find things as we expected; we are obliged to give up the offensive battle, we are not prepared to fight on the defensive, we are obliged to commence with a retreat against our will, and leave almost everything to chance.

This is very much what occurred in the defence, conducted by the Army under Dohna against the Russians, in the campaign of 1759, and which, under General Wedel, ended in the unfortunate battle of Züllichau.

This measure shortens matters so much that plan-makers are only too ready to propose it, without taking much trouble to inquire how far the hypothesis on which it rests is well founded.

(*b*) If we are generally in sufficient strength for battle, and—

(*c*) If a blundering, irresolute adversary specially invites an attack.

In this case the effect of surprise may be worth more than any assistance furnished by the ground through a good position. It is the real essence of good Generalship thus to bring into play the power of the moral forces;—but theory can never say aloud enough nor often enough there must be an *objective foundation* for these suppositions; without *such foundation* to be always talking of surprises and the superiority of novel or unusual modes of attack, and thereon to found plans, considerations, criticisms, is acting without any grounds, and is altogether objectionable.

(*d*) When the nature of our Army makes it specially suited for the offensive.

It was certainly not a visionary or false idea when Frederick the Great conceived that in his mobile, courageous army, full of confidence in him, obedient by habit, trained to precision, animated and elevated by pride, and with its perfection in the oblique attack, he possessed an instrument which, in his firm and daring hand, was much more suited to attack than defence: all these qualities were wanting in his opponents, and in this respect, therefore, he had the most decided superiority; to make use of this was worth more to him, in most cases, than to take to his assistance entrenchments and obstacles of ground.—But such a superiority will always be rare; a well-trained Army, thoroughly practised in great movements, has only part of the above advantages. If Frederick the Great maintained that the Prussian Army was particularly adapted for attack—and this has been incessantly repeated since his time—still we should not attach too much weight to any such saying; in most cases in War we feel more exhilarated, more courageous when acting offensively than defensively: but this is a feeling which all troops have in common, and there is hardly an Army respecting which its Generals and Leaders have not made the same assertion (as Frederick). We must, therefore, not too readily rely on an appearance of superiority, and through that neglect real advantages.

A very natural and weighty reason for resorting to an offensive battle may be the composition of the Army as regards the three arms, for instance, a numerous cavalry and little artillery.

We continue the enumeration of reasons.

(*e*) When we can nowhere find a good position.

(*f*) When we must hasten with the decision.

(*g*) Lastly, the combined influence of several or all of these reasons.

2. The waiting for the enemy in a locality where it is intended to attack him (Minden, 1759) naturally proceeds from—

a, there being no such disproportion of force to our disadvantage as to make it necessary to seek a strong position and strengthen it by entrenchments.

b, a locality having been found particularly adapted to the purpose. The properties which determine this belong to tactics; we shall only observe that these properties chiefly consist in an easy approach for the defender from his side, and in all kinds of obstacles on the side next to the enemy.

3. A position will be taken with the express intention of there awaiting the attack of the enemy—

a. If the disproportion of forces compels us to seek cover from natural obstacles or behind field-works.

b. When the country affords an excellent position for our purpose.

The two modes of defence, 2 and 3, will come more into consideration according as we do not seek the decision itself, but content ourselves with a negative result, and have reason to think that our opponent is wavering and irresolute, and that he will in the end fail to carry out his plans.

4. An entrenched unassailable camp only fulfils the object—

a. If it is situated at an extremely important strategic point.

The character of such a position consists in this, that we cannot be driven out of it; the enemy is therefore obliged to try some other means, that is, to pursue his object without touching this camp, or to blockade it and reduce it by starvation; if it is impossible for him to do this, then the strategic qualities of the position must be very great.

b. If we have reason to expect aid from abroad.

Such was the case with the Saxon army in its position at Pirna. Notwithstanding all that has been said against the measure on account of the ill-success which attended it in this instance, it is perfectly certain that 17,000 Saxons could never have been able to neutralise 40,000 Prussians in any other way. If the Austrians were unable to make better use of the superiority obtained at Lobositz, that only shows the badness of their whole method of War, as well as of their whole military organisation; and there cannot be a doubt that if the Saxons instead of taking post in the camp at Pirna had retired into Bohemia, Frederick the Great would have driven both Austrians and Saxons beyond Prague, and taken that place in the same campaign. Whoever does not admit the value of this advantage, and limits his consideration to the capture of the whole Saxon army, shows himself incapable of making a calculation of all the circumstances in a case of this kind, and without calculation no certain deduction can be obtained.

But as the cases *a* and *b* very rarely occur, therefore, the entrenched camp is a measure which requires to be well considered, and which is very seldom suitable in practice. The hope of *inspiring* the enemy *with respect* by such a camp, and thus reducing him to a state of complete inactivity, is attended with too much danger, namely, with the danger of being obliged to fight without the possibility of retreat. If

Frederick the Great gained his object in this way at Bunzelwitz, we must admire the correct judgment he formed of his adversary, but we must certainly also lay more stress than usual on the resources which he would have found at the last moment to clear a road for the remnants of his army, and also on the *irresponsibility* of a King.

5. If there is one or if there are several fortresses near the frontier, then the great question arises, whether the defender should seek an action before or behind them. The latter recommends itself—

a, by the superiority of the enemy in numbers, which forces us to break his power before coming to a final struggle.

b, by these fortresses being near, so that the sacrifice of territory is not greater than we are compelled to make.

c, by the fitness *of the fortresses for defence.*

One principal use of fortresses is unquestionably, or should be, to break the enemy's force in his advance and to weaken considerably that portion which we intend to bring to an engagement. If we so seldom see this use made of fortresses, that proceeds from the cases in which a decisive battle is sought for by one of the opposing parties being very rare. But that is the only kind of case which we treat of here. We therefore look upon it as a principle equally simple and important in all cases in which the defender has one or more fortresses near him, that he should keep them before him, and give the decisive battle behind them. We admit that a battle lost within the line of our fortresses will compel us to retreat further into the interior of the country than one lost on the other side, tactical results in both cases being the same, although the causes of the difference have their origin rather in the imagination than in real things; neither do we forget that a battle may be given beyond the fortresses in a well chosen position, whilst inside them the battle in most cases must be an offensive one, particularly if the enemy is laying siege to a fortress which is in danger of being lost; but what signify these nice shades of distinction, as compared to the advantage that, in the decisive battle, we meet the enemy weakened by a fourth or a third of his force, perhaps one-half if there are many for resses?

We think, therefore, that in all cases of *an inevitable decision,* whether sought for by the offensive or the defensive, and that the latter is not tolerably sure of a victory, or if the nature of the country does not offer some most decisive reason to give battle in a position further forward—in all these cases we say when a fortress is situated near at hand and capable of defence, the defender should by all means withdraw at once behind it, and let the decision take place on this side, consequently with its co-operation. If he takes up his position so close to the fortress that the assailant can neither form the siege of nor blockade the place without first driving him off, he places the assailant under the necessity of attacking him, the defender, in his position. To us, therefore, of all defensive measures in a critical situation, none appears so simple and efficacious as the choice of a good position near to and behind a strong fortress.

At the same time, the question would wear a different aspect if the fortress was situated far back; for then it would be necessary to abandon a considerable part of our theatre of war, a sacrifice which, as we know, should not be made unless in a case of great urgency. In such a case the measure would bear more resemblance to a retreat into the interior of the country.

Another condition is, the fitness of the place for defence. It is well known that there are fortified places, especially large ones, which are not fit to be brought into contact with an enemy's Army, because they could not resist the sudden assault of a powerful force. In this case, our position must at all events be so close behind that we could support the garrison.

Lastly, the retreat into the interior of the country is only a natural resource under the following circumstances:—

a, when owing to the physical and moral relation in which we stand as respects the enemy, the idea of a successful resistance on the frontier or near it cannot be entertained.

b, when it is a principal object to gain time.

c, when there are peculiarities in the country which are favourable to the measure, a subject on which we have already treated in the twenty-fifth chapter.

