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SPECIAL CAMPAIGN SERIES. No. 1.

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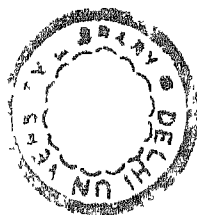
A Strategical Sketch

BY

LIEUT.-COLONEL SISSON C. PRATT

Late R.A.

WITH TEN SKETCHES AND MAPS



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THE "Special Campaign" Series deals with the history of war in its technical aspect, and the text of each volume is interspersed with strategical and tactical comments and illustrated by numerous sketches. A description of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877 is in course of preparation, and subsequent volumes will deal with those campaigns of the nineteenth century that present features of exceptional military interest. It is hoped that this series will not only be useful for examination purposes but may form the nucleus of an interesting library for the military student.

PREFACE

STRATEGY is a term of wide significance. It is applied to the plans, combinations and movements in war whereby the probability of success is increased, the effect of victory enhanced and the results of defeat minimized. It embraces the art of the general in conducting operations on the theatre of war, and the methods by which he seeks to bring the enemy to battle. In warfare between the armed nations of Europe but little scope is afforded for the brilliant combinations that marked the era of Napoleon. The existence of telegraphic communication eliminates to a great extent the chance of surprise, while the movements of great bodies of troops are restricted by their dependence on railway systems. Sedan was the result of a strategy more methodical than that which led to Jena. Foresight, calculation and sound judgment have to a great extent taken the place of genius, and success depends more on the mechanical working of the war machine than on the personal influence of any one leader.

It was not without cause that Stoffel warned his Government to "beware of the Prussian Staff" and the manner in which the German armies were organized,

supplied and led by the pupils of Moltke is a study replete with interest. In addition to its strategic lessons, the campaign of 1870 marks a distinct era in tactical progress; and on the experiences of the war is founded the theory of the modern combat. The literature of the campaign can only be studied by a few; and the following narrative may be of service to officers who have neither the time nor the opportunity to make use of a more detailed account.

June, 1904.

S. C. P.

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CHAPTER I
THE WAR OF 1870

CHAPTER I

THE WAR OF 1870

The Cause of the War—The Prussian Military System—Terms of Service—Mobilization—The French Military System—Mobilization—Morale of the Armies—Armament and Tactics—The Theatre of War—Rivers—The Vosges—Alsace and Lorraine—Road System—French Railway System—German Railway System—Influence of Railways on Operations.

Cause of
War To review the political causes of the war of 1870, and sketch the policy which placed Prussia in the position of leader of the German race would entail a study of Continental politics from the commencement of the century. By the dissolution of the Bund in 1866, and the formation of the North German Confederation, she became invested with military supremacy, and a popular war with a foreign power was all that was necessary to re-establish the ancient German Empire and secure the long desired unity of the German peoples. In France, on the other hand, the growing power of her ancient enemy, the astounding successes of the six weeks' war, and the unsuccessful attempts to obtain a rectification of the Rhine frontier had aroused a feeling of bitter hostility. France alone was determinedly opposed to a German Empire; Russia was open to an arrangement; Austria was too enfeebled by the Sadowa Campaign to interfere, and

England had notoriously withdrawn herself from the complications of Continental politics. The pretensions of the two great rivals had to be decided on the battlefield, and the immediate cause of rupture is a matter of little importance. A diplomatic quarrel arising from the offer of the Spanish throne to the Prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen afforded a plausible pretext for war, which was formally declared by the French Government on July 19, 1870.

From the first no thought crossed the minds of the French people but that of an undisputed march to the Rhine and a series of victories on German soil. The value of the great military system organized by Prussia was not appreciated, and the chief factors that led to the overthrow of Austria at Königgratz were ignored. In no other campaign have the preparations made in peace so largely influenced the outcome of war. It is necessary, therefore, to study the causes which enabled the German forces to humble in a few weeks a great military nation which, while holding Napoleonic traditions had lost the Napoleonic vigour, leadership and skill.

Prussian Military System	The present military system was originated by Scharnhorst, in 1807, after the Treaty of Tilsit, which bound Prussia not to keep more than 42,000 men under arms. By calling her able-bodied population into the field she was enabled in 1814 to regain the position she lost at Jena, but in order to claim co-equal rank with the other great military powers she has since been forced to continue what is virtually tantamount to universal conscription in order to solve the difficult problem of producing a
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THE WAR OF 1870

maximum of military power from a comparatively small country with poor pecuniary resources. The Prussian organization of 1861 was extended to the North German States after the war of 1866, and with slight modifications was adopted in the armies brought into the field in 1870 by the German Confederation. The main principles of the system may be summarized as follows :—

Compulsory service with liberal exemptions. Every able-bodied German of the age of twenty might be called on to serve and no substitution was permitted. The number of recruits annually required (100,000 in 1870) formed but a small proportion of those who came of age, and the remainder, according to circumstances, obtained either complete or partial exemption.

Short service with large reserves. Enlisting for a short period, such as three years, had the advantage of rapidly passing a large portion of the manhood through a military course, and filled the country with men who could be recalled to the colours in time of emergency.

Retention of war cadres in time of peace. By keeping the framework of the army complete, the permanent staff and the corps of officers were able at once to deal with the large influx of men that joined the ranks in time of war.

Localization of army units. Each army corps was allotted to a province, while the whole country was divided into districts and parishes which served as a basis for the recruiting of the regular army and the mobilization of the reserves. In every village there was a conspicuous notice as to its place in the military organization. Ex. Dorf.—Kronberg. Kreis.—Taunus.

Bezirk.—Frankfort. 86th Nassau-Landwehr regiment. 1st Battalion. 3rd Kompanie.

The army in peace time was subdivided
Terms of Service into four classes :—

The standing army of soldiers actually in the ranks, who served nominally for *three years*.

The Reserve composed of men who had completed their army service but were liable on mobilization to be recalled to the colours during a further period of *four years*, and thus raise the numbers of the army from a peace to a war strength.

The Landwehr consisting of those who had finished both their army and reserve service and were liable for a further period of *five years*, to be embodied as a supplementary force in second line.

The Ersatz reserve of men who had escaped conscription, or who were temporarily exempted from service. These untrained men escaped all military duties in time of peace, but were liable to be drafted into depôts in time of war.

Liability to army service lasted twelve years, and in addition to the force that could thus be raised, every able-bodied man from the age of seventeen to forty-two belonged to the *Landsturm* or *levée en masse*, which could only be called out in case of invasion of the country.

In addition to the exemptions obtained by men of the Ersatz reserve, the hardships of conscription were alleviated by allowing the wealthier and better educated classes to become one year or three year volunteers under certain defined conditions.

The efficiency of the combatant arms was ensured by the constant practice in time of peace of all that is neces-

sary in war. The regular forces took part in annual field manœuvres of a practical type, while the men in the reserves were occasionally called out in order that they should not forget what they had learnt.

Mobiliza- The process of rapidly raising an army
tion from a peace to a war footing demanded a carefully-arranged plan based on an effective decentralization of authority. The address of each man in the reserve and Landwehr was registered, and at the order to mobilize he was required at once, under heavy penalties, to present himself at the nearest military centre for the purpose of taking his place in the ranks. Every civilian knew exactly the position he would have to fill if suddenly called upon. By maintaining an efficient organization at all the military centres, it was apparent that an order to mobilize could be rapidly passed on from the headquarters at Berlin through all the several grades of territorial divisions till it finally reached every able-bodied man liable for service in the country. At each of the local centres, stores of clothing, equipment and materiel were kept ready for issue. Equally complete arrangements with regard to the mustering of horses, the formation of trains, and the collection of supplies, combined with a detailed transit organization, enabled each army corps to be assembled completely armed and equipped within a few days after instructions had been telegraphed throughout the country. As a result of this systematic arrangement, the army of the North German Confederation, combined with those of the affiliated States, was enabled to reach the gigantic total of 1,180,000 men within a fortnight after the outbreak of hostilities.

French Military System In the French army, the majority of the combatants were enlisted for seven years under the recruiting law of 1832. The annual contingent of recruits was large, and those not required in the ranks were sent away on furlough with a liability to be called out for seven years. Exemption was at first possible by *payment*, a course afterwards modified by the system of *substitution*. The effect of having a reserve without organization and with little training was evident in 1859, when, out of a nominal strength of 400,000 men, the Emperor was with difficulty able to bring 140,000 into the field. As early as 1861 measures were taken to pass a larger portion of the reserve through the army, to train the remainder, and thus raise the war strength to some 600,000 men. The war of 1866 seemed to show that even this force was insufficient, and it was determined to raise the numbers to 800,000. To obtain this force without calling largely on the budget it was necessary to shorten the periods of service and increase the trained reserves. By the recruiting regulations of 1868 the term of service was reduced to five years in the regular army, followed by four years in the reserve. In second line were the *gardes mobiles*, who were destined for garrisons and work in rear of the army.

Owing to the law of 1868 not having time to come into operation the French reserves were comparatively small in numbers, and more than half of them were untrained. The *gardes mobiles* were practically civilians in uniform with no working organization, and compared unfavourably with either Landwehr or Landsturm:

Mobiliza-
tion Considerable difficulties lay in the path of rapid mobilization. The army units were not *localized*, and a reservist was sent first to the *depôt* companies, however distant they might be, to receive his equipment, and then hurried back to his regiment, which in many cases was close to his home. There was (with a few exceptions) no peace organization of the higher tactical units, and army corps and divisions were assembled with a staff and troops unaccustomed to work together. The *depôts* of stores were large and few in number, and therefore unable, without disorder, to meet the sudden demands made on them. The whole system was one of *over-centralization*. Every matter of petty detail had to be referred to the Paris War Office, and the machinery, capable of good work in the time of peace, was utterly unable to cope with the exigencies of war. The standing army had to be pushed as it stood to the frontier and there organized for command, while the reservists joined their battalions as best they could.

The *Intendance* was a purely localized body, and was quite unequal to the sudden strain of provisioning troops in rapid movement, and out of the sphere of the peace arrangements for supply. The French army, in fact, had to be mobilized on the frontier, while the Germans, assembled with rapidity in their home districts, moved forward to the scene of war a compact and well-equipped force. To a system of decentralization of large localized units was opposed an excessively concentrated machinery working a mass of petty isolated elements.

The actual number of troops available for field service when war broke out was 567,000, and a deduction of the

Algerian troops, garrisons and dépôts leaves only some 330,000 men, with no trained reserves in second line. Against these, Germany could bring more than a million well drilled soldiers, without calling on the Ersatz reserve or the Landsturm.

Morale In addition to numerical inferiority the general condition of the French army was by no means satisfactory. The general officers had no experience in the leading of large bodies of troops, the staff was insufficiently educated, the regimental officers had not adequate authority over their men, the mass of the soldiery was contaminated by the evils of substitution, and the bonds of discipline were relaxed, owing to the enervating effects of the Algerian and Mexican campaigns, and the pernicious spread of democratic principles among all ranks. The French regimental officers were of two distinct types: those who rose from the ranks and seldom became field officers, and those of higher education from the military schools, who were apt to leave the details of regimental work to their less fortunate comrades. In Germany there was no such distinction, and officers of good social status had to be well educated and to pass severe professional tests to obtain advancement. For the Staff in both armies the ablest men were selected, but entrance to the French Staff Corps was gained by examination and interest, and officers were engrossed by theoretical studies to the detriment of practical routine. The German Staff, on the other hand, was the best in Europe and, in addition to a sound scientific training, had the intimate acquaintance with staff and regimental duties that can only be acquired from constant practice in field manoeuvres.

Armament and Tactics For the first time the full power of the breechloading rifle in warfare was about to be tested. The German infantry was armed with the needle gun, which had rendered such great service in the field of Sadowa. Though an excellent and durable weapon, it had but little effect at distances longer than 600 mètres. Opposed to it was the French chassepôt sighted to 1,200 mètres ; a rifle far superior in rapidity of fire, range, and penetration. The musketry training of the German, however, was superior to that of his opponent. The French expected great results from the long-range fire of masses of men ; while the Prussians laid stress on the accurate shooting of the individual at short ranges.

The German artillery was armed with steel breech-loading guns, firing percussion shell of about nine and fifteen pounds weight. The French still adhered to the muzzle-loading system, and their guns fired shell of somewhat similar weight, with both time and percussion fuses. A few shrapnel were also used, but the time fuses in general were so defective that but little advantage was gained by their employment. In matériel the Prussian artillery had by far the best of it ; but their opponents hoped to more than make up for the deficiency by the employment of the far-famed mitrailleuse. In positions where it was possible to conceal them from shell fire, they on more than one occasion did great execution ; but when used as field guns they were, from their short range, utterly unable to cope with the enemy's artillery.

It was more, however, by tactics than by armament that the fighting capabilities of the two armies had to

be tested. The lessons of the war of 1866 had been only partially learnt by the Germans, and totally unappreciated by the French. The bulk of both armies had been trained under an obsolete system, and though this was modified by drill books and instructions made just before the war, many lessons in tactics had to be learnt under fire.

The offensive was the mainspring of the Prussian system. Officers and men had been impressed with the necessity of always being, if possible, the assailant. The French had been imbued with the contrary opinion, and believed that the best course was to utilize their long range rifle on the defensive until the moment arrived when a counter-stroke could be made. Unfortunately, this idea was not suited either to the traditions or temperament of the French soldier, and the predilection for the defensive influenced disastrously the tactics of the whole campaign. Experience soon taught the Germans that formations in columns were seldom suitable for attack ; but it was difficult for the French to alter the defensive attitude to which they had been trained.

The instructions issued to the German cavalry and artillery in 1869 were the basis of their success in war. Formed in independent divisions, the cavalry took up the rôle they played in the time of Frederick and Napoleon, and, scouting far to the front and flank, were the eyes and ears of the army they covered. On the French side the duties of reconnaissance and patrolling were delegated to a few divisional squadrons, while the bulk of the cavalry was reserved for the special occasion of a charge on the battlefield. Mindful of their experience in 1866, the Prussian artillery was placed well forward

in the line of march, and was able, by coming speedily into action, to prepare, by fire, the way for the oncoming infantry. Above all, the Napoleonic maxims were followed of massing the guns, and concentrating the fire. The training and shooting of the French artillery were indifferent, and its methods of employment as antiquated as its matériel.

The theatre of war at the commencement of hostilities comprised the basins of the middle Rhine and the Moselle, a tract intersected by the mountain range of the Vosges.

The frontier line ran along the Rhine from the neutral territory of Switzerland, near Basle to Lauterbourg (106 miles), thence westward along the course of the Lauter to Saargemund (55 miles), dividing France from the Bavarian Palatinate, thence in a north-westerly direction to Sierck (35 miles), bordering the Prussian Rhenish province, and abutting finally on the neutral territories of Luxemburg and Belgium.

The Rhine varies from 200 to 500 yards in width, and is bridged by railways at Basle, Strassburg, Maxau, Mannheim, Maintz and Coblenz. In the vicinity of the chief towns are also boat-bridges of a semi-permanent type. Below Strassburg, all the main bridges were held by the Germans. The tributaries on the left bank in the vicinity of the frontier are not serious military obstacles, and flow generally in a direction from west to east.

The Moselle has a tortuous course of some 290 miles, and rising in the western Vosges first becomes difficult to cross at Toul. Between this place and Sierck there are permanent bridges at Frouard, Marbache, Dieu-

louard, Pont-à-Mousson, Corny and Ars, and further down several within the *rayon* of the fortresses of Metz and Thionville. The fords are practicable in time of drought, but the river is subject to constant floods. The average breadth of the river valley between Frouard and Metz is about 2,000 paces, and steep slopes on both sides rise above the stream from 300 to 500 feet. Below Metz the heights on the left bank recede from the stream and the valley is completely commanded from the eastern bank. The principal tributaries that have to be crossed by an army invading France are the Meurthe, the Seille, and the Saar.

The Vosges The Vosges mountains run northward from the vicinity of Belfort in a direction generally parallel to the Rhine at an average distance from it of from thirty to forty miles. On reaching the source of the Lauter, they divide into two main ridges which take a northerly and north-easterly direction.

The southern Vosges—some thirty miles wide—are densely wooded, and between Belfort and Saverne are nearly impassable for a large army. The northern portion in the vicinity of the frontier is narrower and more open, and is traversed by numerous roads. The eastern slopes of the numerous valleys are steeper than the western, and afford numerous defensive positions against attack from the direction of Germany.

Alsace and Lorraine Parallel to the Rhine extends a broad, fertile plain, intersected with woods, varying in width from fourteen to twenty-three miles. In southern Alsace the watercourses run in the same direction as the river, and the positions afforded by them are supported by the fortresses of Neu-brisach and

Schlesstadt. In northern Alsace the east and west direction of the streams, the extensive woods and the fortress of Strassburg form obstacles to any advance of an enemy from the north. The tract of country from the Lauter to Worms is hilly, and the lie of the valleys favours a defensive attitude on the part of a German force, if attacked from the westward. From the north of Worms a gently undulating country, free of forest, leads to the broad plain of the Main, of which Mainz guards the entrance.

Between the Saar and the Moselle is an open undulating terrain of which the folds lie chiefly north and south and afford good positions. Several deeply-cut river beds have to be crossed by an invader of France before the main defensive line of the Moselle is reached.

The issues across the Rhine were, with one exception, in the hands of the Germans, and could only have been taken from them by a prompt forward movement of the French. As this did not take place, the armies may be considered as concentrating in their own territory with the obstacles of the Rhine and the Vosges between them. Numerous good roads led from the frontier across the mountains towards Nancy and Metz, but the best of those in the northern Vosges were closed by the small fortresses of Bitsch, Petite Pierre, and Phalsbourg.

For the purpose of concentration near the frontier railways had to be largely used; and a slight sketch of the railway system shows the relative facilities afforded to the contending armies. The French frontier line ran from near Saarbrücken through Saargemund, Bitsch and Haguenau to Strass-

burg and Mulhouse, and connected with the German lines at Saarbrücken, Weissemburg, Kehl and Basle.

The line from Metz to Sarrgemund was fed from the branches that led through Mezieres—Thionville and Châlons—Frouard. Converging on Strassburg were lines from Châlons, viâ Frouard and Saverne, Chaumont viâ Langres and Belfort, and Dijon viâ Besançon and Belfort, while uncompleted feeders were of service between Luneville and Schlesstadt, and Nancy-Epinal and Mulhouse.