We thus close the chapter on the defence of a theatre of war if a decisive solution is sought for by one or other party, and is therefore inevitable. But it must be particularly borne in mind, that events in War do not exhibit themselves in such a pure abstract form, and that therefore, if our maxims and arguments should be used in reasoning on actual War, our thirtieth chapter should also be kept in view, and we must suppose the General, in the majority of cases, as placed between two tendencies, urged *more* towards one or the other, according to circumstances.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XXIX

DEFENCE OF A THEATRE OF WAR (*Continued*)

SUCCESSIVE RESISTANCE

We have proved, in the twelfth and thirteenth chapters, third book, that in Strategy a successive resistance is inconsistent with the nature of the thing, and that all forces available should be used simultaneously.

As regards forces which are movable, this requires no further demonstration; but when we look at the seat of War itself, with its fortresses, the natural divisions of the ground, and even the extent of its surface, as being also elements of War, then, these being immovable, we can only either bring them gradually into use, or we must at once place ourselves so far back, that all agencies of this kind which are to be brought into activity are in our front. Then everything which can contribute to weaken the enemy in the territory which he has occupied, comes at once into activity, for the assailant must at least blockade the defender's fortresses, he must keep the country in subjection by garrisons and other posts, he has long marches to make, and everything he requires must be brought from a distance, &c. All these agencies commence to work, whether the assailant makes *his advance before or after* a decision, but in the former case their influence is somewhat greater. From this, therefore, it follows, that if the defender chooses to transfer his decision to a point further back, he has thus the means of bringing at once into play all these immovable elements of military force.

On the other hand, it is clear that this *transfer of the solution* (on the part of the defender) does not alter the extent of the influence of a victory which the assailant gains. In treating of the attack, we shall examine more closely the extent of the influence of a victory; here we shall only observe that it reaches to the exhaustion of the superiority, that is, the resultant of the physical and moral relations. Now this superiority exhausts itself, in the first place, by the duties required from the forces on the theatre of war, and secondly, by losses in combats; the diminution of force arising from these two causes cannot be essentially altered, whether the combats take place at the commencement or at the end, near the frontier, or further towards the interior of the country (vorn oder hinten). We think, for example, that a victory gained by Buonaparte over the Russians at Wilna, 1812, would have carried him just as far as that of Borodino—assuming that it was equally great—and that a victory at Moscow would not have carried him any further; Moscow was, in either case, the limit of this sphere of victory. Indeed, it cannot be doubted for a moment that a decisive battle on the frontier (for other reasons) would have produced much greater results through victory, and then, perhaps, the sphere of its influence would have been wider. Therefore, in this view, also, the transfer of the decision to a point further back is not necessary for the defence.

In the chapter on the various means of resistance, that method of delaying the decision, which may be regarded as an extreme form, was brought before us under the name of *retreat into the interior,* and as a particular method of defence, in which the object is rather that the assailant should wear himself out, than that he should be destroyed by the sword on the field of battle. But it is only when such an intention predominates that the delaying of the decisive battle can be regarded as a *peculiar method of resistance;* for otherwise it is evident that an infinite number of gradations may be conceived in this method, and that these may be combined with all other means of defence. We therefore look upon the greater or less co-operation of the theatre of war, not as a special form of defence, but as nothing more than a discretionary introduction into the defence of the immovable means of resistance, just according as circumstances and the nature of the situation may appear to require.

But now, if the defender does not think he requires any assistance from these immovable forces for his purposed decision, or if the further sacrifice connected with the use of them is too great, then they are kept in reserve for the future, and form a sort of succession of reinforcements, which perhaps ensure the possibility of keeping the movable forces in such a condition that they will be able to follow up the first favourable decision with a second, or perhaps in the same manner even with a third, that is to say, in this manner a *successive* application of his forces becomes possible.

If the defender loses a battle on the frontier, which does not amount to a complete defeat, we may very well imagine that, by placing himself behind the nearest fortress, he will then be in a condition to accept battle again; indeed, if he is only dealing with an opponent who has not much resolution, then, perhaps, some considerable obstacle of ground will be sufficient as a means of stopping the enemy.

There is, therefore, in Strategy, in the use of the theatre of war as well as in everything else, *an economy of force;* the less one can make suffice the better: but there must be sufficient, and here, as well as in commerce, there is something to be thought of besides mere niggardliness.

But in order to prevent a great misconception, we must draw attention to this, that the subject of our present consideration is not how much resistance an Army can offer, or the enterprises which it can undertake after a lost battle, but only the result which we can promise ourselves *beforehand* from this second act in our defence; consequently, how high we can estimate it in our plan. Here there is only one point which the defender has to look to, viz., the character and the situation of his opponent. An adversary weak in character, with little self-confidence, without noble ambition, placed under great restrictions, will content himself, in case he is successful, with a moderate advantage, and timidly hold back at every fresh offer of a decision which the defender ventures to make. In this case the defender may count upon the beneficial use of all the means of resistance of his theatre of war in succession, in constantly fresh, although in themselves small, combats, in which the prospect always brightens of an ultimate decision in his favour.

But who does not feel that we are now on the road to campaigns devoid of decision, which are much more the field of a successive application of force. Of these we shall speak in the following chapter.

[Back to Table of Contents]

CHAPTER XXX

DEFENCE OF A THEATRE OF WAR (*Continued*)

WHEN NO DECISION IS SOUGHT FOR

Whether and how far a War is possible in which neither party acts on the offensive, therefore in which neither combatant has a *positive aim,* we shall consider in the last book; here it is not necessary for us to occupy ourselves with the contradiction which this presents, because on a single theatre of war we can easily suppose reasons for such a defensive on both sides, consequent on the relations of each of these parts to a whole.

But in addition to the examples which history furnishes of particular campaigns that have taken place without the focus of a necessary solution, history also tells us of many others in which there was no want of an assailant, consequently no want of a *positive will* on one side, but in which that will was so weak that instead of striving to attain the object at any price, and forcing the *necessary* decision, it contented itself with such advantages as arose in a manner spontaneously out of circumstances. Or the assailant pursued *no* self-selected end *at all,* but made his object depend on circumstances, in the meanwhile gathering such fruits as presented themselves from time to time.

Although such an offensive which deviates very much from the strict logical necessity of a direct march towards the object, and which, almost like a lounger sauntering through the campaign, looking out right and left for the cheap fruits of opportunity, differs very little from the defensive itself, which allows the General to pick up what he can in this way, still we shall give the closer philosophical consideration of this kind of warfare a place in the book on the attack. Here we shall confine ourselves to the conclusion that in such a campaign the settlement of the whole question is not looked for by either assailant or defender through a decisive battle, that, therefore, the great battle is no longer the keystone of the arch, towards which all the lines of the strategic superstructure are directed. Campaigns of this kind (as the history of all times and all countries shows us) are not only numerous, but form such an overwhelming majority, that the remainder only appear as exceptions. Even if this proportion should alter in the future, still it is certain that there will always be many such campaigns; and, therefore, in studying the theory of the defence of a theatre of war, they must be brought into consideration. We shall endeavour to describe the peculiarities by which they are characterised. Real War will generally follow a mean between the two different tendencies, sometimes appearing nearer to one, sometimes to the other, and we can, therefore, only see the practical effect of these peculiarities in the modification which is produced, in the *absolute form* of War by their counteraction. We have already said in the third chapter of this book, that the *state of expectation* is one of the greatest advantages which the defensive has over the offensive; as a general rule, it seldom happens in life, and least of all in War, that *all*

that circumstances would lead us to expect does actually take place. The imperfection of human insight, the fear of evil results, accidents which derange the development of designs in their execution, are causes through which many of the transactions enjoined by circumstances are never realised in the execution. In War where insufficiency of knowledge, the danger of a catastrophe, the number of accidents are incomparably greater than in any other branch of human activity, the number of shortcomings, if we may so call them, must necessarily also be much greater. This is then the rich field where the defensive gathers fruits which grow for it spontaneously. If we add to this result of experience the substantial importance of the possession of the surface of the ground in War, then that maxim which has become a proverb, *beati sunt possidentes,* holds good here as well as in peace. It is *this maxim* which here takes the place of the decision, that focus of all action in every War directed to *mutual destruction.* It is fruitful beyond measure, not in actions which it calls forth, but in motives for not acting, and for all that action which is done in the interest of inaction. When no decision is to be sought for or expected, there is no reason for giving up anything, for that could only be done to gain thereby some advantage in the decision. The consequence is that the defender keeps all, or at least as much as he can (that is as much as he can cover), and the assailant takes possession of so much as he can without involving himself in a decision (that is, he will extend himself laterally as much as possible). We have only to deal with the first in this place.

Wherever the defender is not present with his military forces, the assailant can take possession, and the advantage of the state of expectation is on *his side;* hence the endeavour to cover the country everywhere directly, and to take the chance of the assailant attacking the troops posted for this purpose.

Before we go further into the special properties of the defence, we must extract from the book on the attack those objects which the assailant usually aims at when the decision (by battle) is not sought. They are as follows:—

1. The seizure of a considerable strip of territory, as far as that can be done without a decisive engagement.

2. The capture of an important magazine under the same condition.

3. The capture of a fortress not covered. No doubt a siege is more or less a great operation, often requiring great labour; but it is an undertaking which does not contain the elements of a catastrophe. If it comes to the worst, the siege can be raised without thereby suffering a great positive loss.

4. Lastly, a successful combat of some importance, but in which there is not much risked, and consequently not much to be gained; a combat which takes place not as the cardinal knot of a whole strategic bond, but on its own account for the sake of trophies or honour of the troops. For such an object, of course, a combat is not fought *at any price;* we either wait for the chance of a favourable opportunity, or seek to bring one about by skill.

These four objects of attack give rise to the following efforts on the part of the defence:—

1. To cover the fortresses by keeping them behind us.

2. To cover the country by extending the troops over it.

3. Where the extension is not sufficient, to throw the Army rapidly in front of the enemy by a flank march.

4. To guard against disadvantageous combats.

It is clear that the object of the first three measures is to force on the enemy the initiative, and to derive the utmost advantage from the state of expectation, and this object is so deeply rooted in the nature of the thing that it would be great folly to despise it *primâ facie.* It must necessarily occupy a higher place the less a decision is expected, and it is the ruling principle in all such campaigns, even although, apparently, a considerable degree of activity may be manifested in small actions of an indecisive character.

Hannibal as well as Fabius, and both Frederick the Great and Daun, have done homage to this principle whenever they did not either seek for or expect a decision. The fourth effort serves as a corrective to the three others, it is their *conditio sine quâ non.*

We shall now proceed to examine these subjects a little more closely.

At first sight it appears somewhat preposterous to protect a fortress from the enemy's attack by placing an Army in *front of it;* such a measure looks like a kind of pleonasm, as fortifications are built to resist a hostile attack of themselves. Yet it is a measure which we see resorted to thousands and thousands of times. But thus it is in the conduct of War; the most common things often seem the most incomprehensible. Who would presume to pronounce these thousands of instances to be so many blunders on the ground of this seeming inconsistency? The constant repetition of the measure shows that it must proceed from some deep-seated motive. This reason is, however, no other than that pointed out above, emanating from moral sluggishness and inactivity.

If the defender places himself in front of his fortress, the enemy cannot attack it unless he first beats the Army in front of it; but a battle is a decision; if that is *not* the enemy's object then there will be no battle, and the defender will remain in possession of his fortress without striking a blow; consequently, whenever we do not believe the enemy intends to fight a battle, we should venture on the chance of his not making up his mind to do so, especially as in most cases we still retain the power of withdrawing behind the fortress in a moment, if, contrary to our expectation, the enemy should march to attack us; the position before the fortress is in this way free from danger, and the probability of maintaining the *status quo* without any sacrifice, is not even attended with the *slightest* risk.

If the defender places himself behind the fortress, he offers the assailant an object which is exactly suited to the circumstances in which the latter is placed. If the fortress is not of great strength, and he is not quite unprepared, he will commence the siege: in order that this may not end in the fall of the place, the defender must march to its relief. The positive action, the initiative, is now laid on him, and the adversary who by his siege is to be regarded as advancing towards his object, is in the situation of occupier.

Experience teaches that the matter always takes this turn, and it does so naturally. A catastrophe, as we have before said, is not necessarily bound up with a siege. Even a General, devoid of either the spirit of enterprise or energy, who would never make up his mind to a battle, will proceed to undertake a siege with perhaps nothing but field artillery, when he can approach a fortress without risk. At the worst he can abandon his undertaking without any positive loss. There always remains to be considered the danger to which most fortresses are more or less exposed, that of being taken by assault, or in some other irregular manner, and this circumstance should certainly not be overlooked by the defender in his calculation of probabilities.

In weighing and considering the different chances, it seems natural that the defender should look upon the probability of not having to fight at all as more for his advantage than the probability of fighting even *under favourable* circumstances. And thus it appears to us that the practice of placing an Army in the field before its fortress, is both natural and fully explained. Frederick the Great, for instance, at Glogau, against the Russians, at Schwednitz, Neiss, and Dresden, against the Austrians, almost always adopted it. This measure, however, brought misfortune on the Duke of Bevern at Breslau; *behind* Breslau he could not have been attacked; the superiority of the Austrians in the King's absence would soon cease, as he was approaching; and therefore, by a position *behind* Breslau, a battle might have been avoided until Frederick's arrival. No doubt the Duke would have preferred that course if it had not been that it would have exposed that important place to a bombardment, at which the King, who was anything but tolerant on such occasions, would have been highly displeased. *The attempt made* by the Duke to protect Breslau by an entrenched position taken up for the purpose, cannot after all be disapproved, for it was very possible that Prince Charles of Lorraine, contented with the capture of Schwednitz, and threatened by the march of the King, would, by that position, have been prevented from advancing farther. The best thing he could have done would have been to refuse the battle at the last by withdrawing through Breslau at the moment that the Austrians advanced to the attack; in this way he would have got all the advantages of the state of expectation without paying for them by a great danger.

If we have here traced the position *before* a fortress to reasons of a superior and absolute order, and defended its adoption on those grounds, we have still to observe that there is a motive of a secondary class which, though a more obvious one, is not sufficient of itself alone, not being absolute; we refer to the use which is made by Armies of the nearest fortress as a depôt of provisions and munitions of war. This is so convenient, and presents so many advantages, that a General will not easily make up his mind to draw his supplies of all kinds from more distant places, or to lodge them in open towns. But if a fortress is the great magazine of an Army, then the

position before it is frequently a matter of absolute necessity, and in most cases is very natural. But it is easy to see that this obvious motive, which is easily overvalued by those who are not in the habit of looking far before them, is neither sufficient to explain all cases, nor are the circumstances connected with it of sufficient importance to entitle it to give a final decision.

The capture of one or more fortresses without risking a battle, is such a very natural object of all attacks which do not aim at a decision on the field of battle, that the defender makes it his principal business to thwart this design. Thus it is that on theatres of War, containing a number of fortresses, we find these places made the pivots of almost all the movements; we find the assailant seeking to approach one of them unexpectedly, and employing various feints to aid his purpose, and the defender immediately seeking to stop him by well-prepared movements. Such is the general character of almost all the campaigns of Louis XIV. in the Netherlands up to the time of Marshal Saxe.

So much for the covering of fortresses.

The covering of a country by an extended disposition of forces, is only conceivable in combination with very considerable obstacles of ground. The great and small posts which must be formed for the purpose, can only get a certain capability of resistance through strength of position; and as natural obstacles are seldom found sufficient, therefore field fortification is made use of as an assistance. But now it is to be observed that, the power of resistance which is thus obtained at any one point, is always only *relative* (see the chapter on the signification of the combat), and never to be regarded as *absolute.* It may certainly happen that one such post may remain proof against all attacks made upon it, and that therefore in a single instance there may be an absolute result; but from the great number of posts, any single one, in comparison to the whole, appears weak, and exposed to the possible attack of an overwhelming force, and consequently it would be unreasonable to place one's dependence for safety on the resistance of any one single post. In such an extended position, we can therefore only count on a resistance of relative length, and not upon a victory, properly speaking. This value of single posts, at the same time, is also sufficient for the object, and for a general calculation. In campaigns in which no great decision, no irresistible march, towards the complete subjugation of the whole force is to be feared, there is little risk in a combat of posts, even if it ends in the loss of a post. There is seldom any further result in connection with it than the loss of the post and a few trophies; the influence of victory penetrates no further into the situation of affairs, it does not tear down any part of the foundation to be followed by a mass of building in ruin. In the worst case, if, for instance, the whole defensive system is disorganised by the loss of a single post, the defender has always time to concentrate his corps, and with his whole force to *offer battle,* which the assailant, according to our supposition, does not desire. Therefore also it usually happens that with this concentration of force the act closes, and the further advance of the assailant is stopped. A strip of land, a few men and guns, are the losses of the defender, and with these results the assailant is satisfied.