German Railway System	Through the Rhenish Provinces four main lines lead from the Rhine to the frontier: 1. Cologne-Treves-Saarlouis (unfinished to the north of Treves). 2. Bingen-Neunkirchen-Saarbrücken. 3. Neustadt-Homburg-Saarbrücken. 4. Neustadt-Weissenburg.
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Into these lines the traffic poured from nine railway systems, of which six proceeded from the north of Germany, and three from the south. One of these lines was allotted to the first army of the North German Confederation, while four lines were given to each of the two other German armies. A line of rail follows the right bank of the Rhine from Basle to Mayence, and connects the fortresses on the river. To the north of the Black Forest this is fed by lines from the interior of the country, while good road approaches are to be found in the mountainous district more south.

Influence of Railways on Plan of Operations	In a war between France and Germany it was evident that the struggle would assume gigantic proportions, and that to bring the enormous forces disposable rapidly into the field, extensive use must be made of the railway systems,
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not only for the assembly of troops but also for their effectual supply.

It will be evident that the German forces could with ease be collected on the line of the Rhine from Carlsruhe to Cologne, and that a further advance, if unopposed, would be favoured by the lines in the Palatinate. A rapid concentration on the upper Rhine was impossible, but an attack in that quarter was little to be feared as an invader would have the formidable obstacles of the river and the Black Forest to overcome, while his army would be liable to an attack in flank.

To utilize fully the French system of railways, concentration would have to be effected in two groups in the vicinity of Metz and Strassburg. Direct communication between the forces thus massed could only take place by using a line running dangerously near a hostile frontier, and any concentration would probably be made by using roads or a very circuitous route. In the case of both armies it was evident that whatever plans were adopted the lines of advance and manœuvre would coincide more or less with the lines of rail.

CHAPTER II
WEISSENBURG

CHAPTER II

WEISSENBURG

German Plan of Operations—French Plan of Operations—German Concentration—Comments—French Concentration—Commencement of Hostilities—Engagement at Saarbrücken—German Advance to Frontier—Invasion of Alsace—Combat at Weissenburg—Comments.

¹⁴¹ Plans of Operations THE Prussians, fully aware of their superiority in numbers and organization, determined from the first to anticipate any attempt of their adversaries to carry the war on to German soil. A private understanding had been come to with the South German States that assistance from Prussia for the defence of any particular locality, such as the Black Forest, was not to be reckoned on, and that South Germany would be best protected by an offensive movement into Alsace from the middle Rhine. With the utmost confidence the Governments of Bavaria, Wurtemberg, Baden and Hesse at once placed their contingents at the service of the Prussian king.

It was obvious that if the French took the initiative they would be forced, owing to the situation of the neutral territories of Luxemburg and Switzerland, either to advance into Rhenish Prussia, or cross the upper Rhine. It was realized that there would be a considerable delay in the French mobilization, though owing to

the existence of the eastern camps and garrisons a part of the Imperial Forces might be able to take the field in a very short time. To counteract a possible invasion over the upper or lower Rhine, and at the same time reserve the power of employing their numerically superior forces in an offensive effort, was the problem to be solved by the Prussian staff.

In accordance with the project of General von Moltke it was decided that the whole of the German forces should be concentrated in three armies in the Palatinate. The plan was based on the resolve to attack the enemy at once wherever found, and to utilize the undoubted superiority in numbers by keeping the armies in touch with each other. Any invasion of the Rhenish Provinces would be met by the combined German forces, whereas if the Emperor crossed the upper Rhine his line of communications and further advance would be seriously imperilled by the presence of a hostile army on his flank. With the Black Forest in front, and a German army massed at Rastadt, a *bataille rangée* in the Rhine Valley was inevitable.

To make full use of their railway system, the French would presumably be obliged to assemble in two groups at Metz and Strassburg with the Vosges separating them. In the Palatinate the Germans would stand on interior lines to masses thus formed, and be able to act against either or both at will.

In the event of a defensive policy being decided on, it was evident that Alsace would have to be evacuated, as the advance of the troops of the Confederation on both sides of the Vosges completely turned the defensive line formed by that mountain chain.

But little danger was apprehended from the initial separation of the German forces. The First Army, protected on its flank by neutral territory and in a country extremely favourable for defence, marched by road to its point of concentration. The rail transport of the Second and Third Armies ended at the Rhine, and their gradually increasing numbers would enable them to deal with any attack that was likely to be made on them.

French Plan of Operations The French Government reckoned somewhat on the old dissensions of the German races, and hoped that a rapid offensive movement might paralyze the action of the South German States. The plan of campaign projected by the Emperor was to mass 150,000 men at Metz, 100,000 at Strassburg, and 50,000 at Châlons as a reserve. The two first-mentioned bodies were to amalgamate, cross the Rhine at Maxau, force the Southern German States into neutrality, and advance towards the Main to seek a general action with the Prussian forces. To carry out this idea, it was obvious that the passage of the Rhine would have to be effected before the German armies were mobilized. Assuming this was possible, it is difficult to see how further successes were to be obtained. To overawe South Germany, and at the same time mask the Rhine fortresses, would absorb a large proportion of the invading troops. With a series of fortified cities in rear, a large entrenched camp (Maintz) on the flank, and a numerically superior army in front, the prospect of a successful advance to Berlin seemed somewhat visionary.

As soon as it was evident that war was inevitable,

each nation proceeded to prepare for the struggle. The order to mobilize the North German forces was issued on the evening of July 15, for both the line and the Landwehr simultaneously, as it was apparent that every available man would be wanted. Within ten days the local mobilizations of the army corps were completed, and transport by rail to the frontier commenced. Precise details as to the way each body of troops was to be forwarded, the respective starting points, the day and hour of departure, the duration of the journey and the places of detrainment, had been prepared long beforehand. At the close of July the whole of the forces, divided into three large armies, had formed on the Rhine and in the Palatinate beyond. The position of the forces on July 31 may be thus summarized :—

I. Army. General Steinmetz.

VII. and VIII. Corps.

3rd Cavalry Division.

50,000 Infantry.

4,800 Cavalry.

VII. Corps . . . Treves.

VIII. Corps, echeloned along Wadern road. Small detachments watching the Saar.

II. Army. Prince Frederick Charles.

III., IV., IX., X., XII., and Guard Corps.

5th and 6th Cavalry Divisions.

152,000 Infantry.

22,000 Cavalry.

III. and IV. Corps S.W. of Mainz in front line. X. at Bingen in rear of right. Guard at Mannheim in rear of left. IX. and XII. Corps in rear of centre.

III. Army. Crown Prince.

V., XI., and two Bavarian Corps. Baden and Wurtemberg Divisions.

4th Cavalry Division.

126,000 Infantry.

14,800 Cavalry.

V. and XI. Corps, and one Bavarian Division in front line Landau-Germersheim. Rest of Bavarians in second line. South Germans on right bank of river.

A few days later the I Corps and 1st Cavalry Division joined the First Army; the II Corps the Second Army and the VI Corps and 2nd Cavalry Division the Third

Army ; forming, with the addition of the 19th Infantry and four Landwehr Divisions, a total of 462,000 Infantry ; 56,800, Cavalry ; and 1,584 guns.

Comments In the middle of July the Rhenish Provinces were quite unprotected, and considerable caution was exercised in arresting the movement by rail on the banks of the Rhine. The advance beyond the river was effected by march route, and the three armies were pushed forward in a general curve, of which the First and Third armies formed the advanced points. If the French took the offensive, the First Army would have little difficulty in holding its own in the mountainous district near Trier. The Third Army was most exposed to attack, and the Second Army had to pass through the Kaiserslautern defile, through which a French advance might possibly take place. To guard against these eventualities, positions for defence were carefully prepared in advance.

French Concentration It has been pointed out that the railway system of France necessitated a primary assemblage in two main groups at Metz and Strassburg. Difficulties first arose about calling up the reserves and providing for their transport and equipment ; and the events of each day of mobilization showed the state of insufficient preparation and other evils inherent in the French system. The railways were blocked with trains of reservists unable to get forward ; the regimental and corps transport was incomplete ; horses had to be taken from the artillery to bring forward the necessary food supplies, and the actual necessities of bread and meat were in many cases not forthcoming. In addition to the failure of the field

administration, it was found that the fortresses were in a most defective condition. Around Metz, the detached forts were neither revetted nor armed ; the depôt for provisions had not been filled nor any arrangements made for standing a siege. Strassburg and the minor fortresses fared but little better ; armed with obsolete weapons and deficient in men and stores, the energies of their Commandants were taxed to the utmost.

As the field army was pushed up to the frontier after the declaration of war, the corps had to have their staffs organized and cadres filled up in close proximity to it. The defects of the centralized war office system and the inelasticity of the Intendance became at once painfully apparent. Time did not admit of combining the whole army for the proposed offensive movement, and no arrangements appear to have been made to adopt a defensive attitude. But little was known of the German concentration beyond that large masses of troops were assembling near Maintz.

The difference between the two systems of concentration is strikingly apparent. Each German army corps, completely furnished with men, horses and equipment, in its own district, was forwarded to the front ; an effective unit of the army of which it was to compose a part. The French troops, on the other hand, with incomplete trains and equipment, actually mobilized on the frontier. The German plan of operations was adapted to meet all emergencies, and every army corps leader was aware of its general tenor. No one out of the French Head Quarter Staff was made acquainted with the scheme to be carried out, and no regard was paid to the contingencies that might possibly arise.

At the close of July the French army was practically under two leaders. The right wing was east of the Vosges, under Marshal MacMahon; while the left was superintended by the Emperor personally at St. Avold. The seven corps that constituted the whole army were bivouacked in a very dispersed order, and echeloned along the whole frontier from Thionville to Strassburg. Besides these troops, there was a reserve corps at Châlons.

On July 31 the position of the several corps was as follows :—

Right Wing	{	1st Corps, Strassburg, Haguenau	47,000
		Cavalry in front	
		7th Corps, Belfort and Lyons.	
Left Wing	{	2nd Corps, Forbach	128,000
		3rd Corps, St. Avold	
		4th Corps, Boulay, Bouzonville,	
		Sierck.	
		5th Corps, Saargemund, Bitsch.	
Reserve	{	Guard, Metz.	35,000
		6th Corps, Chalons.	

925 guns and 210,000 men

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None of the corps were up to their full strength, and the influx of reserves raised the total at the beginning of August to 270,000 men.

Veiled by a thin cordon of outpost troops, the Germans formed their armies on the banks of the Rhine, and pushed forward, strong, compact, united, to the frontier; while in front of them stood detached French corps, weak in men, deficient in equipment, and swayed to and fro by contradictory orders.

Commence- The commencement of August was char-
ment of acterized by a series of daring reconnais-
Hostilities sances by small bodies of German cavalry, who succeeded in finding out that the main French army was in the neighbourhood of St. Avold,

while there were no bodies of importance in Alsace nearer than Haguenau. On the French side, the cavalry were inactive, and the greatest ignorance prevailed as to the general situation.

Engage-
ment at
Saar-
brücken

Up to August 2, there was no serious fighting on either side, but on that date the Emperor Napoleon, who had assumed command, determined to make a reconnaissance in force towards Saarbrücken, with the double object of clearing up the situation, and appeasing the impatience of the nation, which had been long waiting for the news of a victory. From lack of preparation this plan was not carried out in its entirety, but resulted in an offensive movement of the 2nd Corps, under General Frossard. As neither the First nor Second German army had yet received orders to advance to the frontier, the defence of the town was left to a few outpost troops, who made a gallant stand, but were naturally obliged to evacuate their position. The success was in no way pushed, and the corps bivouacked on the heights overlooking the town. A reconnaissance in force is usually an unsatisfactory operation, and the military demonstration was useless, as no further offensive move was made or information gained, and the French forces remained in quietude on the banks of the Saar. Even at this early stage of the operations the greatest uncertainty appeared to exist at the Imperial Head Quarters as to the military situation, and as to whether in the future an offensive or defensive strategy should be adopted.

Meanwhile the First German Army was concentrated to the south of Treves, the Second Army was pushing

forward through the Kaiserslautern defile, while the Third Army was massed near Landau, within a day's march of the frontier.

On the French side, the left wing was assembling near St. Avold, and Marshal MacMahon was on the march to northern Alsace.

As no forward movement took place from German Advance to Saarbrücken, an order was issued on the Frontier 3rd instant that the Second Army should be ready to give battle, if necessary, in front of Kaiserslautern, and that the First Army should hold itself ready to co-operate. The Third Army was at once to cross the frontier.

The line of demarcation between the advance of the First Army and that of the Second was not at first clearly marked. Owing to the large number of troops in the Second Army, a portion of them were ordered to march through St. Wendel, and a consequent order was given to the First Army to move off to its right and leave the road following the Rhine-Nahe railway for the troops of Prince Frederick Charles. The course pursued savoured of extreme caution, it being evidently intended that the armies should be in a position to give mutual assistance in case of being attacked.

To carry out this idea it was necessary for the First Army to temporarily halt to allow the Second Army to come up into line. General Steinmetz, however, somewhat exceeded his instructions, and not only moved to his right, but also pushed towards the frontier. As a result the advance guards of the two armies simultaneously moved on Saarbrücken and came in conflict with the corps of Frossard on the 6th instant.

The Third Army had the arduous task of passing over the mountain roads of the lower Vosges, and would eventually have to force the defiles of the main range. With Paris as an objective, it had evidently the longest distance to traverse, and the most difficult country to get over. To allow sufficient time for this work, the forces of the Crown Prince, without waiting for their trains, were put in motion on August 4, and marched to the Lauter.

In advancing northwards, Marshal MacMahon had pushed forward two divisions under Generals Ducrot and Douay to cover the ultimate concentration of the 1st and 7th Corps. On August 4 the French troops were thus disposed :—

1st Corps	{	2nd Division (Donay)	Weissenburg.
		1st Division (Ducrot)	On the march close to Lembach
	{	3rd Division (Raoul)	Reichshoffen
		4th Division (Lartigue)	Haguenau.
7th Corps	{	1 Division	Colmar
		Cavalry Divisions	Sulz and Brumath

The Third Army, consisting of 128 battalions, 102 squadrons, and 80 batteries, marched on a broad front to cross the frontier between Weissenburg and Lauterburg. The 4th Bavarian division, with flanking parties on its right, formed the advanced guard on the road to Weissenburg, and was followed by the rest of the Bavarians. The V and XI Corps, preceded by advanced guards, marched through the Bienwald, more to the eastward, while the combined Wurtemberg and Baden divisions, under Werder, moved on the left flank to Lauterburg.

General Douay, with a weak division of infantry and a cavalry brigade, had arrived at Weissenburg on the evening of August 3, and taking up a position on the heights south of the town detached two battalions for the defence of the old fortress. The guns of the Bavarian advanced guard surprised the French in their bivouacs by shelling the town shortly after eight o'clock. But little effect, however, was produced until the heads of the columns of the V and XI Corps appeared on the scene some three hours later. The town was speedily stormed and the position on the hills carried by an enveloping attack of overwhelming numbers. After a most gallant resistance, Douay himself was killed, and the main body of the French succeeded in making good their retreat to the neighbourhood of Woerth.

Comments The baneful effect of the undue dissemination of forces is here painfully exemplified. To allow a weak division of the 1st Corps to be crushed by the whole Third German Army was undoubtedly a mistake: If the German forces were making an inroad into Alsace, it was clear that 5,000 men could not stop them; if, on the other hand, the French troops were merely an outpost force, their rôle should have been more clearly pointed out to them. Marshal MacMahon pleads that the divisions were under the command of Ducrot, and that his orders were especially to guard the mountain road over the Col du Pigeonnier, on the left of the position taken up, so that the troops could retire with ease on the 1st division at Lembach. General Ducrot, on the other hand, states that Douay exceeded his instructions and that the occupation of Weissenburg

was unnecessary. It appears undoubted that the Marshal received notice of the impending attack on the night of August 3, that he was informed of the situation by telegraph on the 4th, and that as early as 10.30 that morning he informed Douay of his intention of coming to Weissenburg himself. General Ducrot undoubtedly suggested the protection of the provision stores at Weissenburg, and the details of the occupation were known and approved of by the Marshal. It seems clear that the French were not prepared for more than a reconnaissance in force, and that Douay cannot be blamed for the disaster that occurred. The entire absence of reconnoitring precautions is noticeable as showing the defective training of the French cavalry, while the fact that all touch of the retiring enemy was lost does not conduce to the credit of the mounted troops of the victors.

CHAPTER III

WOERTH

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WOERTH

Concentration of French—Advance of III Army—Occupation of Position at Woerth—Reconnaissance by Germans—Attack of Advanced Guards—Position at Noon—Advance of V Corps—Advance of XI Corps—Counter Attacks—Capture of the Niederwald—Capture of Froeschweiler—The Retreat—Comments

Concentra- THE invasion of Alsace by the Third Army, tion of and the presence of strong German forces French north of Saarbrucken, made it impossible for the French to carry out their original plan of operations. It was clearly impossible for the Emperor to advance the left wing of his army through the Vosges, with two German armies on his flank. A concentration of all the available forces behind the mountains was the best course to pursue, but, owing to the scattered disposition of the corps, it would require some days to carry it out. Moreover, the retirement westward of the right wing would necessitate the abandonment of Alsace—a course likely to be received with little favour by the turbulent spirits in the capital. The command of MacMahon was increased by the addition of the 5th Corps, and orders were given for a concentration at Woerth on the eastern slopes of the Vosges. The passes through the mountains would thus be covered, and an opportunity afforded of

taking the offensive against the German flank if the Third Army were to pursue a southerly course.

It was apparently the intention of the Marshal to take the offensive on August 7, and the troops were formed up near Woerth, and bivouacked in suitable formations. On the morning of the 6th the whole of the 1st Corps and one division of the 7th were assembled on the heights overlooking the Sauer, but of the 5th Corps one division only had started from Bitsch.

On the evening of August 4 all contact with the enemy was lost, and the next day the Third Army, preceded by cavalry, advanced by diverging roads in the directions of Reichshoffen and Haguenau, and prepared to give battle either to the west or to the south. To carry out this idea, the

II Bavarian Corps moved on the Bitsch road to Lembach	} facing westward.
V Corps to Preuschoorf	
XI Corps to Sulz in direction of Hague- nau, Werder's Corps on its left	} facing south.
I Bavarian Corps in reserve.	