To such a risk we say the defender may very well expose himself, if he has, on the other hand, the possibility, or rather the probability, in his favour, that the assailant from excessive caution will half before his posts without attacking them. Only in regard to this we must not lose sight of the fact, that we are now supposing an assailant who will not venture upon any great stroke, a moderate sized, but strong post will very well serve to stop such an adversary, for although he can undoubtedly make himself master of it, still the question arises as to the price it will cost, and whether that price is not too high for any use that he can make of the victory.

In this way we may see how the powerful relative resistance which the defender can obtain from an extended disposition, consisting of a number of posts in juxtaposition with each other, may constitute a satisfactory result in the calculation of his whole campaign. In order to direct at once to the right point the glance which the reader, with his mind's eye, will here cast upon military history, we must observe that these extended positions appear most frequently in the latter half of a campaign, because by that time the defender has become thoroughly acquainted with his adversary, with his projects, and his situation; and the little quantity of the spirit of enterprise with which the assailant started, is usually exhausted.

In this defensive, in an extended position by which the *country,* the *supplies,* the *fortresses* are to be covered, all great natural obstacles, such as streams, rivers, mountains, woods, morasses, must naturally play a great part, and acquire a predominant importance. Upon their use we refer to what has been already said on these subjects.

It is through this predominant importance of the topographical element that the knowledge and activity which are looked upon as the speciality of the General Staff of an Army are more particularly called into requisition. Now, as the Staff of the Army is usually that branch which writes and publishes most, it follows that these parts of campaigns are recorded more fully in history; and then again from that there follows a not unnatural tendency to systematise them, and to frame out of the historical solution of one case a general solution for all succeeding cases. But this endeavour is futile, and therefore erroneous. Besides, in this more passive kind of War, in this form of it which is tied to localities, each case is different to another, and must be differently treated. The ablest memoirs of a critical character respecting these subjects are therefore only suited to make one acquainted with facts, but never to serve as principles governing conduct.

Natural, and at the same time meritorious, as is this industry which, according to the general view, we have attributed to the Staff in particular, still we must raise a warning voice against usurpations which often spring from it to the prejudice of the whole. The authority acquired by those who are at the head of, and best acquainted with, this branch of military service, gives them often a sort of general dominion over people's minds, beginning with the General himself, and from this then springs a routine of ideas which causes an undue bias of the mind. At last the General sees nothing but mountains and passes, and that which should be a measure of free choice guided by circumstances becomes mannerism, becomes second nature.

Thus in the year 1793 and 1794, Colonel Grawert of the Prussian army, who was the animating spirit of the Staff at that time, and well known as a regular man for mountains and passes, persuaded two Generals of the most opposite personal characteristics, the Duke of Brunswick and General Mollendorf, into exactly the same method of carrying on War.

That a defensive line parallel to the course of a formidable natural obstacle may lead to a cordon War is quite plain. It must, in most cases, necessarily lead to that if really the whole extent of the theatre of war could be directly covered in that manner. But most theatres of war have such an extent, that the normal tactical disposition of the troops destined for its defence would be by no means commensurate with that object; at the same time as the assailant, by his own dispositions and other circumstances, is confined to certain principal directions and great roads, and any great deviations from these directions, even if he is only opposed to a very inactive defender, would be attended with great embarrassment and disadvantage, therefore generally all that the defender has to do is to cover the country for a certain number of miles or marches right and left of these principal lines of direction of his adversary. But again to effect this covering, we may be contented with defensive posts on the principal roads and means of approach, and merely watch the country between by small posts of observation. The consequence of this is certainly that the assailant may then pass a column between two of these posts, and thus make the attack, which he has in view, upon one post from several quarters at once. Now, these posts are in some measure arranged to meet this, partly by their having supports for their flanks, partly by the formation of flank defences (called crochets), partly by their being able to receive assistance from a reserve posted in rear, or by troops detached from adjoining posts. In this manner the number of posts is reduced still more, and the result is that an Army engaged in a defence of this kind, usually divides itself into four or five principal posts.

For important points of approach, beyond a certain distance, and yet in some measure threatened, special central points are established which, in a certain measure, form small theatres of war within the principal one. In this manner the Austrians, during the Seven Years' War, generally placed the main body of their Army in four or five posts in the mountains of Lower Silesia; whilst a small almost independent detachment organised for itself a similar system of defence in Upper Silesia.

Now, the further such a defensive system diverges from direct covering, the more it must call to its assistance—mobility (active defence), and even offensive means. Certain bodies are considered reserves; besides which, one post hastens to send to the help of another all the troops it can spare. This assistance may be rendered either by hastening up directly from the rear to reinforce and re-establish the passive defence, or by attacking the enemy in flank, or even by menacing his line of retreat. If the assailant threatens the flank of a post not with direct attack, but only by a position through which he can act upon the communications of this post, then either the troops which have been advanced for this purpose must be attacked in earnest, or the way of reprisal must be resorted to by acting in turn on the enemy's communications.

We see, therefore, that however passive this defence is in the leading ideas on which it is based, still it must comprise many active means, and in its organisation may be forearmed in many ways against complicated events. Usually those defences pass for the best which make the most use of active or even offensive means; but this depends in great part on the nature of the country, the characteristics of the troops, and even on the talent of the General; partly we are also very prone in general to expect too much from movement, and other auxiliary measures of an active nature, and to place too little reliance on the local defence of a formidable natural obstacle. We think we have thus sufficiently explained what we understand by an extended line of defence, and we now turn to the third auxiliary means, the placing ourselves in front of the enemy by a rapid march to a flank.

This means is necessarily one of those provided for that defence of a country which we are now considering. In the first place the defender, even with the most extended position, often cannot guard all the approaches to his country which are menaced; next, in many cases, he must be ready to repair with the bulk of his forces to any posts upon which the bulk of the enemy's force is about to be thrown, as otherwise those posts would be too easily overpowered; lastly, a General who has an aversion to confining his Army to a passive resistance in an extended position, must seek to attain his object, the protection of the country, by rapid, well-planned, and well-conducted movements. The greater the spaces which he leaves exposed, the greater the talent required in planning the movements, in order to arrive anywhere at the right moment of time.

The natural consequence of striving to do this is, that in such a case, positions which afford sufficient advantages to make an enemy give up all idea of an attack as soon as our Army, or only a portion of it, reaches them, are sought for and prepared in all directions. As these positions are again and again occupied, and all depends on reaching the same in right time, they are in a certain measure the vowels of all this method of carrying on War, which on that account has been called a *War of posts.*

Just as an extended position, and the relative resistance in a War *without great decisions,* do not present the dangers which are inherent in its original nature, so in the same manner the intercepting the enemy in front by a march to a flank is not so hazardous as it would be in the immediate expectation of a great decision. To attempt at the last moment in greatest haste (by a lateral movement) to thrust an Army in front of an adversary of determined character, who is both able and willing to deal heavy blows, and has no scruples about an expenditure of forces, would be to go half way to meet a decisive disaster; for against an unhesitating blow delivered with the enemy's whole strength, such running and stumbling into a position would be most dangerous. But against an opponent who, instead of taking up his work with his whole hand, uses only the tips of his fingers, who does not know how to make use of a great result, or rather of the opening for one, who only seeks a trifling advantage but at small expense, against such an opponent this kind of resistance certainly may be applied with effect.