It became evident, on the evening of the 5th, that the French were in force near Woerth, and arrangements were made to support the V Corps, which was nearest to the enemy's position. The XI and Werder's Corps were moved up on its left, while the I Bavarian Corps closed up in rear.

The II Bavarian Corps, which was on the right, was to remain stationary unless the V Corps was attacked; in which case it was to move a division to its assistance. Neither the German nor French leaders contemplated or wished for a collision before the following day.

The French force occupied the high ground on the right bank of the Sauer, from Froschwiller to near Eberbach. The left wing was at first refused, resting on the Grosswald, but was afterwards pushed forward to Neuweiler.

Three divisions of the 1st Corps were in front line with one in reserve. A division of the 7th Corps was near Eberbach, in rear of the right, and a division of the 5th Corps was on the way to the field from Bitsch. Michel's cavalry brigade was posted behind the right flank, while two other brigades were on open ground in rear of the centre. The artillery was dispersed along the line, which had been slightly strengthened by the construction of two small earthworks and a shelter trench.

Reconnaissance by Germans About 7 a.m. on August 6 an attack was made on the bridge at Woerth by an outpost force of the V Corps, which had the effect of drawing fire from the French artillery, and revealing the fact that the enemy was in force.

Hearing the firing, the 4th Bavarian division, in accordance with the tenor of its orders, moved forward through Langensulzbach, and succeeded, with little difficulty, in gaining the boundary of the wood that faced the French left. Checked by the fire from the main position, they were unable to advance, and, owing to a misconceived verbal order, retired out of action at 11 a.m.

The noise of the firing on their right had, however, started the V Corps in an action against the French centre, and the whole of their artillery formed line on the opposite heights in conjunction with the batteries of the advanced guard of the XI Corps further south.

Covered by the fire of their massed artillery (108 guns), two simultaneous infantry attacks were ordered.

Attack of The advanced guard brigade of the V
Advanced Corps was sent against Woerth. Crossing
Guards the river by wading, and using extemporized
bridges, they succeeded in gaining some distance up the
heights, but were driven back to the village of Woerth
and the Haguenau road.

The infantry of the XI Corps advanced guard crossed the Sauer at Spachbach and advanced into the Niederwald, but were driven back in confusion across the river.

At mid-day a portion of three corps had
Position at Noon been engaged with little success. The instructions of the Crown Prince to break off the action, which had in the first instance been delivered to the V Corps, had been forwarded to the Bavarian division and caused their premature withdrawal from the field. On account of the disastrous moral effect of retiring the troops across the Sauer, and in consideration of the French guns being partially silenced, General v. Kirchbach decided that the action must continue. He sent requests to the corps on his flanks to co-operate, and reported the state of affairs to the Crown Prince, who endorsed his action and issued orders to ensure more unity in the hitherto desultory combat.

Advance of The position of the troops across the Sauer
V Corps was critical; they were accordingly reinforced, first by one and then by a second division of the V Corps. Covered by skirmishers, the company columns pushed vigorously up the heights, and after very heavy losses succeeded in gaining the

edge of the plateau: a position they were unable to advance from, and held with difficulty. As the fire of the guns was now masked, seven batteries were sent across the stream at Woerth with orders to come into action as soon as the advance of the flanking corps permitted.

The XI Corps having arrived at Gunstett at noon, orders were given to the leading division to advance against the right flank of the French position.

Five battalions crossed the Sauer at Spachbach, drove the French skirmishers back into the Niederwald, and gained its northern edge, where the advance was brought to a standstill by the heavy fire from a copse beyond it.

Five and a quarter battalions advanced from the Brück Mill towards Eberbach, and succeeded in turning the defenders out of the Albrechtshauserhof. Six and a quarter battalions moved from Gunstett over open ground under heavy artillery fire, and captured Morsbronn, which was weakly held, at the first rush.

By 1 p.m. the troops of the XI Corps had succeeded in their three unconnected attacks, and a wheel to the right was necessary to gain complete possession of the Niederwald and outflank the main position.

As the flanking detachment advanced northwards from Morsbronn they were charged by Michel's cavalry brigade. The ground had not been reconnoitred, and being extremely unfavourable for mounted troops, the squadrons were nearly annihilated by the fire of the infantry, who received the attack in the formations in which they stood.

At about the same time strong bodies of French

infantry drove back the occupants of the Albrechts-hauserhof, but were checked by the fire of the artillery on the Gunstett hill. Reinforced by fresh battalions, the Germans again advanced and captured the buildings, and in conjunction with the Morsbronn group forced the French to abandon the southern edge of the Niederwald and the village of Eberbach.

Capture of the Niederwald The German infantry of the XI Corps had now all crossed the Sauer, and proceeded to fight its way step by step through the extensive wood till it gained the northern edge, which was effectually played on by the French artillery. The border was for a time lost by a counter-attack, but soon regained.

Eight batteries of corps artillery were now brought up in support and Elsasshausen set in flames. A general advance was ordered, and the village stormed by a converging advance of the infantry of the XI Corps and those of the V Corps, with which now connection was established.

Counter-attacks The French were now retreating in all quarters of the field. A respite for the fugitives was necessary and time had to be gained. While a rear guard was being formed, some 1,500 Turkos in single line charged the wearied and disordered infantry, and the Germans, unable to withstand the charge, fled to the Niederwald. The flanking fire of artillery and fresh infantry brought the counter-attack to a stand, and a final but ineffective effort was made to check the assailant by the advance of eight batteries to short range followed by the charge of Bonnemain's Cuirassiers.

Capture of By 3 p.m. the XI and V Corps had succeeded in driving in the right wing and forcing back the French troops to their last stronghold. Seven batteries of the V Corps came into position on the plateau while the Bavarians were advancing on the right. The arrival of a Wurtemberg brigade on the left, and fresh Bavarian troops on the right gave an impulse to the attack, and the whole German force pressed forward in a gradually narrowing ring to Froschwiller, where a short and desperate resistance terminated the battle.

The Retreat The retreat of the beaten troops was conducted in great disorder towards Reichshoffen and Niederbronn. At the Falkenstein stream in rear of the position some of De Failly's troops made a brief stand, but the disorganization of the defeated army was so great that it proved of little service and the bulk of the fugitives fled unhaltingly towards Saverne and Luneville.

Owing to the fact that the battle took place before the troops on either side were in position, the actual numbers engaged were proportionately small. The French occupied the position with 32,000 infantry, 4,850 cavalry, 107 field guns and 24 mitrailleuses. The number of Germans actually engaged were 71,000 infantry, 4,280 cavalry and 231 guns. The victory of the Third Army cost them 481 officers and 10,000 men, while the French losses in killed and wounded may be estimated at about 8,000.

Comments The position at Woerth, though strong, had many defects. The heights, rising steeply from the valley and covered for the most part by vine-

yards and gardens, commanded by fire the open slopes of the opposite range of hills and the low lying meadows of the valley. Though the Germans suffered from an exposed advance, the very openness of the ground enabled them to gain a great initial advantage by massing their artillery. The very steepness of the eastern slope was again in favour of the assailants, who were at many points covered from fire, while the artillery played over their heads. The extensive woods on the left flank favoured the unseen advance of the attack, while the unoccupied low-lying ground near Morsbronn lay open for an enveloping movement.

The Niederwald was a source of weakness, as its interior defence was neglected, and, when once gained, it served as a receptacle in which the XI Corps could collect until strong enough to emerge from the northern side. The main line of defence was on the plateau, but the brunt of the fighting appears to have been done in front of the position, and when its neighbourhood was reached the moral effect of a defeat had already been felt. From the lie of the ground, it is evident that no counter-stroke in force was possible as long as the assailants' artillery was in action.

On the German side three army corps became engaged without any unity of action and without sufficient force to produce an adequate result. To extricate the compromised troops the Third Army had to fight an unpremeditated battle. An instance, on the other hand, is afforded of the self-reliance in taking responsibility which is characteristic of the German generals in this war. At the time the XI Corps was hardly pressed at Elsasshausen, the Wurtemberg general, regardless

of his orders to march on Reichshoffen, hurried to the threatened points, and his opportune assistance was of great value. A consideration of the losses shows that the brunt of the fighting fell to the share of the V and XI Corps. Of these, one was severely compromised from the first, and had to call up its last reserves. That the isolated action of the three groups in which the XI Corps mainly fought was not more severely punished is a matter for surprise. The formation of infantry in a battle in which the opponents were armed with breech-loading weapons is worthy of note. The tenor of the Prussian regulations, tempered by a license permitted on account of the experience of 1866, was to the effect that the first line should be composed of company columns with their skirmishers, and that the supports should be in battalion or half-battalion columns. Now in the attack of the V Corps there was no attempt to work in larger bodies than company columns, and those in front line were completely dissolved into skirmishers. The XI Corps, on the other hand, in closed formations of company and half-battalion columns, succeeded in crossing the open ground east of Morsbronn, though exposed to artillery fire.

The massed artillery of the Germans had little difficulty in putting out of action the isolated groups of French batteries ; but the advance of artillery to close quarters took place when the enemy was virtually beaten. The possibility of guns firing over the heads of their own troops and thus facilitating an otherwise impossible advance is strikingly exemplified.

Charges of cavalry against unbroken infantry have once more been proved to be ineffective, and the absence

from the field of the bulk of the German cavalry shows that they had yet to learn the lessons they subsequently so brilliantly displayed.

Suddenly given command of an army dispersed along the frontier line from Bitsch to Strassburg, with an enemy of threefold strength in the immediate proximity, the position of MacMahon was certainly unenviable. Exception may, however, be taken to his stand at Woerth, which was so far forward and close to the enemy that time did not admit of the concentration of adequate forces either for offensive or defensive operations. For an inferior force to offer battle in a position difficult to retreat from cannot but lead to disaster; and to defend the passes of the Vosges when they were practically turned by the First and Second German Armies seems injudicious. If from political causes it was necessary to fight east of the Vosges, it would appear that the retention of Strassburg as a base would give the opportunity of striking an offensive blow on the flank of an enemy attempting to cross the mountains, and at the same time secure a better defensive position and a safer retreat. It has also been suggested that a battle might have been offered behind the Moder, south of the Haguenau forest, and thus cover the Strassburg-Nancy railroad and avoid the risk of severance from the Army of the Rhine.

The non-appearance of de Failly's corps on the field has been the subject of much comment, arising, as it did, from contradictory orders from the head quarters of each wing of the army. Although the defeated troops were much disorganized, it seems scarcely necessary for them to retreat so far or by such a circuitous route. A

better course would have been to endeavour to gain the neighbourhood of Metz by the left bank of the Moselle, and join the forces of Bazaine, or retreat southward toward Belfort. In the one case the union of the French army would be effected ; in the other, the presence of a formidable body of regular troops in the south would compel a division of the German forces, and arrest, at all events temporarily, the general advance.

The great superiority in numbers of the German forces enabled them not only to attack in front but to envelop the position on both flanks. The premature attack of the V Corps has been justified on the ground that it was thought necessary to hold the enemy in position until the flanks were turned. More recent information has made it clear that the French were not prepared to retreat, and that victory could have been attained with far less loss if the infantry of the V Corps had not been sent forward until the enveloping movement of the XI and Bavarian Corps had begun to take place.

CHAPTER IV

SPICHEREN

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SPICHEREN

French Positions.—Advance of German Armie.—Spicheren Position
—Attack of 27th Brigade.—Position at 2 30 p.m.—The Battle
2.30 to 3 30 p.m.—The Battle 3 30 to 5 p.m.—Left Attack
5 to 7 p.m.—Right Attack 5 to 7.30 p.m.—The Retreat—
Comments—Comments on the Opening of the Campaign.

EARLY in August the French Head Quarters
French Positions became aware of the presence of the First and
Second German Armies in the vicinity of
the frontier. A good deal of attention was also directed
to a demonstration in the Black Forest near Strassburg.
After the result of the action at Weissenburg was known,
the Emperor seemed inclined to leave a strong garrison
in Strassburg and assemble his available forces behind
the Vosges. The optimist views of MacMahon, however,
prevailed, and an order was given dividing the army into
two main groups under the command of MacMahon and
Bazaine, while the Emperor retained control of the
Guards and the Reserve. A division of the 3rd Corps
was to relieve, at Saargemund, the 5th, which was to
concentrate at Bitsch. Frossard was near Saarbrücken,
while the remainder of the western corps of the French
army were in the vicinity of St. Avold. Part of the
7th Corps was detained near Strassburg, owing to the
demonstration made by the enemy on the opposite side

of the river. Even at this early stage in the operations the movements of the French troops were dependent on those of their adversaries, and orders and counter-orders of little consequence made but slight difference in their dispositions.

Advance of German Armies In the meantime the First and Second German Armies advanced to the frontier.

The Second Army had steadily pushed forward through the defiles of the Hardt, and was forming up in front of the forest belt of Kaiserslautern, with the III Corps in front line. The First Army, already assembled, had been ordered to clear the Neunkirchen-St. Wendel road, and was thus shifted somewhat to the front. It was the intention of the Head Quarter Staff to delay the advance across the frontier until the passage of the Vosges was secured by the Third Army. But the reports brought in by cavalry of the French retirement led to the advance guards of the leading divisions of the two armies being hurried forward to the Saarbrücken bridge. The impetuous disposition of General Steinmetz induced him to cross over the line of march of the Second Army, and his leading troops, on arriving at the Saarbrücken drill-ground, received their baptism of fire from the guns on the Spicheren position. In the soldiers' battle that ensued there was no lack of troops, but the detachments from both armies arrived after each other by unprescribed routes, and at different hours.

Spicheren Position On the evening of August 5, General Frossard had retired from Saarbrücken on a strong entrenched position on the Spicheren heights. From the centre projected the steep spur of the Rother Berg, while the steep slopes on either side were

densely wooded. The valley on the left, through which ran the main road and railway to Forbach, was blocked by the massive buildings of Steiring-Wendel and its ironworks, which were well adapted for defence.

As the van of the advanced guard of the 14th Division reached the drill-ground the shells fell fast, and its battery came into action. On the Rother Berg and the plateau beyond were visible some infantry and guns, as well as small bodies of troops in the Forbach valley. The highest estimate of the Prussian scouts was 7,000 men and eight guns; and nothing betokened the presence of a powerful French army corps with its fifteen batteries. Convinced that the enemy was in retreat, and that only a rear-guard was in front of him, General Kamecke decided to attack, and bringing his four batteries into action on the high ground south of Saarbrücken, converged their fire on the Rother Berg.

Attack of 27th Brigade About noon the 27th Brigade of von François moved over the open ground towards the two flanks of the spur, two battalions being allotted to each attack, and two battalions being kept in reserve.

The left attack, by a long détour, escaped somewhat the fire from the Rother Berg, and eventually gained the foot of the heights. Strenuously climbing the slopes of the Giffert and Stift woods, the leading companies reached the southern edge. Here all advance was stopped by a heavy fire of infantry and artillery, and a subsequent attack forced back the Fusiliers to the crest in the interior of the wood, where with great difficulty a stand was maintained.

The battalions assigned to the right attack were soon

engaged in a severe contest for the Steiring copse. The superior strength of the enemy manifested itself in violent counter-attacks, supported by an artillery fire from Steiring and the Spicheren heights.

While the right and left attacks were holding their own with difficulty, von Kamecke, at about one o'clock, ordered the two reserve battalions to assault the Rother Berg in front. To support the attack, three batteries were advanced to the Galgenberg, and concentrated their fire on the defenders of the spur. As the brigade, in line of company columns, descended the southern slope of the Reppertsberg, they were met with a hail of fire. Appeals for help from the Steiring copse led to a diversion of three companies, and over the absolutely open ground the remaining five companies, despite the rapid thinning of their ranks, finally gained the shelter of the bank at the foot of the Rother Berg. An advance for a mile under the fire of 800 infantry and six guns seems almost incredible, and is a testimony as much to the accuracy of the Prussian artillery as to the indifferent and uncontrolled musketry of the French.

The position of affairs at 2.30 p.m. was briefly as follows:—On the right, nine Prussian companies on a front of 1,400 yards, in Steiring copse and near it, were deployed without reserves in front of a force of double its strength. On the left, the troops attacking the Rother Berg and Giffert wood, some 3,000 strong without any supports, were in presence of three times their numbers.

The whole of the 27th Brigade was in fighting line, and at the mercy of a counter-attack by overwhelming numbers. General Frossard, under the impression that

the three French divisions were being forwarded to him, remained on the defensive.

Meanwhile, the 28th Prussian Brigade was being pushed forward in support of the troops at Steiring, and the vanguards of the VIII and III Army Corps were approaching Saarbrücken. The 13th Division, which had crossed the Saar at Volkingen, was pushing through the Saarbrücken forest towards Forbach, and 35,000 infantry with sixty-six guns were in full march to the field of battle.

The Battle Shortly after 2.30 a strong local attack was
2.30 to made on the two battalions in the Giffert
3.30 p.m. wood, and resulted in one of them being driven down the slopes and across the valley back to the Winterberg. The remaining companies were in sore straits when relief was unexpectedly afforded by the storming of the Rother Berg by the companies that lay at its foot. Never dreading a frontal attack, the French Chasseurs had withdrawn to their trenches, and kept no look out over the precipitous slope. Reinforced by a company from across the valley, the Prussians pushed slowly but persistently up the slope, and completely surprised the defending forces in their trenches on the crest. The French soon recovered from their panic, and a sudden and strong counter-attack made further advance impossible. By the side of their dying leader, von François, the five Prussian companies held fast to the trenches so gallantly won, unable either to advance or retire.

On the other flank, the reinforcement by the 28th Brigade secured the complete occupation of the Steiring copse and the southern edge of the Saarbrücken forest.

The 14th Division was now extended over a front of

three and a half miles. Its left wing had been repulsed, and on the right it was hard pressed by superior forces.

A new impulse to the battle was now given
3.30 to
5 o'clock by the arrival at Saarbrücken of the artillery and infantry of the III and VIII Corps. The battalions of the 5th Division arrived by rail at half-hour intervals, and to this was mainly due the manner in which the fight was led. A regiment at first tried to gain the eastern flank of the Giffert wood, while battalion following battalion worked forward over the open against the Rother Berg and the woods on its right flank. To support the 1,800 men who had gained a footing on the Spichenen heights, some 8,000 troops advanced, and after a hot fight secured the edge of the Rother Berg and the north-west corner of the Giffert forest. The ridge in the centre of the wood was now held in strong force; but attempts to advance further were frustrated.

During these hours the edge of the Steiring wood had been lost and regained, and at five o'clock 6,000 men, in very extended formation and worn out with their protracted fire fight, encompassed the French stronghold at Steiring-Wendel.

With the advent of fresh troops, aided by the massed artillery on the Galgenberg, the original plan of attacking the Rother Berg from the west was again resorted to, and resulted in the capture by infantry of the buildings of the Custom House and Golden Bremm in the valley at the foot of the heights.

General Frossard now withdrew a brigade from his right to support the troops at Steiring-Wendel, and as a

result the opposing forces in the Giffert wood were nearly equal in numbers. On the western flank the Prussians were outnumbered by two to one, and several of the French battalions had not been engaged.

In the Giffert wood, the front of battle
Left attack
5 to 7 p.m. swayed backwards and forwards as fresh
troops came up on either side, and eventually the intermingled companies of the Prussians gained the southern border, with the exception of the south-west corner. The troops on the Rother Berg were unable to advance, but their position was made more secure by the charge of a fresh battalion of Grenadiers, from the Golden Bremm, across their front, which resulted in turning the French out of the adjacent corner of the Giffert wood. The Prussians had now won the northern crest of the plateau and the homesteads in the centre, but in front of them lay a still stronger line of defence on the Spicheren ridge.

After six o'clock a futile attempt to mount the Rother Berg was made by a cavalry regiment, but the artillery that followed them was more successful. A single gun was first dragged up to the crest, and was eventually followed by the remaining pieces of two batteries.

Meanwhile the Prussian artillery had advanced to the Folster heights and a formidable attack of some seven battalions was being pushed with success from the homesteads against the centre of the French line on the Spicheren-Forbach heights. As darkness was beginning to fall, the French, leaving their trenches, made a general advance along the plateau, but, unable to gain ground, fell suddenly back under cover of the fire of their massed artillery in rear.

On the French left the aspect of affairs was somewhat different. The arrival of fresh troops gave the defending force an overwhelming superiority, and by a vigorous forward movement the weakly-held Prussian line was driven rapidly back. Eventually the whole of the Steiring copse was retaken: and it is not too much to say that a vigorous further effort would have led to a French victory. Shortly after seven o'clock, however, the attacking force retired, and the Prussians were enabled to take up their former advanced position before Steiring. Intelligence had reached Frossard, about seven o'clock, that hostile troops (the advance of the 13th Division) were on the Volkingen-Forbach road, and in consequence of his retreat being threatened a retrograde movement was inevitable.

The
Retreat The retirement of the 2nd Corps was conducted in fairly good order on Saargemund, as the road westward towards St. Avold was commanded by the fire of the enemy. The material gains of the victors could not compare with the rich trophies of the Third Army at Woerth. But the moral effect of the simultaneous defeat in Alsace and Lorraine affected both the troops and the nation. Resistance was for the moment renounced, and in the course of a week the whole land as far as the Moselle fell into German hands. Against the corps of Frossard had been led portions of three army corps and two cavalry divisions which formed the advance troops of the First and Second German Armies.

The numbers actually engaged were :—French, 23,679 infantry, 72 guns and 18 mitrailleuses. Prussians,

26,494 infantry and 66 guns. The percentage of loss was equal on both sides.

Comments The action of General von Kamecke in attacking with very inferior forces a strongly held position is defended on the ground that it was thought the French were merely a rear-guard covering a retirement, and that it was desirable to bring them to bay. The successive arrival of reinforcements undoubtedly extricated him from the critical position in which an over-confident attack had placed him, and eventual success justified his action. On the other hand, it may be urged that it was solely the inaction on the French side that saved him. The idea suggested in the official account, that the risk was justifiable, is doubtful. If it were a mere question of checking a retreating enemy, a determined attack on the left flank would have equally effected the purpose, as behind it lay the line of retreat, and an attack through the Steiring and Forbach woods would not only be safer, but would be supported by the advancing 13th Division. It may be fairly questioned, however, if the attack was advisable. The main idea permeating the plans of Moltke was by combination to overwhelm, with superior force, any resistance that would be encountered. In spite of the defeat at Woerth, it was probable that the French army, if given time, would have concentrated in a position eastward of the Moselle for the purpose of offering a general action. To meet the united French army would have been more suitable to the German plan of campaign than the attack, even though successful, of an isolated corps. The manner in which the German troops hurried to the sound of the firing is worthy of

note, and also the remarkable fact that the constant change in supreme command during the engagement caused no friction. During the battle, three divisions under Marshal Bazaine were within ten miles of the field, and rendered no assistance. In exculpating himself, the Marshal states that Saarlouis and Saargemund were threatened, and that it was inexpedient to weaken the corps in their vicinity. To this it may be answered, that proper reconnaissance should have revealed the fact that the threatened attacks were quite visionary. Again, he states that some troops were sent towards the battlefield, but that they were not called up by Frossard. The adoption of such an argument reveals the fact that there was a great lack of initiative in the French army ; that the troops did not march to the sound of the firing ; and that Bazaine was hampered in his decisions by the anomalous nature of his command in reference to the Emperor's Head Quarters.

An absolute want of energy was perhaps the most conspicuous failing of the French generals in 1870, whilst on the German side its existence was almost superabundant. At no single point did the Prussians show themselves superior in courage or hardihood to their opponents. The nature of the country, the position of the enemy, and the circumstances under which the battle was conducted were all unfavourable to the assailant. But it is not surprising that the vigour in attack and tenacity in defence of the French soldier should become relaxed when he saw his leaders acting on divergent principles and failing to render each other loyal support. The Prussian generals had been taught the way to victory, but in this soldiers' battle the success was due to the

tactical skill of the regimental officers and the high discipline and training of the German soldier.

Comments
on Open-
ing of
Campaign

A strategic deployment should be based on either an offensive or a defensive policy ; but whatever course is adopted the contingency must be faced that the measures taken by the enemy may cause a change of attitude. Aware of the preponderating strength of the forces of the North German Confederation, the French Emperor had determined to balance his inferiority of numbers by a rapid forward movement combined with a naval descent on the Baltic provinces. The Germans, on the other hand, relying on their superior organization, were not disposed to surrender the manifold advantages of the initiative.

An active offensive was the mainspring of von Moltke's plan of campaign ; but the strategic deployment of the forces was nearly as favourable for defence as for attack. The arrest of rail transport at the Rhine was a precautionary measure against any sudden crossing of the river, while the contingency of being attacked in the Palatinate during concentration was provided for by selecting positions favourable for defence and arranging for mutual support. When once assembled the combined armies were on interior lines to the two groups of the French forces, and could act against either or both simultaneously.

The projected concentration of the French forces on the frontier was effective for a forward movement, but quite unsuitable to a defensive attitude. An army but partially mobilized and equipped is not in a position to carry out an attack, and the time necessary to make it an effective instrument was not forthcoming. In all

strategic deployment *time* is a factor of essential importance, and the transport of national armies by rail limits the possibility of concentration to an area of country well served by a railway system.

The first Napoleon, with rapid marches, effected by surprise a deployment in a locality or *space* that gave him a strategic advantage over his enemy. The leader of a modern national army uses his mobilization and rail transport to gain an area which circumstances clearly indicate, and trusts to a superiority in organized effort to gain *time* over his adversary. The main object of strategy is to obtain a superiority of numbers at the decisive point; but in the modern contest of civilized nations the primary success due to deployment is obtained more by the organized efforts of peace than by the genius for war.

The advance of an army on both sides of a mountain range is, to a certain extent, dangerous, as one portion of the force lays itself open to defeat before succour can reach it. In the case of the German invasion, the division of the armies was rendered necessary on account of their huge size. The danger was at the same time minimized by the forces on both sides of the Vosges being superior in numbers to any combinations of troops that could be massed against them under the defective French system of mobilization. Moreover, an attack on the Third Army, if based on Strassburg, could only be in inferior force, while if based on Metz, it would be threatened in flank and rear by the formidable numbers of the other two German armies.

At the same time, the care taken in arranging where the divided army should make its stand, if attacked,

shows that the possible danger of isolation was foreseen.

The rapid transfer of troops from one zone of operations to another, so as to beat isolated armies in detail—a course so brilliantly carried out by Napoleon in 1814—is very difficult when large masses of men have to be moved. The existence of the telegraph, moreover, facilitates the division of armies, enables reserves to be forwarded, and ensures the joint action of forces beyond the immediate field of hostilities. Though temporarily obliged to concentrate in separate groups, the main lines of the German advance were not more than two days' march apart; and, as will afterwards be seen, a policy of excessive caution was generally pursued in always arranging the march routes so as to afford mutual support.

It is interesting to note the system of command that obtained in the German armies. The instructions given by the Royal Head Quarters were of a simple general character and did not extend beyond the immediate situation. It was found desirable, on critical occasions, to control the movements of the larger units by definite orders, however much such an arrangement might provisionally limit the independence of army commanders. At the same time the key of the German system was *decentralization*, and considerable discretion was allowed as to details. The advantage of allowing a large initiative is undoubted; but, as at Spicheren and Woerth, subordinate leaders are apt, by their action, to destroy the symmetry of the main strategical plan. Where initiative is discouraged, on the other hand, a leader like Frossard may be confronted by circumstances

which demand instant resolution, and may have no time in which to ask for orders.

To preserve the necessary balance between power, responsibility and freedom of action is a matter of no little difficulty. An army in modern times is a more complex machine than those wielded by Wellington and Napoleon, and its component parts must be arranged so as to work together under the impulse of leaders of average ability.

Causes which have been alluded to interfered with the carrying out of the French offensive movement. Whether it would have been advantageous to partially carry it out is dubious. It has been suggested that at least 60,000 men might, in July, have been pushed forward to Maxau. Such a movement would have undoubtedly checked the German advance across the Rhine, and even if it was followed by a retrograde movement, *time* would have been gained—a factor which would be of great value to the French administration. A rapid offence would be congenial to the French spirit, but to avert being overwhelmed by a numerically superior enemy required more able generalship than the Imperial army at the time possessed. The action of von Moltke in not following up the success at Spicheren has been severely criticised. It is stated that a pursuit would have interfered with the plan of operations, and that it was the safest course to delay, and wait until the Third Army had fulfilled its task of crossing the Vosges.

If such an argument is admitted, it is obvious that the battle should not have been fought, and that those who brought it on are deserving of censure. If a slow, methodical advance was the essence of the German

plan, a hasty advance-guard action with small forces only led to an unnecessary expenditure of human life. Had the corps of Frossard not been attacked, the concentrated French army would probably have given battle, and an attack by the combined German forces might have terminated the war at an early date.

CHAPTER V
BORNŸ—COLOMBEY

CHAPTER V

BORNY—COLOMBEY

The French Retreat—The German Advance—Plans for Contingencies—Operations before Borny—Battle of Borny—Comments

French Retreat

AFTER their defeats on August 6, the beaten armies retired in a westerly direction in two large masses. The greater portion of one of these bodies consisted of the troops routed at Woerth, whose retirement was compulsory, and attended with disaster. The left wing, on the other hand, was composed of the main Imperial army, only one of whose corps had been in contact with the enemy. With their right wing utterly disorganized, and their main body threatened in front by superior numbers, it was obvious that all offensive action was impossible, and that immediate measures had to be taken for the defence of the country. To effectually utilize their inferior numbers, it was advisable to unite the whole of the French forces. Owing to the demoralized state of MacMahon's troops, it was useless to arrange for a concentration east of the Moselle, and a general retreat to that river was ordered. There was much dispute as to the best course to pursue : whether to retire direct on Châlons, and thereby unite the two separated groups, or to retreat to Metz with the

main body, and to endeavour to close the right wing to it; or to take up a defensive position south of the fortress with all the troops available and dispute the passage of the Moselle. (The German Head Quarter Staff were apparently of opinion that the most suitable position that offered was that on the further bank of the Moselle, of which Metz protected one flank and Thionville the other.)

Orders and counter-orders succeeded one another with lamentable rapidity, but eventually the retreat on Châlons was decided on.

The main body partially deployed on the French Nied, but hastily abandoned the position as untenable, and continued its march westwards. Eventually, on August 13, the left wing, with a portion of the 6th Corps (from Châlons), were assembled under the detached forts to the east of Metz (176,000 men and 540 guns), and the command of the force definitely handed over by the Emperor to Marshal Bazaine.

Marshal MacMahon, in his retreat on Saverne (where the fugitives to Haguenau and Strassburg rejoined him), had taken a direction that entirely severed his touch with the main army. Union with Bazaine might have been effected further west by the Luneville-Metz railway, but in view of the state of the troops the 1st Corps was marched further south to Neufchâteau, whence they took the railway to Châlons, where they were followed from Bitsch and Belfort by the 5th and 7th Corps.

The precipitate haste with which MacMahon retired is very remarkable, and no attempt was made to blow up the railway tunnels at Saverne and Phalsbourg, or in any way retard the German advance.

Aug. 6-12 While the two armies were in full retreat, strenuous efforts were made by the Government to increase the defensive power of the country. The Gardes Mobiles were called out throughout the whole of France; old soldiers were recalled to the ranks; the troops destined for the Baltic expedition (including Marines) were hurried to the capital, and provisions were everywhere laid in with the utmost despatch.

Whether it was necessary to give up the whole of the country east of the Moselle without resistance is a matter of dispute, but under the circumstances it was probably advisable. The defensive positions on the Nied were not suitable for an army so large as that of Bazaine, and the co-operation of MacMahon could scarcely be expected. The defence of the line of the Moselle, either above or below Metz, offered many advantages; but, on the other hand, the fortress of Metz was in a most defenceless state, and urgent appeals were made to secure its safety by the detachment of a large force. By marching the troops of Bazaine through the town, time and opportunity would be given for strengthening the works and reinforcing the garrison of the virgin City.

German
Advance Owing to the hurried retreat of the French armies, all trace of them was, for a time, lost.

It was, however, to be supposed that a stand would be made on the line of the Moselle, if not more to the eastward. The original plan of operations was accordingly carried on as being suited to the case, viz., that the three armies should make a simultaneous advance westward on a broad front, the various

columns of march being within supporting distance of each other.

To carry out this measure and bring the armies abreast a wheel to the right was requisite. The First Army, accordingly, had to halt; the Second Army to gradually push forward its troops to the southward; while the Third Army, on the outer flank, had to traverse the defiles of the Vosges and form up on the left of the Second Army.

The advance of the Third Army was slow and cautious, as the principal roads were blocked by small fortresses, and it was possible that the forces under MacMahon might rally and offer further resistance. Bitsch had to be avoided by a fatiguing circuit; Lichtenberg was captured by surprise; Lutzelstein (Petite Pierre) had been abandoned by its garrison; while Phalsbourg was temporarily invested. Though the actual distance was short, it took five days before the whole force reached the Saar on a front extending from Saarunion to Sarrebourg.

The marching area to be occupied by each army was defined by order. The Third Army was to use the Saarunion-Dieuze road, and those south of it; the Second Army the St Avold-Nomeny road and those southwards; while the First Army covered the ground northward as far as the Saarlouis-Metz main road. As soon as the wheel was completed (August 12), the whole force was to advance westward, the Third Army being somewhat in rear of the other two. The front of the First and Second Armies covered about eighteen miles; the corps keeping well together, and marching by divisions when the roads permitted.

In front of the three armies pushed the cavalry divisions, from one to two days' march ahead, towards Metz and across the Moselle, both above and below the city. Large masses of French troops were seen to be encamped in front of the fortress, while the important bridges at Pont-à-Mousson, Dieulouard and Nancy were found intact. The line of rail and telegraph between Metz and Nancy were at once destroyed, and a report sent in that a retreat through Metz was being carried out. From the Head Quarters, now at St. Avold, orders were issued for the First Army to push direct on Metz; the Second Army to advance towards the Seille, further south, and endeavour to secure the passage of the Moselle; while the Third Army continued its movement on Nancy and Luneville.

Plans for Contingencies It was evident that the French, who were in great force, might turn and attack the First Army. To meet this contingency, the two corps on the right wing of the Second Army were ordered to halt a little to the south of Metz, and be ready to deliver a flank attack. Any southward advance on the right bank of the Moselle would be impossible, in view of the position of the two German armies in mutual support. Should the French, however, retire through Metz and advance up stream along the further bank of the river, the Second Army could await the support of the troops of the Crown Prince, while the First Army, crossing above the fortress, would attack the enemy's flank or rear. In the event of the retreat westward being continued, the cavalry was to push forward to harass the retiring troops, while the Second Army was to cross the Moselle, and wheel up on

the flank of the French line of march. It may be noted that before the commencement of hostilities it had been decided that if the French took up a position resting on Metz and Thionville, they should be held in front by the First Army, while the Second Army made a circuit south of Metz, so as to threaten the line of retreat.

Operations After abandoning the defensive position on
before the Nied, the French Staff at first entertained
Borny. the idea of defending the valley of the Moselle, and calling in MacMahon to form the right of the line. The co-operation of the right wing could not, however, be obtained, and definite orders were given to retire through the fortress of Metz along the road to Verdun. The whole of August 13 was occupied in arranging the details of the passage across the river, and the forwarding in advance of the numerous trains. A sudden rising of the stream from floods hampered the formation of the temporary bridges, and it was not till the morning of the 14th that the retreat commenced.

The French army was bivouacked in a semi-circle to the east of the fortress, and waited until the enormous luggage train had cleared to the left bank of the river. The cavalry patrols sent out in the morning did not find out that the Germans were in force (the German divisions were concentrating within four miles), and the retirement was much delayed, owing to the insufficient number of bridges and the blocking of the roads by the unwieldy trains.

The First Army (General Steinmetz) had halted on the French Nied on the 14th, and had pushed forward patrols beyond the outposts to find out whether the French were retreating or prepared to make a stand.

The outpost line was formed of the advanced guards of the I and VII Corps (two brigades), the flanks being taken up by cavalry. The whole line extended over twelve miles, of which the infantry in the centre occupied eight. The front line of sentries and the vedettes extended from St. Barbe to Laquenexy.