A natural consequence is, that this means also in general occurs oftener in the last half of a campaign than at its commencement.

Here, also, the General Staff has an opportunity of displaying its topographical knowledge in framing a system of combined measures, connected with the choice and preparation of the positions and the roads leading to them.

When the whole object of one party is to gain in the end a certain point, and the whole object of his adversary, on the other hand, is to prevent his doing so, then both parties are often obliged to make their movements under the eyes of each other; for this reason, these movements must be made with a degree of precaution and precision not otherwise required. Formerly, before the mass of an Army was formed of independent Divisions, and even on the march was always regarded as an indivisible whole, this precaution and precision was attended with much more formality, and with the copious use of tactical skill. On these occasions, certainly, single Brigades were often obliged to leave the general line of battle to secure particular points, and act an independent part until the Army arrived: but these were, and continued, *anomalous proceedings;* and the aim in the order of march generally was to move the Army from one part to another as a whole, preserving its normal formation, and avoiding such exceptional proceedings as the above as far as possible. Now that the parts of the main body of an Army are subdivided again into independent bodies, and those bodies can venture to enter into an engagement with the mass of the enemy's Army, provided the rest of the force of which it is a member is sufficiently near to carry it on and finish it—now such a flank march is attended with less difficulty even under the eye of the enemy. What formerly could only be effected through the actual mechanism of the order of march, can now be done by starting single Divisions at an earlier hour, by hastening the march of others, and by the greater freedom in the employment of the whole.

By the means of defence just considered, the assailant can be prevented from taking any fortress, from occupying any important extent of country, or capturing magazines; and he will be prevented, if in every direction combats are offered to him in which he can see little probability of success, or too great danger of a reaction in case of failure, or in general, an expenditure of force too great for his object and existing relations.

If now the defender succeeds in this triumph of his art and skill, and the assailant, wherever he turns his eyes, sees prudent preparations through which he is cut off from any prospect of attaining his modest wishes: then the offensive principle often seeks to escape from the difficulty in the satisfaction of the mere honour of his arms. The gain of some combat of respectable importance, gives the arms of the victor a semblance of superiority, appeases the vanity of the General, of the Court, of the Army, and the people, and thus satisfies, to a certain extent, the expectations which are naturally always raised when the offensive is assumed.

An advantageous combat of some importance merely for the sake of the victory and some trophies, becomes, therefore, the last hope of the assailant. No one must suppose that we here involve ourselves in a contradiction, for we contend that we still continue within our *own supposition,* that the good measures of the defender have deprived the assailant of all expectation of attaining any one of those other objects by means of a *successful combat!* To warrant that expectation, two conditions are required, that is, a

favourable termination to the combat, and next, *that the result shall lead really to the attainment of one of those objects.*

The first may very well take place without the second, and therefore the defenders' detachments and posts singly are much more frequently in danger of getting involved in disadvantageous combats if the assailant merely aims at the *honour of the battle-field,* than if he connects with that a view to further advantages as well.

If we place ourselves in Daun's situation, and with his way of thinking, then his venturing on the surprise of Hochkirch does not appear inconsistent with his character, as long as we suppose him aiming at nothing more than the trophies of the day. But a victory rich in results, which would have compelled the King to abandon Dresden and Neisse, appears an entirely different problem, one with which he would not have been inclined to meddle.

Let it not be imagined that these are trifling or idle distinctions; we have, on the contrary, now before us one of the deepest-rooted, leading principles of War. The signification of a combat is its very soul in Strategy, and we cannot too often repeat, that in Strategy the leading events always proceed from the ultimate views of the two parties, as it were, from a conclusion of the whole train of ideas. This is why there may be such a difference strategically between one battle and another, that they can hardly be looked upon as the same means.

Now, although the fruitless victory of the assailant can hardly be considered any serious injury to the defence, still as the defender will not willingly concede even *this* advantage, particularly as we never know what accident may also be connected with it, therefore the defender requires to keep an incessant watch upon the situation of all his troops and posts. No doubt here all greatly depends on the leaders of those bodies making suitable dispositions; but any one of them may be led into an unavoidable catastrophe by injudicious orders imposed on him by the General-in-Chief. Who is not reminded here of Fouqué's corps at Landshut, and of Fink's at Maxen?

In both cases Frederick the Great reckoned too much on customary ideas. It was impossible that he could suppose 10,000 men capable of successfully resisting 30,000 in the position of Landshut, or that Fink could resist a superior force pouring in and overwhelming him on all sides; but he thought the strength of the position of Landshut would be accepted, like a bill of exchange, as heretofore, and that Daun would see in the demonstration against his flank sufficient reason to exchange his uncomfortable position in Saxony for the more comfortable one in Bohemia. He misjudged Laudon in one case and Daun in the other, and therein lies the error in these measures.

But irrespective of such errors, into which even Generals may fall who are not so proud, daring, and obstinate as Frederick the Great, in some of his proceedings may certainly be termed, there is always, in respect to the subject we are now considering, a great difficulty in this way, that the General-in-Chief cannot always expect all he desires from the sagacity, goodwill, courage and firmness of character of his Corps-Commanders. He cannot, therefore, leave everything to their good judgment; he must

prescribe rules on many points by which their course of action, being restricted, may easily become inconsistent with the circumstances of the moment. This is, however, an unavoidable inconvenience. Without an imperious commanding will, the influence of which penetrates through the whole Army, War cannot be well conducted; and whoever would follow the practice of always expecting the best from his subordinates, would from that very reason be quite unfit for a good Commander of an Army.

Therefore the situation of every detachment and post must be for ever kept clearly in view, to prevent any of them being unexpectedly drawn into a catastrophe.

The aim of all these efforts is to preserve the *status quo.* The more fortunate and successful these efforts are, the longer will the War last at the same point; but the longer War continues at one point, the greater become the cares for subsistence.

In place of collections and contributions from the country, a system of subsistence from magazines commences at once, or in a very short time; in place of country waggons being collected upon each occasion, the formation, more or less, of a regular transport takes place, composed either of carriages of the country, or of those belonging to the Army; in short, there arises an approach to that regular system of feeding troops from magazines, of which we have already treated in the fourteenth chapter (On Subsistence).

At the same time, it is not this which exercises a great influence on this mode of conducting War, for as this mode, by its object and character is in fact already tied down to a limited space, therefore the question of subsistence may very well have a part in determining its action — and will do so in both cases — without altering the general character of the War. On the other hand, the action of the belligerents mutually against the lines of communications gains a much greater importance for two reasons. Firstly, because in such campaigns, there being no measures of a great and comprehensive kind, Generals must apply their energies to those of an inferior order; and secondly, because here there is time enough to wait for the effect of this means. The security of his line of communications is therefore specially important to the defender, for although it is true that its interruption cannot be an object of the hostile operations which take place, yet it might compel him to retreat, and thus to leave other objects open to attack.

All the measures having for their object the protection of the area of the theatre of War itself, must naturally also have the effect of covering the lines of communication; their security is therefore in part provided for in that way, and we have only to observe that it is a principal condition in fixing upon a position.

A *special* means of security consists in the bodies of troops, both small and large, escorting convoys. First, the most extended positions are not sufficient to secure the lines of communication, and next, such an escort is particularly necessary when the General wishes to avoid a very extended position. Therefore, we find, in Tempelhof's "History of the Seven Years' War," instances without end in which Frederick the Great caused his bread and flour waggons to be escorted by single regiments of

infantry or cavalry, sometimes also by whole brigades. On the Austrian side we nowhere find mention of the same thing, which certainly may be partly accounted for in this way, that they had no such circumstantial historian on their side, but in part it is also to be ascribed just to this, that they always took up much more extended positions.

Having now touched upon the four efforts which form the foundation of a defensive *that does not aim at a decision,* and which are at the same time altogether free upon the whole from all offensive elements, we must now say something of the offensive means with which they may become more or less mixed up, in a certain measure flavoured. These offensive means are chiefly:—

1. Operating against the enemy's communications, under which we likewise include enterprises against his places of supply.