**Battle
of Borny** It was not till nearly noon that the troops of the French Army commenced their retreat from both flanks under cover of the 3rd Corps, which was deployed in two lines on the Borny plateau, behind the deep valley of the Colombey brook. Whether the French were retiring or assembling for attack was not quite clear to the commander of the I Corps, who simply ordered his divisions to stand to their arms. From the southward position of the VII Corps, the nature of the movement was recognized with less difficulty late in the afternoon (4 p.m.), and General von der Goltz with his advanced guard at once attacked, and, driving in the outposts, captured Colombey on the right flank of the French defence. The retreating columns at once turned, and a greatly superior force threw itself on the weak German detachment. Already the advanced guards of the I Corps were approaching by the high roads from Saarbrücken and Saarlouis, and, their batteries pushing ahead, came into action against the French centre. As the infantry came up, the attack developed along the course of the Colombey brook and up the slopes of the plateau to the westward. Some sixty guns were in action, and the conflict on the edge of the high ground raged on both sides with great fury and varying success. Some ground was gained to the northward near Mey against a division of the 4th Corps,

but this was met by an advance of the other divisions of Ladmirault's Corps, which pressed forward and threatened to outflank the German right.

The advance of the French was checked by the main body of a Division of the I Corps, which was now coming on the scene, and as darkness fell the attacking force fell back towards Fort St. Julien.

The 13th Division was, meanwhile, holding its ground near Colombey, and as twilight fell Woyna's Brigade, and the 18th Division (from the nearest corps of Second Army) drove the enemy out of Peltre and Grigy somewhat in rear of the original French line at Borny. The further advance of the Prussians was impossible, owing to the presence of the detached forts, and darkness put an end to an indecisive engagement.

Comments A victory has been claimed by both sides ; but tactically it may be considered a drawn fight. The Prussians did not drive the French out of their main position, nor, on the other hand, did the French overwhelm, with their superior forces, the attack of the German advanced guards. Though large forces (nearly 100,000 men) were in the immediate vicinity of the battlefield, the actual fighting was between five Prussian brigades against four French divisions.

The manner in which the battle originated renders all unity of command impossible, and the late hour at which it commenced prevented the attainment of a decisive issue. It will be noted that, as at Spicheren, the Prussian troops in the vicinity at once marched to the sound of the firing, while the Imperial Guard bivouacked in rear of the 3rd Corps gave no support of any kind to the troops fighting in its immediate front. A

considerable share of the success obtained is due to the Prussian artillery, which hurried on in front of the infantry divisions, and massed in the line of the advanced guard troops.

The attack of General v. der Goltz with his advanced guard brigade was justified by its success; but had failure resulted it would have been the subject of hostile criticism. The Head Quarter Staff had no intention of fighting a battle, and the rivalry of generals is little excuse for initiating a battle at an hour so late (4 p. m.) in the day. The early battles of the war were all commenced in a similarly unauthorized fashion, and afford matter for discussion in the much-mooted question of limiting the strength of advanced guards.

It is claimed that by checking the retreat a day was gained for the crossing of the Moselle by the Second and Third Armies. It is doubtful, however, if this plea can be sustained. The orders for retreat given by Bazaine were clearly insufficient, and would have led to 152,000 men (deducting the losses at Borny, and the garrison left in Metz) being marched on one road to Gravelotte. Bazaine stated to the Emperor that he expected to be formed up on the Gravelotte plateau by the evening of the 14th; while a simple calculation will show that he could not reach the place in the time mentioned. The orders were not literally carried out, and, in dire confusion, several routes were used; and still half the force occupied no less than thirty-six hours on the main road. That a methodical retreat in four columns would have been arrested by the action at Borny is true; but that much difference was made under the actual circumstances is doubtful.

Bazaine, apparently, simply ordered a retreat to the west of the fortress, and left the details of the march to his Staff, without clearly indicating the course to be pursued. To march a large force across a river and through the narrow streets of a city in one day was impossible. When once the retreat to the Meuse was decided on, it would have been advisable to utilize the bridges at Pont-à-Mousson and Corny, and pontoon bridges below the city, and pass the trains through Metz, covering their retreat by one corps. If the pursuit was vigorous, the enemy could be checked on the banks of the Moselle, and the retirement on the Meuse could have been carried out on August 15 by numerous parallel roads. Delay was fatal, and why some such measures were not initiated on August 11 or 12 must be attributed to the indecision of the Emperor, and the change in the supreme command at a critical moment.

There seems little difference of opinion upon the question as to whether the French should have accepted a general engagement. If committed to a retreat, it was unnecessary to waste men in a profitless battle. A victory of importance could not be gained in a few hours of an afternoon. On the other hand, the plea of the defenceless state of the Metz forts is hardly tenable. In the unlikely case of an attempt to storm them, the defence could have been aided by the troops of a rear-guard with assured success.

CHAPTER VI
VIONVILLE—MARS-LA-TOUR

CHAPTER VI

VIONVILLE—MARS-LA-TOUR

Advance of Germans—Positions on August 15—French Retreat—
Positions on August 15—Comments—German Advance—
Battle of Vionville-Mars-la-Tour till Noon—Comments—
Progress of Battle 12 to 1 p m—2 p m—3 to 5 p m—5 to 7
p m—Comments

THE battle of Borny did not interfere with
Advance of the advance of the German armies, as the
Germans marches ordered were completed before the
battle began. The situation that arose from the French
giving battle to the east of Metz had been provided for,
and it was due to the late hour at which the battle
commenced that only one Division of the Second Army
was enabled to take part in it.

On the night of the 14th, while the First Army bivouacked near the battlefield, two corps (X and the Guard) reached the Moselle at Pont-à-Mousson and Dieulouard. Another (IV Corps) was only seven miles, and three more (III, IX and XII) a short day's march from the river. The cavalry, scouting to the westward, reported no signs of the enemy.

Preparations were made early on the 15th for a possible counter-attack of the French on the First Army. The IX Corps of the Second Army was ordered towards the battlefield, while the disposition of the III Corps

was reserved by the supreme command. As soon as it became clear that an attack to the eastward of the fortress was no longer to be feared, the whole of the Second Army proceeded to carry out its previous instructions of advancing to the Moselle, and seizing the river passages. The general tenor of the orders was to march eastward to the Meuse, but special instructions were given to pursue on the Metz-Verdun road. The two corps that had been engaged (I and VII) remained in the positions they held before the battle.

Positions night of Aug. 15	I Corps . . .	on Nied, N. and S. of Pange
First Army	VII Corps	
	VIII Corps . . .	to the west, near Orny and Buchy
	III Corps . . .	Novéant.
	X Corps . . .	Pont-à-Mousson— Thiaucourt.
Second Army	Guard Corps . .	Diculouard
	IV Corps . . .	Marbache.
	IX Corps . . .	Verny.
	XII Corps . . .	Nomeny.
Third Army	II Corps . . .	Hans-sur-Nied.
	on the Meurthe, from Nancy to Lune- ville.	
	5th Cavalry Division—near Metz-Ver- dun road.	
	Guards Cavalry Division—S. of Thiau- court and covering front of X. G. and IV Corps.	
	3d Cavalry Division—N.E. of Metz, on right flank of first Army.	

The 5th Cavalry Division came in contact with the French cavalry, and finally bivouacked south-west of Mars-la-Tour. A large force of the enemy was reported to be in camp near Rezonville. The great southern road

from Metz to Verdun was thus under observation on the evening of August 15, and it was thought that the main army was retiring by the Briey road, and that an attack by the two nearest German corps would suffice to harass the rear guard. The possibility of forcing the enemy back on Metz was not at first entertained, and it seemed probable that the next general action would take place on the Meuse.

French Retreat Aug. 14-16 The retreat of the French Army was directed along the two main roads which lead from Gravelotte to Mars-la-Tour and Doncourt. On the southern road, the 2nd Cavalry Division (De Forton) was to precede the 2nd, 6th, and Guard Corps, while the division of Du Barrail formed the advance, on the other road, of the 3rd and 4th Corps. The northern chaussée through Briey was not used, owing to a false impression that the bulk of the German forces was crossing the Moselle below Metz, and also because the route was circuitous and hilly. Great delay was caused in passing through Metz, owing to the encumbrance of quantities of unnecessary baggage, and the insufficient bridging of the Moselle. The troops on the southern road had retreated some ten miles to the westward of Metz on August 15, but were checked until the corps in rear reached their assigned positions. The cavalry of De Forton came in contact with the enemy south of Mars-la-Tour, and withdrew to Vionville after an insignificant skirmish. On the northern road a small body of German cavalry, who had apparently advanced from the south, was also encountered. On the evening of the 15th the French Army were in the following positions—

Positions

night of

Aug. 15

2nd Corps	}	across Metz-Paris road near Rezon-
6th Corps		ville.
3rd "		on the right with flank thrown back.
Guard "		in reserve at Gravelotte.
4th "		on the roads from Metz
Forton's cavalry		division—Vionville.
Barrail's "		" —Doncourt.

Comments. The lack of information possessed by Bazaine seems remarkable, and to arise not only from defective reconnoitring but from want of an efficient intelligence department. When once the retreat had been ordered, it seems unpardonable that the bridges over the river above Metz were not destroyed. Even if the line of the river was not to be defended, the leading German troops might easily have been checked for some hours. The presence of hostile troops south of Metz was known on the 15th, but apparently the French plans were based on the totally erroneous supposition that a large force was crossing the river on the Thionville side of the fortress.

Orders were issued on the night of the 15th to continue the retreat early on the 16th, and mentioning that an attack on the Vionville road might be expected. On the representation of Marshal Le Bœuf, the retirement was delayed till after midday, in order to wait for the division of the 4th Corps, which was still in rear. An attack from the southward was evidently in prospect, but Bazaine apparently underestimated the force which could be brought against him.

**German
Advance**

Now that the enemy was known to be in retreat, the main object was to attack him wherever found, and endeavour to arrest the

retiring movement before he gained the Meuse. In the orders issued by Moltke on the evening of the 15th it is stated: "The fruits [of victory] can only be reaped by a vigorous offensive on the part of the Second Army towards the Metz-Verdun roads." The I Corps of the First Army was left at Courcelles to protect the railway, while the VII and VIII Corps were pushed forward to the Seille. To the Second Army was merely indicated the French line of retreat, and it was left at liberty to make its own arrangements. Prince Frederick Charles conceived that the situation would be best met by directing the right wing of the Second Army to the northward, while the left wing continued its march westward to the Meuse. Reinforcing the 5th Cavalry Division by the 6th, he ordered the III Corps and the X Corps to move towards the Metz-Verdun road via Gorze and Thiaucourt, respectively. These two corps could, if necessary, be supported by the IX Corps, and on the following day by the XII Corps, and a greater portion of the First Army.

It will be remembered that the 5th Cavalry Division had already gained the vicinity of the Paris road, and been engaged in a skirmish with De Forton's Cavalry. The commander of the X Corps reinforced his cavalry division, early on the 16th, with two Horse Artillery batteries, and ordered a reconnaissance in force. The leader of the III Corps gave similar instructions to the 6th Cavalry Division, which advanced over the plateau above Gorze. The infantry and artillery of both corps were pushed forward in support as fast as possible:

Battle of Vionville—Mars-la-Tour, Aug. 16 In the early morning of August 16, the French Emperor departed from the army by the road through Etain ; but the prosecution of the retreat of the main force was delayed until the afternoon, owing to the corps of Ladmirault not having reached its position on the right flank.

The reconnaissance in force of the 5th Cavalry Division, with four batteries of Horse Artillery, took place a little after nine o'clock. Advancing at a gallop, under cover of the cavalry the batteries unlimbered on a hill southwest of Vionville, and rapidly shelled the French cavalry camp to the west of that village. Taken completely by surprise, the French squadrons fled to the rear in complete disorder, and eventually re-formed behind the line of the infantry bivouacs at Rezonville. Meanwhile, more to the eastward, the 6th Cavalry Division, mounting the plateau above Gorze, drove in the outposts in front of them. Against the wide semi-circle of cavalry, extending from the Bois de St. Arnould to the Tronville heights, the French infantry advanced to attack on lines radiating from the centre of Rezonville. Both sides now assumed the offensive, but at the extremities of the great cavalry arc—at about ten o'clock—appeared the advanced guards of the 5th and 6th Infantry Divisions. (The III Corps, after crossing the Moselle, pushed forward one division on the Gorze-Vionville road, the other via Onville towards Mars-la-Tour.)

The 5th Prussian Division on the right, sending forward its artillery on the heights to the westward, fought its way with varying success up the Gorze ravine, and with its right wing gained the northern edge of the Bois de St. Arnould. Its left wing was repulsed, and the

artillery in danger till the 52nd Regiment in a gallant attack re-established the fight, and, reinforced by a detachment from Novéant, of the X Corps, eventually carried the height south of Flavigny. When the 6th Division (III Corps), on its road to Mars-la-Tour, had reached Tronville, it was evident that the French line of retreat was already barred and its brigades wheeled to the right, and, aided by the fire of a powerful line of batteries, captured first Vionville and then Flavigny.

At noon the two occupied villages and the wood of St. Arnould marked out a front of four miles occupied by the III Corps and a strong force of artillery. In second line were two cavalry divisions, with only one regiment of infantry.

Hitherto the 2nd French Corps (Frossard) had borne the brunt of the fighting, and were falling back slowly on Rezonville. The 6th Corps, facing generally westwards, occupied Rezonville and to the north of it, while the Guards were on the Gravelotte plateau. The left flank of the French army rested on Metz, while the right, on the old Roman road, was protected by a formidable artillery and a strong force of cavalry. The 3rd Corps, followed by the 4th, was coming up on the right of the line.

Comments The possibility of continuing the retreat on the Mars-la-Tour road was out of the question, unless the Prussian III Corps was defeated by a vigorous offensive movement. Behind the attacking force there were no reserves, and it is difficult to see why Bazaine did not utilize his great numerical superiority. The Marshal's chief solicitude was, apparently, to keep touch with Metz, and his whole attention was directed to his left wing. The Guards Corps and a portion of

the 6th Corps were massed opposite the Bois des Ognons, a quarter from which an attack, to say the least, was improbable.

Progress of Battle, 12 to 1 p.m. To reanimate the retiring 2nd Corps, the Cuirassiers of the Guard charged resolutely on its pursuers ; but, thrown in confusion by the wagons and camp equipage strewn on the ground, the regiment was in no position to encounter the fire of the Prussian companies drawn up in line. Charged in return by two Hussar regiments, the remnants of the horsemen escaped with difficulty, and Bazaine himself was for a moment in danger of being taken prisoner.

The 6th Prussian Cavalry Division was now ordered to the front ; but its advance was received by such an overwhelming fire from the fresh troops deployed at Rezonville that it did no more than cover a slight general advance of the attacking troops.

2 p.m. It was now two o'clock, and the battle was at a standstill. The attacking force was exhausted ; their ammunition nearly expended ; and there was not a battalion or battery in reserve. The French were gradually extending to their right, and it was evident that an attack by the whole of the 6th Corps towards Vionville was about to be made.

At this critical moment six squadrons of cavalry under von Bredow charged in single line the deployed army corps. Neither infantry nor guns are able to check the vigorous onslaught, and the batteries on the heights in rear limber up and seek safety in flight. After a career of 3,000 paces, the recall is sounded ; but, thinned by the enemy's bullets, and hemmed in by hostile cavalry, but half the men and horses survive the gallant exploit,

Time, however, had been gained ; the French advance crushed ; and new forces were coming up to the assistance of both sides.

3 to 5 p.m. With the arrival of the 3rd and 4th Corps, the French right pressed forward, and four divisions advanced towards the Tronville copses. The woods were vigorously contested, but the superiority of numbers told after an hour's time, and the weak left of the III Corps fell back on Tronville village.

Meanwhile the X Corps, which was on its march through Thiaucourt, heard the sound of the firing, and was directed towards the battlefield. The artillery, hurrying on in advance, reinforced the batteries of the III Corps, and checked the French advance on both sides of the Tronville copses. The leading infantry brigade drove the enemy back into the woods, and, supported by the rest of the division, gained the northern outskirts by 5 p.m.

On the right flank of the battlefield the main object of the Germans was to maintain the position already in their hands, and the principal rôle in the engagement devolved on the artillery. The unceasing flow of fresh troops into the French skirmishing lines led to constant attacks in varying force, but with little success. On the other hand, the Prussians could gain no ground in advance, owing to the greatly superior numbers that were opposed to them. On the arrival of a brigade of the VIII Corps (which had been hurried forward from the Moselle), a strenuous effort was made to carry the heights south of Rezonville, but it was defeated with heavy loss. Till nightfall the fighting on the eastern portion of the battlefield was, in the main, stationary.

5 to 7 p.m. On the western side, the French had, meanwhile, extended their right wing to the sunken valley west of Bruville, where three divisions of their cavalry were massed in position.

In the hope of falling upon the rear or flank of the enemy, the 33th Brigade—five battalions strong—advanced over the open ground north of Mars-la-Tour. On traversing the ravine in front of the French right, they came under the fire of the deployed divisions of the 4th Corps. After most of their officers were shot down, the wreck of the battalions fell back, and were finally rallied at Tronville, having lost more than half their numbers. The French followed up their success, but were checked by the bold charges of cavalry regiments on both flanks.

The culminating phase of the battle was a great hand-to-hand encounter of 5,000 horsemen, on the upland of Ville-sur-Yron, to the north-west of Mars-la-Tour. Both nations claimed success; but night was falling, and the result of the contest was to check any further infantry movements in the vicinity.

An order was issued at seven o'clock, by Prince Frederick Charles, for a renewed general attack on the enemy's positions. The advisability of attempting such a measure has been much questioned. Evening was closing; the troops were thoroughly exhausted; ammunition was nearly spent; the horses had been at work for fifteen hours; and no reinforcements could be expected till the morning. The III Army Corps had placed itself across the path of the whole French Army, and by the help of the X Corps had been enabled to maintain its position throughout the day. To expect more was

scarcely reasonable ; and further action might possibly jeopardize the success so dearly bought. A general forward movement was, however, attempted. The X Corps was quite unable to answer the demands made upon it ; while the artillery of the III Corps, when it advanced, was at once stopped by the fire of the artillery and infantry of the Imperial Guard.

To the bulk of the Army of the Rhine had been opposed the III and X Army Corps, together with detachments from the VIII and IX Corps, and three cavalry divisions, a total of 64,246 infantry, 13,171 cavalry, and 246 guns. The numbers actually engaged may be roughly estimated at 60,000 Germans, to 120,000 French.

The loss on each side was some 16,000 men ; there were no guns, prisoners, or trophies to show ; and both armies, worn out by a twelve hours' struggle, bivouacked opposite each other, doubtful of what the morning would bring forth.

Comments The true importance of the day cannot be judged by its tactical results. The Prussians had certainly not been able to drive the French out of their main positions ; but, on the other hand, the French had not been able to recover the ground lost before noon, or recontinue the march. The victory, however, clearly lay with the Germans in a strategic sense. By a bold employment of their numerically inferior forces they had stopped the enemy's retreat, and given time for their main body to interpose between the two French Marshals.

The German movements on the morning of the 16th were made on the supposition that Bazaine was retreat-

ing on a more northern road. The III Corps undoubtedly commenced its attack with the idea that it was dealing with a strong rear-guard or flanking force, while the X Corps was directed towards Etain instead of on the battlefield—a fact which caused considerable delay in the arrival of reinforcements. The action of the III Corps in waging battle on its own account against very superior forces affords another illustration of the independent action of corps commanders. The bold attempt of General Alvensleben appears justifiable if it was evident that the French were retiring in a northerly direction. As matters turned out, a great risk was run; and that disaster did not result affords a strong proof of the value of the offensive in war. Had the German general adopted a defensive attitude on the Gorze plateau there is little doubt that he would have been overwhelmed by superior forces, and driven down the defiles to the river;

The French armies were considerably inferior in numbers to those of their adversaries, and their best hope of success lay in a retreat for the purpose of combination. Bazaine knew on the 15th that the Germans, taking advantage of the bridges over the Moselle not being destroyed, had crossed in force, and that no attack had to be feared from the north. The hostile cavalry had already been seen, and if an uninterrupted retreat was desirable, every moment was of value, and the more northerly routes should have been utilized.

It is difficult to understand the delay in marching off on the morning of the 16th. Admitting that the 4th Corps was much delayed in passing through Metz, this defect might have been partially obviated by directing

it to act as a rear-guard, while the Guard might have followed the more northern chaussée. If the southern road was to be adhered to in spite of the danger of a flank attack, it is apparent that the dispositions for bivouac should have been along the road. The difficulties as to water were not insurmountable, and the formation of the troops across the road showed a tendency not to quit the fortress, and to fight a defensive battle under its protection. That such a scheme had its merits is undoubted; but, to be carried out with success, must entail something more than a passive defence. It must be remembered, however, that Bazaine had only taken over the command some thirty-six hours, and that he was committed to a line of conduct for which he had evidently a distaste. After the 16th, the retreat on Verdun could only be effected by obtaining a more or less decisive victory; and failing in this, if he let go his hold on Metz, his army would be exposed to destruction. It is generally admitted that a vigorous offensive movement on the morning of the 16th against the III German Corps would have met with success; and even in the afternoon, when reinforcements had come up, the enemy was much inferior in numbers. The massing of reserves on the left flank shows how strong was the feeling to rest on Metz; but the adoption of a generally defensive attitude could never forward the retreat. A main reason for the comparative immobility was that the French tactics were based on the great value in defence of the fire of the chassepot and the over-rated mitrailleuse. The effect of the improved weapons in a carefully-chosen position had not yet been fairly tried; and good results might be looked for in a

pitched battle, if theory was to be trusted. The half-measures taken were disastrous, and the French Marshal failed to recognize the exigencies of the strategical situation; and instead of regarding the fortress as a pivot of manœuvre, he treated it as his actual base.

Throughout the battle the Germans laid themselves open to be beaten in detail; and that they were not must be attributed more to the inaction of their adversaries than to any tactical combination of their own.

The battle of the 16th deprived the French of their best line of retreat, but had left their adversaries powerless to renew the attack. The northern roads to Verdun were still open, and might have been used under the cover of a powerful rear-guard. Provisions and ammunition might have been sent forward from Metz and Verdun on the roads, but the heavy losses of the 16th seemed to have furnished an excuse for delaying the execution of a retreat for which Bazaine had always been disinclined. As events turned out, it is clear that on the morning of the 18th the Germans were not sure of the French movements, and that consequently during the whole of the 17th the French were at liberty to execute their designs without molestation.

It has been suggested that Bazaine might have retired through Metz on the 17th, and broken out to the south-east early on the 18th by the three main roads along both banks of the Seille, throwing out flank and rear guards to deal with the I, VII and VIII German Corps. Such a movement, conducted with celerity, would cut the line of communication of the three German armies at a moment when, from the position of their corps, but little resistance would be offered. Whatever might be

the ultimate result of the operation, there is no doubt that the plans of the invader would be disorganized, and considerable time be gained for a retreat on Strassburg, or to the south. On the other hand, it is scarcely possible to conceive that a difficult movement of this nature could have been carried by a Staff which had hitherto shown such weakness and want of ability. The French Intendance was unequal to its duties; and, above all, it is improbable that the Germans, with their ample sources of information, would not have at once detected the movement, and with the assistance of the Third Army have taken measures to render its execution hazardous.

CHAPTER VII
GRAVELOTTE—ST. PRIVAT

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GRAVELOTTE—ST. PRIVAT

French Movements: August 17—German Plan of Operations—
Comments—The French Position—The German Advance—
Attack of IX Corps, 12 to 5 p.m.—Attack by I Army, 12 to
5 p.m.—Attack by II Army, 12 to 5 p.m.—Right Attack 6 to
8 p.m.—Central and Left Attack, 5 to 8 p.m.—Comments.

THE French troops quitted their bivouacs
Movements, early on the morning of August 17, and
Aug. 17 retired to a strong position west of Metz
extending from Rozerieulles to Amanvillers. The
position assigned to the 6th Corps, at Verneville, was
subsequently altered, and the general line of defence
extended northward as far as St. Privat and Roncourt.

Bazaine assigns as the principal reason for retiring
the lack of ammunition and provisions. But the roads
were full of trains on the 15th; and if, during the battle
of the 16th, the supply columns had been directed on
Briey, it would not have been necessary to send back
to Metz for ammunition. The plateau north of the
battlefield permitted of retirement on a broad front, and
a position beyond the Orne would have been suitable
to assemble the troops and restore order. That an
army within a short day's march of a great French
arsenal should have run short of supplies and of warlike
stores is a serious reflection on the French adminis-

tration. A force in want of stores should have them forwarded to it, and not have to retire to obtain them. The Marshal also pointed out that, by fighting in a strong defensive position, the numerical superiority of the enemy would be neutralized, and that he hoped the issue of a successful battle would enable him to utilize the northern route to Verdun without further molestation.

**German
Plan of
Operations** The Second Army, which had not taken part in the battle were on the march westward towards the Meuse, and an unsuccessful attempt was made by the IV Corps to capture Toul by assault. On the afternoon of the 16th it was evident that the retreat of the entire French army had been arrested, and that reinforcements were urgently required to support the two weakened army Corps (III and X) that were with difficulty holding their positions. But little apprehension was entertained as to an attack eastward from Metz, so that the I Corps and 3rd Cavalry Division were alone left to guard the right bank of the Moselle.

The VII and VIII Corps of the First Army and the IX, XII and Guard Corps of the Second Army were accordingly ordered to form up on the Paris road; and on the evening of August 17 seven army corps and three cavalry divisions assembled on a front of eleven miles extending from Gravelotte to beyond Mars-la-Tour. The execution of the orders was facilitated by the foresight of the corps commanders, who had in the course of the day received news of the battle being fought. It was above all necessary that the flanking movement initiated by the VII and VIII Corps of the

First Army should not lead to any serious collision, and, for the day, all attacks were forbidden. The Third Army and the IV Corps of the Second Army were far to the southward, and were ordered to halt, and wait the course of events. The II Corps, which was coming up in rear from the frontier, was pushed on to Pont-à-Mousson, and could be called upon as a reserve.

The reports sent in by the reconnoitring cavalry up to noon were somewhat contradictory, and left it uncertain whether the French were retreating by the northern roads or were retiring towards Metz. To meet either contingency, the Second Army was directed to march northward in direct échelon of corps from the left, the movement being covered from any attack from Metz by the two corps of the First Army. The left wing of the Second Army moving northward by Doncourt would thus attack and detain the French, if in retreat; while the right wing would hurry up in support. In case the enemy should decide to retire on Metz, the left wing was to swing round eastwards, and envelop any position taken up; while a wheel to the right of the remaining corps would form them into position for a frontal attack. The VII Corps, in such a case, would form the pivot on which the wheel to the right would be made. In the event of such a situation being created, each army would fight facing its own rear, and temporarily sacrifice its line of communications. The French had the advantage of a secure temporary base in the fortress of Metz; but defeat to the attacking troops might possibly entail a disaster that would have to be retrieved by the advance of the Third Army.

Comments The fact that Bazaine had decided to take up a defensive position renders it intelligible that he should have drawn back his cavalry, but the inaction of the Germans in reconnoitring requires explanation. With the exception of the Saxon Crown Prince, the cavalry leaders did not utilize the large forces in their hands. Instructions were certainly issued to avoid a battle on the 17th, but they scarcely afford excuse for the fact that on a very limited area of ground the German Head Quarters were quite in the dark as to the enemy's situation on the evening of the day. The order issued by Moltke at 2 p.m. was admirably adapted to deal with the contingencies that might arise; but it is generally admitted that its issue was too early, and that information of the French position should have been accurately made known by the cavalry before the movements for the great battle on the next day were initiated.

The French Position The French position extended for some seven miles along the crest of an open ridge, the western slope of which fell gently, with the smoothness of a glacis, on the right and in the centre. In front of the left the ground was steep and wooded. The ridge lay between two ravines, both of which became gradually shallower as they approached the right of the position. The French left was naturally strong, and supported in rear by the forts of St. Quentin and Plappeville. The centre of the ridge was exceptionally adapted for defence, from the lie of the ground as well as from the strongly built farm-houses that defined it. The right flank at St. Privat was weak both by nature and position, as it rested some-

what *en l'air*. There were, however, two grave elements of weakness: the woods which ran up to the occupied line from the ravine in front, and the steep wooded ravine in rear, which rendered the forwarding of reinforcements a difficult matter. In occupying the position, the numbers of the corps—reckoning from left to right—were the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 6th corps; the latter of which, though on the exposed flank, was weak in numbers, and destitute of engineer park. The conditions required that the reserve should have been posted in rear of this wing; but Bazaine, still apprehensive of an attack from the south, retained his Guard Corps at Plappeville. Cavalry was in rear of both flanks, and a brigade of the 5th Corps stood in the Moselle valley. Field entrenchments, of all kinds, covered the left and centre of the position, and the farmsteads were placed in a state of defence.

In accordance with the tenor of the German Advance, instructions received from Head Quarters, the Second Army was put in movement early on the morning of August 18. Some delay arose from the Guard not being in the position assigned to it; but eventually the different corps moved off in échelon from the left, the XII Corps leading. As the march to be undertaken was over open country and a prelude to a serious engagement, each corps moved in mass of divisions, with the corps artillery between them.

At 9 a.m. the general position of the attacking troops was as follows:—

- VII Corps — South of Gravelotte, with outpost on
 • east margin of Bois de Vaux.
- VIII „ — Rezonville.

IX Corps	—	Caulre Farm, N.E. of St. Marcel.
G.	„	— Mars-la-Tour, on Doncourt (delayed).
XII	„	— Jarny.
III & X	„	— Vionville and Tronville.

In advance of the army corps the divisional cavalry scouted both to the north and north-east.

From the reports received, it became apparent that the French army was still in the vicinity of Metz ; but it was conceived that its position did not extend further north than Montigny. The Second Army was accordingly directed to attack the right wing with the artillery of the IX Corps, and to make an enveloping movement with the outer flanking corps. On the reception of the news that the French flank was much further to the northward, the IX Corps was ordered to postpone its attack, while the Guards was directed on Amanvillers, and the XII Corps on St. Marie aux Chênes. By direction of the King, the First Army was not to begin hostilities until the Second Army was in position, and ready to co-operate.

Attack of General v. Manstein (IX Corps) ob-
IX Corps, served from the Verneville heights that
12 to 5 p.m. an enemy's camp lay before him in a state of
heedless unconcern. It was somewhat doubtful if
it was the flank of the French line ; but the advantage
of surprise was obvious, and the greater part of his
artillery was brought into action on the southern portion
of the long spur that extends from Amanvillers to
Verneville.

The first rounds alarmed the enemy's entire line. The heights in front were quickly crowned with numerous batteries, and dense lines of infantry occupied the shelter-trenches. The attacking batteries had no

cover whatever, and were overwhelmed with a concentric fire of shells, shrapnel, and mitrailleuse bullets. Instead of outflanking the right wing, the artillery of the IX Corps was in a critical position in front of the French centre. It was impossible to withdraw, and, to repel the advancing French skirmishers, the battalions of the 18th Division, in breathless haste, occupied the farmhouses and woods on both flanks of the guns. The few Prussian battalions were soon in as great straits as the batteries, which were becoming unserviceable. The arrival of the remaining division of the IX Corps, more to the northward, somewhat relieved the pressure, and at 2 p.m. the whole of the IX Corps was deployed on a line two and a half miles long, extending from the Bois de Genivaux to Habonville. Opposite the centre of the line was visible the spire of the church at Amanvillers, while the left and right faced, respectively, towards St. Privat and Montigny.

The attempts of the infantry to advance on both wings were checked with heavy loss; five of the batteries were disabled, and the situation was very grave. A welcome reinforcement of six batteries of the III Corps arrived at a critical moment, and the capture of the farm of Champenois made the position a little more secure.

At 5 p.m. the pressing danger was over, the Guard Corps was making its presence felt on the left, and 106 guns were in action in front of Verneville and up to Habonville. The exhaustion caused by the five hours' struggle was so great that, for some time, there was almost a total suspension of hostilities on this part of the field.

Attack by I Army, According to the general scheme of attack, the First Army was not to enter 12 to 5 p.m. into any serious action until the Second Army had grappled with the enemy. The heavy firing at Verneville, about noon, led to permission being given for the First Army to engage its artillery ; and sixteen batteries of the VII and VIII Corps came into action to the south and north of Gravelotte.

In front of the German position was the valley of the Mance, a deep and heavily wooded ravine. The highway from Gravelotte to Metz descends through a deep cutting to the stream, and ascends the other side to the edge of the bare slopes that rise to the strongly entrenched ridge of the French position. On the narrow front between Leipzig and Point du Jour lay some sixty French battalions and 100 guns, while a brigade on the left closed the valley of the Moselle.

The first artillery position was too distant from the enemy, and after the French skirmishers in the Mance ravine were driven back, a more advanced line of 132 guns was formed on the eastern edge of the Gravelotte plateau. The fire of the massed artillery partially silenced the enemy's batteries, and the 15th Division, on a broad front, worked its way through the ravine on both sides of the great highway. Every attempt to advance from the wood on the eastern edge of the ravine was checked by the fire from the French trenches. The farm of St. Hubert, blocking the exit of the road from the ravine, became the objective of all the troops in the vicinity. At about three o'clock it was taken with a rush ; and this success was followed by a further advance on the right and on the left. The

attack on the gravel pits near Point du Jour was successful, but on the left all onsets towards the Moscou farm were repelled with great loss, in spite of the reinforcement of another brigade. On the extreme right, a brigade of the VII Corps had captured Jussy, but found it impossible to further advance.

From the Gravelotte plateau the general situation appeared favourable to General Steinmetz (First Army). The enemy had lost a strong advanced post at St. Hubert, and seemed to be falling back towards Metz, while his artillery fire had perceptibly slackened. About four o'clock an advance across the ravine was ordered of four batteries, followed by the 1st Cavalry Division. As soon as the head of this deep column emerged from the defile of the highway, it was received by devastating artillery and infantry fire. Only two of the batteries succeeded in coming into action, and the cavalry, unable to deploy, had to turn back in the defile. A wild crush took place in the narrow road, and into the mingled mass of horse, foot and artillery poured the shells and bullets of the defenders. The French skirmishers, advancing in force, drove the Prussians back to the edge of the wood. St. Hubert was still occupied, but every attempt to advance over the open slopes proved a failure. At 5 p.m. the firing on both sides slackened, and there was a distinct lull in the fighting, while the wearied troops took breath.

Attack by The leading artillery of the Guard Corps, II Army, as before mentioned, came into action near 2 to 5 p.m. Habonville, to support the left of the IX Corps. The main body of the corps reached St. Ail as early as two o'clock; and the bulk of the guns

were facing St. Privat. It was now seen that the enemy's front extended as far as Roncourt, and that a strong advanced post was held at St. Marie aux Chênes. The infantry of the Guard were ordered to await the co-operation of the Saxon Corps, and detach one division towards St. Marie aux Chênes.

The XII Corps, advancing from Batilly, pushed one division northwards; and the other, with the corps artillery, moved towards the French advanced post. A concentrated fire of ten batteries was brought to bear on the village, and at 3.30 it was stormed by a combined attack of the Saxons and Prussian Guards.

The artillery of the Guard now advanced to a position in front of Habonville and St. Ail, while the Saxon guns came into action on a ridge north of St. Marie. The 1st Division of the Guard deployed at St. Marie, facing St. Privat; one brigade of the other division remained in support, while the other brigade reinforced the IX Corps. Meanwhile, the majority of the Saxon Corps was marching northwards, down the valley of the Orne, and extending so as to envelop the French flank.

The great mass of guns firing against the St. Privat—Amanvillers position repelled every advancing attack of skirmishers, and succeeded in partially silencing the French guns.

During the lull in the fighting, the Head
Right Attack, 5 to 8 p.m. Quarter Staff arrived at Gravelotte, and the II Corps, after a long and wearisome march from Pont-à-Mousson, made its appearance on the field. To the northward the sound of heavy firing betokened that the Second Army was hotly engaged;

and the King, about six o'clock, ordered General Steinmetz to make a renewed advance with all the troops at his disposal. A brigade of the VIII Corps, and some battalions of the VII, were ordered to cross the Manco valley, while the infantry in the Bois de Vaux advanced in the direction of the quarries of Point du Jour.

Bazaine, reinforcing his left wing by a division of the Guards, made a vigorous counter-stroke; and a crushing artillery and infantry fire hurled back the advancing troops again to the fringes of the wood. The day had begun to decline when the foremost battalions of the II Corps emerged from the ravine; but neither space nor time was favourable to their action. In the increasing gloom of the evening confusion arose from the intermingling of units, and it was difficult to distinguish friend from foe. At last the order came to stop the fight; and at ten o'clock the troops of the Pomeranian corps rested on the field in close proximity to the French line and facing them, while the disordered remnants of the VII and VIII Corps reorganized themselves in rear.