2. Diversions and incursions within the enemy's territory.

3. Attacks on the enemy's detachments and posts, and even upon his main body, under favourable circumstances, or the threat only of such intention.

The first of these means is incessantly in action in all campaigns of this kind, but in a certain measure quite quietly without actually making its appearance. Every suitable position for the defender derives a great part of its efficacy from the disquietude which it causes the assailant in connection with his communications; and as the question of subsistence in such operations becomes, as we have already observed, one of vital importance, affecting the assailant equally, therefore, through this apprehension of offensive action, possibly resulting from the enemy's position, a great part of the strategic web is determined, as we shall again find in treating of the attack.

Not only this general influence, proceeding from the choice of positions, which, like pressure in mechanics, produces an effect *invisibly,* but also an actual offensive movement with part of the Army against the enemy's lines of communication, comes within the compass of such a defensive. But that it may be done with effect, *the situation of the lines of communication, the nature of the country, and the peculiar qualities of the troops* must be specially propitious to the undertaking.

Incursions into the enemy's country which have as their object reprisals or levying contributions, cannot properly be regarded as defensive means, they are rather true offensive means; but they are usually combined with the object of a real diversion, which may be regarded as a real defensive measure, as it is intended to weaken the enemy's force opposed to us. But as the above means may be used just as well by the assailant, and in itself is a real attack, we therefore think more suitable to leave its further examination for the next book. Accordingly we shall only count it in here, in order to render a full account of the arsenal of small offensive arms belonging to the defender of a theatre of War, and for the present merely add that in extent and importance it may attain to such a point, as to give the whole War the *appearance,* and along with that the honour, of the offensive. Of this nature are Frederick the

Great's enterprises in Poland, Bohemia, and Franconia, before the campaign of 1759. His campaign itself is plainly a pure defence; these incursions into the enemy's territory, however, gave it the appearance of an aggression, which perhaps had a special value on account of the moral effect.

An attack on one of the enemy's detachments or on his main body must always be kept in view as a necessary complement of the whole defence whenever the aggressor takes the matter too easily, and on that account shows himself very defenceless at particular points. Under this silent condition the whole action takes place. But here also the defender, in the same way as in operating against the communications of the enemy, may go a step further in the province of the offensive, and like his adversary may make it his business to lie in wait *for a favourable stroke.* In order to ensure a result in this field, he must either be very decidedly superior in force to his opponent—which certainly is inconsistent with the defensive in general, but still may happen—or he must have a method and the talent of keeping his forces more concentrated, and make up by activity and mobility for the danger which he incurs in other respects.

The first was Daun's case in the Seven Years' War; the latter, the case of Frederick the Great. Still we hardly ever see Daun's offensive make its appearance except when Frederick the Great invited it by excessive boldness and a display of contempt for him (Hochkirch, Maxen, Landshut). On the other hand, we see Frederick the Great almost constantly on the move in order to beat one or other of Daun's Corps with his main body. He certainly seldom succeeded, at least, the results were never great, because Daun, in addition to his great superiority in numbers, had also a rare degree of prudence and caution; but we must not suppose that, therefore, the King's attempts were altogether fruitless. In these attempts lay rather a very effectual resistance; for the care and fatigue, which his adversary had to undergo in order to avoid fighting at a disadvantage, neutralised those forces which would otherwise have aided in advancing the offensive action. Let us only call to mind the campaign of 1760, in Silesia, where Daun and the Russians, out of sheer apprehension of being attacked and beaten by the King, first here and then there, never could succeed in making one step in advance.

We believe we have now gone through all the subjects which form the predominant ideas, the principal aims, and therefore the main stay, of the whole action in the defence of a theatre of War when no idea of decision is entertained. Our chief, and, indeed, sole object in bringing them all close together, was to let the organism of the whole strategic action be seen in one view; the particular measures by means of which those subjects come to life, marches, positions, &c., &c., we have already considered in detail.

By now casting a glance once more at the whole of our subject, the idea must strike us forcibly, that with such a weak offensive principle, with so little desire for a decision on either side, with so little positive motive, with so many counteracting influences of a subjective nature, which stop us and hold us back, the essential difference between attack and defence must always tend more to disappear. At the opening of a campaign, certainly one party will enter the other's theatre of War, and in that

manner, to a certain extent, such party puts on the form of offensive. But it may very well take place, and happens frequently, that he must soon enough apply all his powers to defend his own country on the enemy's territory. Then both stand, in reality, opposite one another in a state of mutual observation. Both intent on losing nothing, perhaps both alike intent also on obtaining a positive advantage. Indeed it may happen, as with Frederick the Great, that the real defender aims higher in that way than his adversary.

Now the more the assailant gives up the position of an enemy making progress, the less the defender is menaced by him, and confined to a strictly defensive attitude by the pressing claims of a regard for mere safety, so much the more a similarity in the relations of the parties is produced in which then the activity of both will be directed towards gaining an advantage over his opponent, and protecting himself against any disadvantage, therefore to a true strategic *manœuvring;* and indeed this is the character into which all campaigns resolve themselves more or less, when the situation of the combatants or political views do not allow of any great decision.

In the following book we have allotted a chapter specially to the subject of strategic manœuvres; but as this equipoised play of forces has frequently been invested in theory with an importance to which it is not entitled, we find ourselves under the necessity of examining the subject more closely while we are treating of the defence, as it is in that form of warfare more particularly that this false importance is ascribed to strategic manœuvres.

We call it an *equipoised play of forces,* for when there is no movement of the whole body there is a state of equilibrium; where no great object impels, there is no movement of the whole; therefore, in such a case, the two parties, however unequal they may be, are still to be regarded as in a state of equilibrium. From this state of equilibrium of the whole now come forth the particular motives to actions of a minor class and secondary objects. They can here develop themselves, because they are no longer kept down by the pressure of a great decision and great danger. Therefore, what can be lost or won upon the whole is changed into small counters, and the action of the War, as a whole, is broken up into smaller transactions. With these smaller operations for smaller gains, a contest of skill now takes place between the two Generals; but as it is impossible in War to shut out chance, and consequently good luck, therefore this contest will never be otherwise than a *game.* In the meantime, here arise two other questions, that is, whether in this manœuvring, chance will not have a smaller, and superior intelligence a greater, share in the decision, than where all concentrates itself into one single great act. The last of these questions we must answer in the affirmative. The more complete the organisation of the whole, the oftener time and space come into consideration—the former by single moments, the latter at particular points—so much the greater, plainly, will be the field for calculation, therefore the greater the sway exercised by superior intelligence. What the superior understanding gains is abstracted in part from chance, but not necessarily altogether, and therefore we are not obliged to answer the first question affirmatively. Moreover, we must not forget that a superior understanding is not the only mental quality of a General; courage, energy, resolution, presence of mind, &c., are qualities which rise again to a higher value when all depends on one single great decision; they

will, therefore, have somewhat less weight when there is an equipoised play of forces, and the predominating ascendency of segacious calculation increases not only at the expense of chance, but also at the expense of these qualities. On the other hand, these brilliant qualities, at the moment of a great decision, may rob chance of a great part of its power, and therefore, to a certain extent, secure that which calculating intelligence in such cases would be obliged to leave to chance. We see by this that here a conflict takes place between several forces, and that we cannot positively assert that there is a greater field left open to chance in the case of a great decision, than in the to al result when that equipoised play of forces takes place. If we, therefore, see more particularly in this play of forces a contest of mutual skill, that must only be taken to refer to skill in sagacious calculation, and not to the sum total of military genius.

Now it is just from this aspect of strategic manœuvring that the whole has obtained that false importance of which we have spoken above. In the first place, the whole genius of a General has been supposed to consist in this skilfulness; but this is a great mistake, for it is, as already said, not to be denied that in moments of great decisions other moral qualities may have power to control the force of events. If this power proceeds more from the impulse of noble feelings and those sparks of genius which start up almost unconsciously, and therefore does not proceed from long chains of thought, still it is not the less a free citizen of the Art of War, for that Art is neither a mere act of the understanding, nor are the activities of the intellectual faculties its principal ones. Further, it has been supposed that every active campaign without results must be owing to that sort of skill on the part of one, or even of both Generals, while in reality it has always had its general and principal foundation in the general relations which have turned War into such a game.