Every endeavour to force the French left had failed; and the exhausted troops of both sides, in close proximity, waited for the morning to renew the contest. Moscou, Leipzig and Point du Jour remained in the hands of the enemy, and the farm of St. Hubert marked the limit of the German advance. The determined attack of the First Army had, however, the effect of riveting the attention of Bazaine to his left flank, while the issue of the battle was decided on another part of the field.

The movement of the II Army Corps into the

fighting line at a late period in the evening was a mistake; and Moltke himself is of opinion that it would have been better to have maintained it as an intact reserve, which could be utilized the following day.

Central
and Left
Attack,
5 to 8 p.m.

Shortly after five o'clock a renewed attack was made on the centre and right of the French position. The right of the IX Corps were unable to get forward, but their front was covered by the shells from the newly arrived batteries of the III Corps behind them. From Habonville, the 3rd Guard Brigade, aided by Hessian infantry and artillery, gradually worked their way under heavy fire to within 800 paces of Amanvillers.

Further to the northward the 4th Guard Brigade advanced south of the St. Marie—St. Privat highway. The enemy lay in dense lines behind shelter-trenches and ditches, beyond the range of the needle-gun, and fairly protected from artillery fire. Every chassepot bullet told, even if it was a ricochet; and the attacking battalions lost nearly all their officers before attaining the western edge of the spur projecting from the main French line.

Half an hour after the above movement the 1st Brigade of the Guards deployed north of the high road, and advanced directly on St. Privat. The artillery of the Guard had been directing their fire on the crest south of the village, while the Saxon batteries were shelling Roncourt. The massive houses of St. Privat were comparatively untouched, and behind the hedges and walls in front rose tier on tier of shelter-trenches. The attack was received by an overwhelming artillery and infantry fire, and the losses incurred in

advancing over the glacis-like slope were enormous. The batteries of the Guard came up into action within 1,000 paces of the village, and by their aid the foremost line of infantry reached a position within 600 paces of it, unable to advance or retire, and having lost most of their officers.

Relief now came from the northward. The Saxon (XII) Corps had concentrated its artillery on Roncourt, and its infantry were advancing to the attack both from the west and the north.

Marshal Canrobert (6th Corps), finding his extreme right in danger of being enveloped, withdrew the troops from Roncourt, under cover of the fire of a brigade posted in the Jaumont quarries. The artillery and infantry of the Saxon Army Corps now approached St. Privat from the north and north-west. A concentrated fire of twenty-four batteries was brought to bear, and the encircling battalions only needed the impulse of the last reserve of the Guards and the artillery of the on-coming X Corps to make the final assault at 7.30 p.m.

The French defended the burning village with great obstinacy; but, surrounded on all sides, surrendered at about eight o'clock.

The defeated troops of the 6th Corps retired into the valley of the Moselle, covered by the brigade at Jaumont and the cavalry. Too late to turn the fate of the day came up the reserves which had been forwarded by Bazaine from his left flank. The French batteries, however, took up a position east of Amanvillers, and an artillery duel ensued, lasting till nightfall. In the early morning the whole of the formidable French position was evacuated by its defenders.

Eight army corps and three cavalry divisions took part in the attack, with a total force of 178,818 infantry, 24,584 cavalry and 720 guns. The estimates of the French forces vary from 130,000 to 150,000 men, but of the troops actually engaged the numbers may be roughly estimated at 100,000 French to 150,000 Germans. The French admit a loss of 13,000 officers and men, while the killed and wounded of the attacking force exceeded 20,000 in number.

Comments The position of the reserve and of Bazaine himself in rear of the left flank indicates that he was more apprehensive to preserve his communications with Metz than with Châlons. The right flank was by far the weakest ; and the fact that Canrobert was deficient in entrenching tools pointed to the necessity of supporting him strongly. Had the Guard been in support of St. Privat, the issue of the battle might have been very different. It was only at night-fall that the German army gained their success ; and the next day they would have had great difficulty in renewing their exhausted ammunition. With the resources of the arsenal close at hand, the French would have been in much better plight ; and it seems quite possible that a vigorous forward movement would have resulted in a great victory. Bazaine, by assuming strictly the defensive, left the onus of attack and its consequent terrible losses on his adversaries. But both on August 16 and 18 the counter-attacks made by the French were purely local, and there was no single attempt at an advance in force. From the point of view of Bazaine it may be urged that, even if he could not make good his retreat, time would be gained

by holding out at Metz, and that a large force of the enemy would be neutralized until he could be relieved by external co-operation. To carry out such a course an ample supply of food and war-like stores was necessary, and there was already sufficient evidence that the magazines were but partially filled.

The action of the Germans in accepting battle has been criticized. They had already effectively cut the French line of retreat, and a retirement towards the Meuse could only be made by an assailant. To drive the French into Metz, they attacked, with heavy loss, a very strong position. Had the battle lasted over the night, the issue would have been doubtful; and a defeat would have been most disastrous. Delay, on the other hand, might lead to the strengthening of the position to a dangerous degree. Bazaine had hitherto played into the German hands, but that he should continue to do so by becoming the assailant was doubtful. The spirit of the offensive had been sedulously drilled into the German forces, and their energetic attack had hitherto been crowned with success. To suddenly change to a defensive attitude would probably be injurious to the army; and where there was some doubt as to the best policy to pursue, the best course was to adhere to the adage that "To make war is to attack." Gravelotte was a strategical battle, and was practically won when the German armies had wheeled up against the position. Even if the issue of the battle had been somewhat different, the interception of the French retreat was complete. To annul the effect of the strategic movement would require the rout of the German forces,

which was, under the circumstances, an improbable contingency.

Though nominally one great battle it was practically two—one to the northward, waged by the Second Army, and one near Gravelotte, carried out by the First Army. The King's Head Quarters were on the right flank, and after 5 p.m.—the critical period of the battle—there was no control exercised over Prince Frederick Charles and the Second Army. There is little doubt that the proper position of the Royal Head Quarters should have been in the vicinity of the centre of the army somewhere near Verneville. The success of the operations round Metz were due mainly to Moltke; but it was only by indomitable energy and resource that he was able to deal with the obstruction caused by personages at Head Quarters.

The general idea of the battle, as planned by the Chief of the Staff, was a frontal attack with envelopment on both flanks. Owing mainly to the defective cavalry reconnaissance of the 17th, the control of the Head Quarters was insufficient, and the success of the turning movement at St. Privat was due to the initiative of Prince Frederick Charles. On the other flank, General Steinmetz did not apparently grasp the situation; and instead of making his main attack from the Bois de Vaux against Rozerieulles, uselessly wasted his infantry and misused his mounted arms round St. Hubert. The success of the First Army was small. The whole of three army corps were employed against as many divisions, and only an advanced post of the enemy was captured.

On the northern flank, the premature advance of the

Guard against St. Privat in formations more suited to the parade ground than the battlefield caused a great expenditure of life. The attack of a strong defensive position entails heavy losses; but in the battle of the 18th a large portion of these were due to the defective tactics employed by General Steinmetz and the Prince of Württemberg.

It was not till midnight that Moltke received the message from Prince Frederick Charles that the French right wing was turned and completely defeated. The action of the First Army on the other flank had left the issue of the battle uncertain; but the genius of the strategist was never better displayed than when, at once realizing the situation, he drew up for the next day the orders for the investment of Metz and the detachment of three corps for the further advance on Paris.

CHAPTER VIII
CHÂLONS AND RHEIMS

CHAPTER VIII

CHÂLONS AND RHEIMS

Assembly at Châlons—French Plan of Operations—March on Rheims—Position on August 25—German Plan of Operations—Formation of the Meuse Army—The German Advance—the 22nd August—the 23rd August—the 24th August—the 25th August—Comments

The concentration of the whole of the Assembly at Châlons French forces at Châlons, resolved upon as early as August 7, was now impossible. The army of the Rhine under Bazaine was absent; and all that was known of it at this period was that it had crossed the Moselle on August 16, with the intention of pursuing its retreat in a westerly direction.

After the defeat at Woerth, the 1st and 5th Corps, which had united at Saarburg, continued their retreat in a south-westerly direction, towards Neufchâteau and Chaumont. From this neighbourhood the 1st Corps was despatched by rail to Châlons, followed by the 5th, the majority of which marched by road.

Of the 7th Corps, one division only had been engaged at Woerth, while the other two were at Belfort and Lyons. The proceedings of the division at Belfort are of little importance, but are so typical of the internal condition of the French army at the time that they require notice.

In consequence of reports that bivouac fires were

visible across the Rhine, General F. Douay advanced his division to Mulhausen, where he heard of the disaster at Woerth, combined with the most exaggerated and alarming reports that the enemy were crossing the river. Thinking it was too hazardous to hold his ground with only 12,000 men, and without a single attempt to find out whether there was any truth in the rumour, he ordered an immediate retreat on Belfort. No time was allowed for the soldiers to cook their meals, and drunkenness, indiscipline and discouragement spread rapidly through the ranks. Arms and knapsacks were thrown away, and the roads were covered with stragglers abusing their officers. The humiliating part of the affair was that the precipitate retreat, without having seen an enemy, was due to having given way blindly to panic caused by a clever demonstration of a small detachment of Würtemberg troops in the Black Forest.

On August 12, after the arrival of the division from Lyons, the 7th Corps at Belfort numbered 20,000 men with ninety guns. But they neither moved to meet the enemy who was already in front of Strassburg, nor did they attempt to join the retiring troops of MacMahon.

It was not till August 16 that the corps received orders to proceed by rail to Châlons, and thus abandon Alsace to its fate. The shortest route to the camp was exposed to attack by the enemy, and the corps, in fifty-two trains, was despatched *viâ* Paris. Closely packed in wagons for the long journey of 450 miles, the troops were exhausted; and want of proper arrangements for food led to indiscipline and drunkenness.

On reaching Châlons, the corps was again sent on to join the main body, which it reached on the morning of August 22, some of the trains requiring twenty-four hours to get from the camp to Rheims. Although the 7th Corps had yet never seen the enemy, it joined the army of MacMahon in a state of great disorder.

The transit of troops by rail for long distances has to be arranged with great care, or the fatigue arising from a continuance in cramped positions leads to exhaustion both in men and horses, and the consequent evil effects.

A 12th Corps had also been formed at Châlons, composed of the divisions which hitherto had guarded the Spanish frontier, together with some battalions of Marines and newly formed regiments. Some battalions of the Parisian Gardes Mobiles that were to have been incorporated in the corps, proved so insubordinate and refractory that they had to be sent back to the Capital, where a 13th Army Corps was being organized under General Vinoy. The lost artillery matériel of the army was replaced, and two new cavalry divisions added. Exclusive of the troops forming at Paris, the total strength of the army under Marshal MacMahon on August 24 numbered 133,600 infantry, 16,450 cavalry, 402 guns and 84 mitrailleuses.

French
Plan of
Operations

At a council of war held at Châlons by the Emperor, it was decided that Marshal MacMahon should take command of the Army, and lead it back to the Capital, of which General Trochu had been appointed Governor. Shortly after this decision had been taken, a despatch arrived from Paris demanding, in the name of the Empress, an advance towards Metz. Meanwhile, the report of Bazaine on the battle of

Vionville was received, in which he expressed the opinion that, after supplying himself with food and ammunition, he would continue his march *westward*.

A retreat on Paris would make a junction with Bazaine impossible; and this fact was again insisted upon by a further despatch from the War Ministry. Definite intelligence arrived on August 21 that the Third German Army, which had taken no part in the struggle round Metz, was in full march on Paris, and that its leading cavalry had already reached Vitry.

The position of the French Marshal was undoubtedly a difficult one. On the one hand, it was his object to cover the Capital, and, with the support derived from its fortifications and vast resources, to offer battle under as favourable circumstances as possible. On the other hand, he had to think of giving a land to the army of the Rhine, so as to fall with united force on the Germans, and again contest with them, wherever circumstances permitted, the territory which they had at present conquered. To risk defeat by offering battle to the Third Army would be dangerous, and in the event of success but temporarily check the German advance; to retreat on Paris would undoubtedly lead to the downfall of the Napoleonic dynasty the prestige of which was already severely shaken. The exigencies of the political situation demanded an attempt to unite with Bazaine, while purely military grounds dictated the necessity of a retirement to the Capital.

Above all, it was of importance to receive information as to Bazaine's plans and future proceedings. In answer to a telegram sent to Metz, MacMahon was notified that he must act on his own judgment.

The plan of campaign suggested by the War Ministry was to advance in three columns through the Argonnes, and thus gain the valley of the Meuse. Such an operation could only be effected by making a flank march between the Third German Army and the Belgian frontier, and incurring the risk of a simultaneous attack on front and flank. Taking the most favourable view, it might possibly lead to the corps detached from the investing army being beaten in detail, and in consequence enforce the raising of the Metz investment. The hazardous nature of such a movement, combined with the fact that in case of Bazaine breaking out southwards it would be perfectly futile, was fully apparent. The absence of authentic information as to the exact position in which the army of the Rhine was placed, increased the difficulties of the situation; and MacMahon, temporarily to escape from his dilemma, determined on the medium course of marching on Rheims to take up a position which would enable him to await the development of the enemy's plans, and at the same time flank the direct approaches on Paris.

March on The evacuation of the camp at Châlons
Rheims, on the 21st took place with such precipitancy
Aug. 21 that no arrangements were made to transport
to Paris the large accumulation of food, forage and
clothing. To a rear-guard was assigned the duties of
burning down the camp and destroying the stores.
The entire 7th Corps, and a portion of the 5th Corps,
which arrived later, were unable to avail themselves
of the resources of the camp for their re-equipment,
and were directed to follow the other troops by rail:
a most ill-advised proceeding under the circumstances.

A two days' rest was absolutely necessary to place the recently arrived troops in a condition to undertake operations in the field, and Marshal MacMahon again decided to retire on Paris.

Orders for the march were issued, when a despatch arrived (the 22nd) from Bazaine that he calculated on being able to fight his way to Châlons viâ Montmédy. It now appeared possible that the Army of the Rhine had already commenced its march ; and MacMahon felt compelled to forego his resolution, and to march to its aid.

On the 23rd the Marshal telegraphed to Bazaine that he was starting in the direction of Montmédy, and that in two days he would be on the Aisne.

At the commencement of the first day's march, defective arrangements led to the crossing of columns and the encumbrance of roads with trains : and it was not till the evening that the force completed a short march to the Suippe. The inefficiency of the French Intendance to provide food became painfully obvious, and necessitated, for the next day, a détour through Rethel, where considerable stores were collected. Another valuable day was thus lost, and on August 25 the army stood with its main forces along the reach of the Aisne between Rethel and Vouziers.

Margueritte's cavalry division proceeded
Position on Aug. 25 in a northerly direction towards Le Chesne, while one cavalry regiment watched the defile of Grand Pré. The bulk of the cavalry, instead of being pushed forward to reconnoitre, were bivouacked in rear of the corps to which they were attached.

The indecision of the chief command, the defective

staff arrangements, and the insufficiency of supplies, now sensibly affected the morale of the army. The troops had lost confidence in their leaders. The soldiers resorted to requisitions on their own behalf; and bands of stragglers wandered over the country, more dangerous to friends than to foes. With insubordinate and dejected troops, there seemed but little prospect of a successful issue to a hazardous enterprise.

On the day after Gravelotte it was known that the French Army had retired on Metz, and occupied unassailable positions under the protection of the detached forts. To prevent it further co-operating with the army still in the field, it was necessary to take measures for the investment of the fortress.

Hitherto the Germans had been forced to take the offensive against strong positions, but now, in entrenched batteries and lines, the artillery and infantry had to prove their ability in the defence. To encircle a concentrated army with a thin ring of troops was a bold operation. Acting on interior lines, the central forces could obtain superiority of force at any single point, and the success of an attempt to break out was apparently assured, whenever it should be made.

The strength of a cordon of earthworks, defended by modern weapons and connected by telegraphic communications, was not fully recognized, and the difficulties in the way of the self-liberation of a surrounded force not appreciated. The situation, as it appeared to the Germans, is apparent from a quotation from an Army order issued by the King on August 19:—

“It is important that the armies should continue

their march on Paris on a level front, so as to be able to meet in sufficient force the new formations assembling at Châlons.

"In consideration that the French Army thrown back on Metz might hazard the attempt to break through in a westerly direction, it will be well for six Army Corps to remain on the left bank of the Moselle, in order to oppose this movement, upon the heights which we captured yesterday. On the right bank, there will remain one Army Corps and the Reserve Division, which, if necessary, will withdraw before an attack of superior forces."

The line of investment was to be at once strengthened to the utmost by the art of the engineer ; but the main tenor of the instructions was that a sally of the enemy to the westward was to be prevented at all hazards, while on the right bank of the Moselle the chief attention was to be directed to important points, such as the station at Remilly.

Formation of IV Army To form the investing force, four corps of the Second Army were attached to the First Army, while a Fourth Army (army of the Meuse), consisting of the IV, XII, and Guard Corps, with the 5th and 6th Cavalry Divisions passed under the orders of the Crown Prince of Saxony.

In its first composition, the army of the Meuse consisted of 70,000 infantry, 16,000 cavalry, and 288 guns, and on August 20 was assembled as follows : The XII Corps at Conflans ; the Guards at Mars-la-Tour (on the road to Verdun) ; while the IV Corps, which had not been ordered to Metz, had reached Commercy.

The Third Army, after crossing the Vosges, had been

pressing forward westward in three columns preceded by cavalry divisions. Leaving a brigade to observe Toul, the foremost corps reached the line of the Meuse on August 19, where a two days' halt took place, in order to give the Meuse Army time to come up into line. The strength of the force was 118,000 infantry, 19,500 cavalry, and 525 guns.

The German Advance, and the Third Armies (224,000 men with Aug. 22 813 guns) faced westwards on a front of fifty miles, extending from Etain to Gondrecourt. The Guards and the XII Corps formed, with the 5th, 6th and 12th Cavalry Divisions, the extreme right; in the centre stood the IV Corps, at Commercy, covered by a part of the Guard Cavalry Division; while on the left, in two lines, was formed the Third Army, on the Ornain and Upper Meuse, preceded by the 4th Cavalry Division.