As most Wars between civilised States have had for their object rather the observation of the enemy than his destruction, therefore it was only natural that the greater number of the campaigns should bear the character of strategic manœuvring. Those amongst them which did not bring into notice any renowned Generals, attracted no attention; but where there was a great Commander on whom all eyes were fixed, or two opposed to each other, like Turenne and Montecuculi, there the seal of perfection has been stamped upon this whole art of manœuvring through the names of these Generals. A further consequence has then been that this game has been looked upon as the summit of the Art, as the manifestation of its highest perfection, and consequently also as the source at which the Art of War must chiefly be studied.

This view prevailed almost universally in the theoretical world before the Wars of the French Revolution. But when these Wars at one stroke opened to view a quite different world of phenomena in War, at first somewhat rough and wild, but which afterwards, under Buonaparte systematised into a method on a grand scale, produced results which created astonishment amongst old and young, then people set themselves free from the old models, and believed that all the changes they saw resulted from modern discoveries, magnificent ideas, &c.; but also at the same time, certainly from the changes in the state of society. It was now thought that what was old would never more be required, and would never even reappear. But as in such revolutions in opinions two parties are always formed, so it was also in this instance, and the old views found their champions, who looked upon the new phenomena as

rude blows of brute force, as a general decadence of the Art; and held the opinion that, in the evenly-balanced, nugatory, fruitless War game, the perfection of the Art is realised. There lies at the bottom of this last view such a want of logic and philosophy, that it can only be termed a hopeless, distressing confusion of ideas. But at the same time the opposite opinion, that nothing like the past will ever reappear, is very irrational. Of the novel appearances manifested in the domain of the Art of War, very few indeed are to be ascribed to new discoveries, or to a change in the direction of ideas; they are chiefly attributable to the alterations in the social State and its relations. But as these took place just at the crisis of a process of fermentation, they must not be taken as a norm; and we cannot, therefore, doubt that a great part of the former manifestations of War will again make their appearance. This is not the place to enter further into these matters; it is enough for us that by directing attention to the relation which this even-balanced play of forces occupies in the whole conduct of a War, and to its signification and connection with other objects, we have shown that it is always produced by constraint laid on both parties engaged in the contest, and by a military element greatly attenuated. In this game one General may show himself more skilful than his opponent; and therefore, if the strength of his Army is equal, he may also gain many advantages over him; or if his force is inferior, he may, by his superior talent, keep the contest evenly balanced; but it is completely contradictory to the nature of the thing to look here for the highest honour and glory of a General; such a campaign is always rather a certain sign that neither of the Generals has any great military talent, or that he who has talent is prevented by the force of circumstances from venturing on a great decision; but when this is the case, there is no scope afforded for the display of the highest military genius.

We have hitherto been engaged with the general character of strategic manœuvring; we must now proceed to a special influence which it has on the conduct of War, namely this, that it frequently leads the combatants away from the principal roads and places into unfrequented, or at least unimportant localities. When trifling interests, which exist for a moment and then disappear, are paramount, the great features of a country have less influence on the conduct of the War. We therefore often find that bodies of troops move to points where we should never look for them, judging only by the great and simple requirements of the War; and that consequently, also, the changefulness and diversity in the details of the contest as it progresses, are much greater here than in Wars directed to a great decision. Let us only look how in the last five campaigns of the Seven Years' War, in spite of the relations in general remaining unchanged in themselves, each of these campaigns took a different form, and, closely examined, no single measure ever appears twice; and yet in these campaigns the offensive principle manifests itself on the side of the allied Army much more decidedly than in most other earlier Wars.

In this chapter on the defence of a theatre of War, if no great decision is proposed, we have only shown the tendencies of the action, together with its combination, and the relations and character of the same; the particular measures of which it is composed have been described in detail in a former part of our work. Now the question arises whether for these different tendencies of action no thoroughly general comprehensive principles, rules, or methods can be given. To this we reply that, as far as history is concerned, we have decidedly not been led to any deductions of that kind through

constantly recurring forms; and at the same time, for a subject so diversified and changeful in its general nature, we could hardly admit any theoretical rule, except one founded on experience. A War directed to great decisions is not only much simpler, but also much more in accordance with nature; is more free from inconsistencies, more objective, more restricted by a law of inherent necessity; hence the mind can prescribe forms and laws for it; but for a War without a decision for its object, this appears to us to be much more difficult. Even the two fundamental principles of the earliest theories of strategy published in our times, the *Breadth of the Base,* in Bulow, and the *Position on Interior Lines,* in Jomini, if applied to the defence of a theatre of War, have in no instance shown themselves absolute and effective. But being mere forms, this is just where they should show themselves most efficacious, because forms are always more efficacious, always acquire a preponderance over other factors of the product, the more the action extends over time and space. Notwithstanding this, we find that they are nothing more than particular parts of the subject, and certainly anything but decisive advantages. It is very clear that the peculiar nature of the means and the relations must always from the first have a great influence adverse to all general principles. What Daun did by the extent and provident choice of positions, the King did by keeping his army always concentrated, always hugging the enemy close, and by being always ready to act suddenly with his whole Army. The method of each General proceeded not only from the nature of the Army he commanded, but also from the circumstances in which he was placed. To extemporise movements is always much easier for a King than for any Commander who acts under responsibility. We shall here once more point out particularly that the critic has no right to look upon the different manners and methods which may make their appearance as different degrees on the road to perfection, the one inferior to the other; they are entitled to be treated as on an equality, and it must rest with the judgment to estimate their relative fitness for use in each particular case.

To enumerate these different manners which may spring from the particular nature of an Army, of a country, or of circumstances, is not our object here; the influence of these things generally we have already noticed.

We acknowledge, therefore, that in this chapter we are unable to give any maxims, rules, or methods, because history does not furnish the means; and on the contrary, at almost every moment, we there meet with peculiarities such as are often quite inexplicable, and often also surprise us by their singularity. But it is not on that account unprofitable to study history in connection with this subject also. Where neither system nor any dogmatic apparatus can be found, there may still be truth, and this truth will then, in most cases, only be discovered by a practised judgment and the tact of long experience. Therefore, even if history does not here furnish any formula, we may be certain that here as well as everywhere else, it will give us *exercise for the judgment.*

We shall only set up one comprehensive general principle, or rather we shall reproduce, and present to view more vividly, in the form of a separate principle, the natural presupposition of all that has now been said.

All the means which have been here set forth have only a *relative* value; they are all placed under the legal ban of a certain disability on both sides; above this region a higher law prevails, and there is a totally different world of phenomena. The General must never forget this; he must never move in imaginary security within the narrower sphere, as if he were in an *absolute* medium; never look upon the means which he employs here as the *necessary* or as the *only means, and still adhere to them, even when he himself already trembles at their insufficiency.*

From the point of view at which we have here placed ourselves, such an error may appear to be almost impossible; but it is not impossible in the real world, because there things do not appear in such sharp contrast.

We must just again remind our readers that, for the sake of giving clearness, distinctness, and force to our ideas, we have always taken as the subject of our consideration only the complete antithesis, that is the two extremes of the question, but that the concrete case in War generally lies between these two extremes, and is only influenced by either of these extremes according to the degree in which it approaches nearer towards it.

Therefore, quite commonly, everything depends on the General making up his own mind before all things as to whether his adversary has the inclination and the means of outbidding him by the use of greater and more decisive measures. As soon as he has reason to apprehend this, he must give up small measures intended to ward off small disadvantages; and the course which remains for him then is to put himself in a better situation, by a voluntary sacrifice, in order to make himself equal to a greater solution. In other words, the first requisite is that the General should take the right scale in laying out his work.

In order to give these ideas still more distinctness through the help of real experience, we shall briefly notice a string of cases in which, according to our opinion, a false criterion was made use of, that is, in which one of the Generals in the calculation of his operations very much underestimated the decisive action intended by his adversary. We begin with the opening of the campaign of 1757, in which the Austrians showed by the disposition of their forces that they had not counted upon so thorough an offensive as that adopted by Frederick the Great; even the delay of Piccolomini's Corps on the Silesian frontier while Duke Charles of Lorraine was in danger of having to surrender with his whole Army, is a similar case of complete misconception of the situation.

In 1758, the French were in the first place completely taken in as to the effects of the convention of Kloster Seeven (a fact, certainly, with which we have nothing to do here), and two months afterwards they were completely mistaken in their judgment of what their opponent might undertake, which, very shortly after, cost them the country between the Weser and the Rhine. That Frederick the Great, in 1759, at Maxen, and in 1760, at Landshut, completely misjudged his enemies in not supposing them capable of such decisive measures has been already mentioned.

But in all history we can hardly find a greater error in the criterion than that in 1792. It was then imagined possible to turn the tide in a national War by a moderate sized auxiliary Army, which brought down on those who attempted it the enormous weight of the whole French people, at that time completely unhinged by political fanaticism. We only call this error a great one because it has proved so since, and not because it would have been easy to avoid it. As far as regards the conduct of the War itself, it cannot be denied that the foundation of all the disastrous years which followed was laid in the campaign of 1794. On the side of the Allies in that campaign, even the powerful nature of the enemy's system of attack was quite misunderstood, by opposing to it a pitiful system of extended positions and strategic manœuvres; and further in the want of unanimity between Prussia and Austria politically, and the foolish abandonment of Belgium and the Netherlands, we may also see how little presentiment the Cabinets of that day had of the force of the torrent which had just broken loose. In the year 1796, the partial acts of resistance offered at Montenotte, Lodi, &c., &c., show sufficiently how little the Austrians understood the main point when confronted by a Buonaparte.

In the year 1800 it was not by the direct effect of the surprise, but by the false view which Melas took of the possible consequences of this surprise, that his catastrophe was brought about.

Ulm, in the year 1805, was the last knot of a loose network of scientific but extremely feeble strategic combinations, good enough to stop a Daun or a Lascy but not a Buonaparte, the Revolution's Emperor.

The indecision and embarrassment of the Prussians in 1806, proceeded from antiquated, pitiful, impracticable views and measures being mixed up with some lucid ideas and a true feeling of the immense importance of the moment. If there had been a distinct consciousness and a complete appreciation of the position of the country, how could they have left 30,000 men in Prussia, and then entertained the idea of forming a special theatre of War in Westphalia, and of gaining any results from a trivial offensive such as that for which Rüchel's and the Weimar corps were intended? and how could they have talked of danger to magazines and loss of this or that strip of territory in the last moments left for deliberation?

Even in 1812, in that grandest of all campaigns, there was no want at first of unsound purposes proceeding from the use of an erroneous standard Scale. In the headquarters at Wilna there was a party of men of high mark who insisted on a battle on the frontier, in order that no hostile foot should tread on Russian ground with impunity. That this battle on the frontier *might* be lost, nay, that it *would* be lost, these men certainly admitted; for although they did not know that there would be 300,000 French to meet 80,000 Russians, still they knew that the enemy was considerably superior in numbers. The chief error was in the value which they ascribed to this battle; they thought it would be a lost battle, like many other lost battles, whereas it may with certainty be asserted that this great battle on the frontier would have produced a succession of events completely different to those which actually took place. Even the camp at Drissa was a measure at the root of which they lay a completely erroneous standard with regard to the enemy. If the Russian Army had

been obliged to remain there they would have been completely isolated and cut off from every quarter, and then the French Army would not have been at a loss for means to compel the Russians to lay down their arms. The designer of that camp never thought of power and will on such a scale as that.

But even Buonaparte sometimes used a false standard. After the armistice of 1813 he thought to hold in check the subordinate Armies of the Allies under Blücher and the Crown Prince of Sweden by forces which were certainly not able to offer any effectual resistance, but which might impose sufficiently on the cautious to prevent their risking anything, as had so often been done in preceding Wars. He did not reflect sufficiently on the reaction proceeding from the deep-rooted resentment with which both Blücher and Bulow were animated, and from the imminent danger in which they were placed.

In general, he underestimated the enterprising spirit of old Blücher. At Leipsic Blücher alone wrested from him the victory; at Laon Blücher might have entirely ruined him, and if he did not do so the cause lay in circumstances completely out of the calculation of Buonaparte;* lastly, at Belle-Alliance, the penalty of this mistake reached him like a thunderbolt.

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[*]This definition has been rendered obsolete by the enormous increase in the numbers of armed men available. An Army nowadays consists of the greatest number of Army Corps which can be efficiently directed by a particular general, and several may act in the same Theatre of War.—Ed.

[*]And were beaten accordingly at the Katzbach, Gross Beeren. Dennewitz, 1813.—Ed.

[*]Leuthen, 5th Dec. 1757.

[*]Fifth Chap. ?—Tr.

[*]All these figures are taken from Chambray. Compare vol. vii., 2nd edition, § 80, ff.

[*]Eighth Chap. ?—Tr.

[*]From Berlin to the Vistula they suffered terribly, and the operations about Pultusk, 1806, broke down from want of provisions.—Ed.

[*]The Civil War in America, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877, the Manchurian Campaign 1904, are striking cases in illustration of this point.—Ed.

[*]*e.g.* the War in South Africa 1900.—Ed.

[*]It was a neglect to realise this principle, which led to the employment of raids by the Confederates in 1862 and cost them the loss of the battle of Gettysburg.—Ed.

[†]This refers especially to events in the Russian Campaign 1812, and to Napoleon's defeat of the Bavarians at Hanau, 1813.

[*]Compare the course of our South African Campaign 1899-1901.—Ed.

[*]This refers to the ideas current in Prussia before Jena, of which Massenbach was the chief exponent. They retained this influence in the Austrian Army till the close of the Great Wars, and this paragraph is particularly directed against von Schwarzenberg, Commander-in-Chief of the Austrian Army, 1814.

[*]When in 1814 Schwartzenberg urged upon Blücher the advantages resulting from the occupation of the Plateau of Langres—the watershed of France—Blücher replied that all he could see in it was the fact that if he p . . ss . . d on it, some of his water would go into the Mediterranean and some into the Atlantic.—Ed.

[*]This is positive proof that Clausewitz had not realised the central principle of Napoleon's "Manœuvre pour la battailles" in which the engagement of the advance guard not only reconnoitred but held the enemy's will-power.—Ed.

[*]Both in the American Civil War and in the campaigns against the Boers this whole cycle of extension over extension and penetration was run through in a couple of years.

[*]This is exactly what Napoleon did not do either at Jena or Friedland. By threatening an important point he compelled his adversary to interpose to protect it.—Ed.

[*]Nowadays the fact that the defender in his own country has control over his railways may add enormously to his power. Thus in England it would be possible to transfer 200,000 men in twenty-four hours from Scotland to the South or *vice versâ* with ease.—Ed.

[*]"Landwehr" means literally "landguard," and consists essentially of all men who have passed through the ranks of the Army and its Reserve, and are still under forty-five years of age.—Ed.

[*]It must be remembered that Clausewitz is here writing only of Strategy, and in 1830 or thereabouts. His experience also was largely with war trained troops not easily susceptible to attacks of nerves. With modern peace trained Armies within the influence of the daily press, to remain awaiting an attack is almost to court disaster. The wildest rumours circulate, and presently scouts and sentries see Armies behind every bush and Boers behind every kopje. For instances see Verdy du Vernois, "Ereignise auf die Grenze 1870-71." This largely discounts the value of the security of railways and telegraphs within the defenders' territory.—Ed.

[*]Philippsburg was the pattern of a badly-placed fortress; it resembled a fool standing with his nose close to a wall.

[1]They did reappear, however, in the Civil War in America, in Bulgaria, in South Africa and in Manchuria.

[*]As it is conceived that the words "*ebenen*" and "*gebirgigen*" in this passage in the original have by some means become transposed, their equivalents—*level* and *mountainous*—are here placed in the order in which it is presumed the author intended the words to stand.—Tr.

[*]During the critical day of Laon, Blücher was confined to a dark room by ophthalmia. *Vide* Müffling's *Diary*.—Ed.