The information gained from the cavalry reports pointed to the assembly of MacMahon's forces at Châlons; and an order was issued for the armies to continue their advance westwards to the line St. Menchould-Vitry (which the advanced guards were to reach on the 26th), the Third Army preceding the Meuse Army by a day's march. In the event of the enemy being met with, he was to be attacked at once in front and on his right flank, so as to force him northwards, away from Paris.

Aug. 23 Intelligence was received at the Headquarters of the King that Napoleon, with MacMahon's army, was at Rheims; and the probability of this fact was confirmed by some captured letters and

Paris newspapers. Those in chief command, however, were still in uncertainty as to the position and intentions of the enemy, as the cavalry were not yet in touch with the French forces.

Aug. 24 The general line of Verdun-Bar le Duc-St. Dizier was reached on the 24th, after an unsuccessful attempt was made to take the former place by assault. Some Dragoons of the 4th Cavalry Division pushed forward as far as Châlons, and reported the camp to be deserted and the magazines burnt.

Aug. 25 The retirement of the French Army to Rheims was now known, but it was still uncertain whether it would adopt the hazardous course of moving towards Metz, or take up a flanking position, probably at Laon, to cover the Capital. No change was made in the direction of the advance, but as Rheims was more distant than Châlons, the Third Army made a forced march so that the general line of front of the two armies faced north-west, from Vitry to Dombasle. A cavalry regiment sent northward through Dun burnt a wooden railway bridge north-east of Stenay, on the Sedan-Thionville line, while the small fort of Vitry and a battalion of Mobs were captured by the cavalry further south. Scouting to any great distance on the right of the army was hindered by the vicinity of the Argonne, and the manifestly hostile disposition of the populace, but the 5th and 6th Cavalry Divisions pushed forward their advanced parties some fourteen miles in front of the Guard and IV Corps.

The French Government had organized a general rising, and had provided the people with arms. The franc-tireurs, only partly in uniform, could not be

regarded as soldiers, and, though not affecting large operations, caused much loss and annoyance to small detachments.

Comments Reviewing the situation, it will be seen that on the right flank of the German Army, moving *westward*, and only two days' march to the north of it, was a French army of 150,000 men advancing eastward. The movements and intentions of MacMahon were not known with certainty, and information based on rumour might prove unfounded.

At the German Head Quarters, on the morning of the 25th, the march of the enemy eastward, towards Metz, seems doubtful and even improbable. A change of front to the right of an extended army would require time, and entail serious difficulties as to the supply columns which were following each corps. The decision to be made was a weighty one. Though it is rarely possible in war to base one's measures on a positive knowledge of the position and intentions of the enemy, it is inadvisable to make a complex movement on unconfirmed reports. Orders were accordingly issued for August 26 for both armies to make a slight alteration of direction, Rheims being taken as an objective, instead of Châlons. † The cavalry of the right wing, however, was to reconnoitre towards Vouziers and Busancy, in order to clear up the situation.

"In war it is, for the most part, with probabilities that the strategist can reckon; and the probability, as a rule, is that the enemy will do the right thing." (Moltke.)

That the French Army should uncover Paris, and move along the Belgian frontier seemed strange and

venturesome ; but it was possible. A march table was accordingly drawn out, arranging for the army of the Meuse, and the two neighbouring corps (Bavarians) of the Third Army to march northwards, in the event of the news of the eastward march of the French Army being confirmed. By the advance of these corps and the assistance, if required, of the reserve corps of the army before Metz, the enemy, wherever found, either west or east of the Meuse, would be forced to give battle to superior numbers.

Were the German armies to execute the marches ordered for the 26th, the German right wing would, in the evening, be some twenty-five miles distant from the nearest corps of the army of Châlons, and both the contending armies would be at about the same distance from Metz;

All doubt as to the best course to pursue was put an end to in the afternoon. The vehement speeches delivered in the National Assembly as to the disgrace of leaving Bazaine unsuccoured were reported in the Paris newspapers, and, in corroboration, there came a telegram from London, derived from the *Temps*, that "MacMahon is advancing to form a junction with Bazaine."

Orders were issued late at night on the 25th for the Meuse Army to concentrate towards the right wing, and to push northwards, followed by the I and II Bavarian Corps. The Crown Prince, on receiving news of the situation, asked leave to accompany the movement a day later with the remainder of the Third Army. He maintained that a possible loss of time in advancing on Paris would entail less disadvantage than if all available forces were not present for a decisive

battle in the north. The King concurred : and there is little doubt that but for the foresight of the leader of the Third Army the V and XI Corps would not have been in time at Sedan and that the retreat of the French on Mezières might have been successfully carried out.

CHAPTER IX

BEAUMONT'

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BEAUMONT

German Advance, August 26—French Movements—August 27
—August 28—August 29—Combat at Nouart—August 30—
Battle of Beaumont—Comments.

German Advance, Aug. 26 THE march northward of the Meuse Army took place in persistent rain, hail, and storm, which imposed heavy tasks on the troops. The XII Corps moved on Varennes, and the Guard, followed by the IV Corps, on Dombasle. The Third Army, compactly closed up on its right wing, stood ready to march either towards Rheims, or to the northward; and the two Bavarian Corps were set in motion to follow the Meuse Army.

The cavalry, sent forward in every direction, scouted in an arc extending from Dun to Châlons, and reported that Busancy and Grand Pré were occupied, and that there was a large body of troops near Vouziers.

There was now but little doubt that MacMahon was marching towards Metz, with a view of uniting with Bazaine, and that he must be intercepted at all costs. The large force advancing from the south would be able to attack him in flank, while instructions were sent to the army investing Metz to detach two corps to block the space between the right bank of the Meuse and the Belgian frontier. If need be, the investment of the

fortress might be temporarily abandoned, but the army of the Rhine must be prevented from breaking out westward.⁷

French
Movements

The French, meanwhile — when every minute was of importance—were leisurely wheeling their army on the pivot of the 7th Corps at Vouziers. Their 12th Corps formed on the left flank, while the 1st Corps closed up on the 5th in the centre. In front of the left of the army was one cavalry division, on the Beaumont road, while the other division was in rear of the whole force. It was the intention of MacMahon to utilize the two main roads leading through Beaumont and Busancy on Montmédy. The apparition of German cavalry at Grand Pré and Busancy, in the afternoon, caused unaccountable excitement. The most exaggerated reports were received at Vouziers, and the main body of the 7th Corps were kept under arms the entire night during the pouring rain. MacMahon, on receiving intelligence of the presence of the German troops, determined to advance his whole force on the threatened points the next day.

The disposition and inaction of the French cavalry are remarkable. The 1st Cavalry Division was on the flank where no danger was to be apprehended, while the remaining cavalry were a useless reserve in rear of the other corps. The German armies were known to lie to the southwards, and yet no reconnaissance was pushed in that direction, nor any attempt made to drive back the cavalry scouts. A vigorous offensive would have made it clear that an immediate attack was not to be feared, and at the same time

would have shown that an advance eastward must end in disaster.

Aug. 27 In accordance with orders issued late on the previous night, the XII Corps pushed forward to seize the river passages at Dun and Stenay. The Guard Corps and IV Corps followed up in support, while the leading corps of the Third Army advanced northwards from St. Menchould and Clermont. Four cavalry divisions covered the movements, and an impenetrable cordon of 100 squadrons were in touch with the enemy from Vouziers to the Meuse.

Under the influence of the erroneous reports as to the proximity of the German forces, the Marshal moved the 1st Corps in support of the 7th at Vouziers, and directed the 5th Corps towards Busancy, with the 12th Corps in support. On the misconception being cleared up, counter-orders, causing great confusion, were at once issued, and the general result of the day's movements was that the 12th Corps formed the left wing at Le Chêne, the 7th Corps the right wing at Vouziers, the 5th Corps somewhat in advance of the centre, while the 1st Corps was in reserve on the Aisne.

The 1st Cavalry Division advanced to Stonne, and was ordered to observe the roads leading to Dun and Stenay, and secure the river passages at Mouzon and Remilly. It would seem that the Marshal had some doubts about forcing the passage at Stenay, and had determined to make an attempt further to the north, and reach Montmédy by a detour. The movement in advance and retreat of the 5th Corps of De Failly led to a small cavalry combat at Busancy, and to skirmishes of little importance:

It became evident to MacMahon that insurmountable obstacles were likely to oppose themselves to the continuation of the march on Metz. The passages of the Meuse in front were already occupied, while the right flank was seriously threatened by the constantly increasing masses of the enemy. There was also the fear that communications with Rheims would be cut by the troops of the Third Army advancing west of the Argonnes. Orders were accordingly issued for a retreat on Mezières the next day, and the fact notified to the War Minister.

From Paris, during the night, came the most strenuous remonstrances. "If you leave Bazaine in the lurch, revolution will break out in Paris;" and a second telegram gave a peremptory order to relieve Metz. It was urged that the troops threatening the march were nothing more than a portion of the army investing Metz, and that he had some days' start of the Third German Army. The resolution of the Marshal was again changed, and fresh orders issued for the resumption of the movement on Montmédy.

The German commanders were now accurately informed about the enemy's arrangements. It was concluded that the French were prosecuting their advance partly by the Busancy, partly by the Beaumont road, and that the Meuse had not yet been reached. In the present position of the Fourth Army there was a well-founded prospect of overtaking the adversary while still on the left bank of the river, and the co-operation of the two corps of the army investing Metz would no longer be needed. An order issued on the

evening of the 27th prescribed Vouziers, Busancy and Beaumont as the main directions for advance during the next few days.

Aug. 28 In the early morning of the 28th the French corps had commenced their retreat on Mezières, and the change of route, from the subsequent counter-order, gave rise to much confusion. Along the roads, sodden with rain, the badly fed and wearied troops, wet and disheartened, did not reach their destinations till late in the evening. On the northern route to Beaumont, the 12th Corps was followed by the 1st, at some distance in rear. On the southern road, the 5th Corps was diverted from its original destination of Dun, and directed in a more northerly course, so as to be in a position to force a passage at Stenay next day. The 7th Corps was following the 5th in support, but was unable to complete its ordained march. During the day a distance less than ten miles eastward was, on the whole, gained, the two leading corps being in a line somewhat west of Beaumont.

On the German side, the XII Corps entrenched their positions on the Meuse, and awaited an expected attack ; while the remaining corps of the Meuse and the Third Army continued the advance northwards. A decisive engagement had to be avoided till the troops in rear came up ; and the cavalry had strict orders to watch the French as closely as possible, but not to check or press them. West of the Argonnes, four cavalry divisions and three and a half corps were available to cut off the retreat of the army of Châlons, in case MacMahon should abandon his plan of marching on Metz.

The French Head Quarters at Stonne
Aug. 29 had received intelligence that Stenay was occupied by Saxon troops, and that the bridge was broken down. As the army had no bridge trains with it, the Marshal proposed, by bending away northward, to utilize the passages over the Meuse at Mouzon and Remilly, and then to follow the road to Metz through Carignan. The 12th Corps crossed over the river at Mouzon, while the cavalry division forded the stream lower down. The 1st Corps and 2nd Cavalry Division reached Raucourt, some six miles to the westward. The 7th Corps, delayed by cavalry skirmishes, did not succeed in completing its march, and only arrived at Oches, some nine miles south-west of Beaumont. The 5th Corps (De Failly) was to have moved northwards on Beaumont; but the Staff officer carrying the counter-order was captured by Prussian cavalry, and De Failly marched on Stenay—his original destination—in two columns. On the appearance of Saxon troops at Nouart, the General determined to halt, and deployed one of his divisions to face the advance of the enemy. Hitherto the French troops had only come in contact with cavalry; but now an attack was being pressed with some vigour by infantry and artillery. The action
Combat at
Nouart, Aug. 29 resulted from a reconnaissance in force of an advance guard of the XII Corps which had recrossed the Meuse at Dun. As soon as the object of the reconnaissance was attained, the action was broken off, and the German troops retired south of Nouart. The French corps returned to its former encampment at Bois des Dames, and in conse-

quence of fresh orders retired in the night to Beaumont, leaving their watch-fires burning.

By orders of the King, the three corps of the Meuse Army were to assemble in a defensive attitude west of Dun in the early morning and await the arrival of the nearest Bavarian corps at ten o'clock. A general action was not to be brought on ; but it was left to the discretion of the Saxon Crown Prince to advance to the Busancy-Stenay road, if there was no serious resistance. It was in furtherance of this movement that the Saxon advanced guard entered into the engagement at Nouart. The transfer of the XII Corps across the Meuse left the river passages simply watched by cavalry.

Further to the westward, four corps of the Third Army were now within a short march in rear of the left flank of the army of the Meuse. The 5th Cavalry Division stood across the French lines of communication with Rheims, while the 6th Division was following close on the retiring columns of march. As a result of the various reports brought in, it was decided to attack the enemy the following day before he could cross the Meuse. The combined armies were directed to advance on a broad front towards Beaumont and Le Chêne, and the Meuse Army was to wait till the Third Army in rear got up into line. Only the fighting trains were to follow the troops.

Thus on the evening of August 29 six army corps and two cavalry divisions stood between the Meuse and the Argonnes, in readiness to advance on the following day to the attack of the French forces. At the same time the contingency of a retreat westward

was met by the movement, on the general line of the Aisne, of the XII Corps and three cavalry divisions. In the event of a decisive engagement on the bank of the Meuse, the entire force of both armies could be brought into action, and could, if necessary, be strengthened by the addition of two army corps from the force investing Metz.

The net was spread in all directions, and only by displaying the greatest energy and rapidity of action could the French forces escape from fighting a general action under the most unfavourable circumstances.

Aug. 30 The burden of the French instructions was to cross the Meuse at Remilly and Mouzon, with a view to continuing the march *viâ* the valley of the Chiers on Montmédy. The 12th Corps, as well as the 1st Cavalry Division, were already across, and the latter was directed on Carignan. The 1st Corps and the 2nd Cavalry Division moved off in the early morning from Raucourt, crossed at Remilly, and advanced up the Chiers valley towards Carignan.

The 7th Corps at Oches, which was directed to cross at Villers (close to Mouzon), was much delayed by having to escort an enormous train of wagons more than nine miles in length. The long procession was watched by Prussian cavalry, and at times compelled to halt by the fire of artillery. It was not till one o'clock that the main body reached La Besace, when heavy firing was heard in the direction of Beaumont. General Douay did not consider himself justified in marching to the firing, as he had positive instructions "to make his way as fast as possible to the Meuse, and cross the river." To effect this without molestation

from the enemy, he decided to change the direction of his march, and take the northern circuitous route, *viâ* Raucourt, to Remilly. The leading division of the corps (Dumesnil) did not receive notice in time, and continued its march towards Mouzon, in the course of which it came in contact with the troops engaged at Beaumont.

To the 5th Corps had been assigned the duty of covering the retirement. The troops, after an exhausting night march, had only arrived at Beaumont at 4 a.m., and General De Failly considered it imperative to give them a few hours' rest. The combat at Nouart, on the preceding day, made it evident that the enemy was not far off; but as no further intelligence came in about him, it was assumed that he was moving on Stenay, and the departure was deferred till the afternoon.

Isolated cavalry patrols advanced a short distance from the camp, but the ordinary outpost precautions seemed to have been neglected. On the open ground south of Beaumont the men were employed in cooking, and many of the horses had been taken to water, when, shortly before one o'clock, the Prussian shells burst among the heedless groups. The IV Army Corps of the Meuse Army had succeeded in traversing, unperceived, the woods south of Beaumont, and effectually surprised the careless troops.

Battle of The general instructions for August 30
Beaumont, laid down that the two leading corps of
Aug. 30 the Meuse Army (with the Guard in reserve) should march northwards on Beaumont to the eastward of the Busancy-Beaumont road. To the west-

ward of the road, in support, were to advance the two Bavarian Corps of the Third Army.

On the four roads traversing the forest south of Beaumont, marched the divisions of the IV and XII Corps. The attack was to be prepared by artillery, but no column was to engage until the neighbouring ones were ready to co-operate. The division on the left (IV Corps), on emerging from the forest, saw the enemy's camps south and north of Beaumont. The general in command could not let slip the opportunity of effecting a complete surprise. The leading brigade was deployed, and the artillery opened fire at 1,500 paces on the southern camp. The French hurried to their arms, and, like a startled swarm of bees, dense clouds of skirmishers hurried forward to attack the bold assailants. The main body of the division, meanwhile, came up to the assistance of their advance guard, while the other division of the IV Corps appeared on their right. Under the combined attack of the whole corps, the French were repulsed; and the leading battalions of both divisions made their way into Beaumont, and the second camp to northward of it. All the tents, many of the guns, and a vast quantity of camp stores fell into the hands of the victors; while the French troops, in disorderly flight, rallied on the heights above the town, where their artillery was in position. About two o'clock a pause occurred in the infantry fight, and the fourteen batteries of the IV Corps, advancing in *échelon*, deployed on the heights south of Beaumont. The artillery mass was shortly reinforced by the guns of the approaching Saxon and Bavarian Corps, and under a concentric and superior

fire the French batteries were mastered, and De Failly was compelled to resume his retreat, under cover of a strong rear-guard left in the Bois de Givodeau.

Meanwhile, the infantry of the XII Corps was coming into action on the right, and, traversing with difficulty the swampy forest ground, reached the heights above Letanne. Further progress in the low ground of the Meuse valley was impracticable, owing to the fire of the numerous batteries of the French 12th Corps on the eastern side of the river. A portion of the Saxon Corps, therefore, ascended the plateau to the left, and followed the central advance through the Givodeau woods.

On the left flank of the IV Corps a portion of the Third Army had also joined in the fight. The 1st Bavarian Corps, advancing up the Yoncq valley, had reached La Thibaudine, when the leading brigade was quite unexpectedly attacked from the west by a strong force of the enemy. These were troops of the Dumesnil division of the 7th French Corps, which, acting on their original orders, were making their way to Mouzon. The action was long and undecided until reinforcements came up, when the French were driven northwards in disorder. The Bavarians, leaving a brigade to support the IV Corps, moved westward, and reached Raucourt as dusk fell.

The fugitives of the French Division fell back on the main body of the 7th Corps, and threw it into disorder. At Remilly, Bonnemain's cavalry division was still crossing, and the infantry of the corps did not effect the passage till after nightfall. After the defeat at La Thibaudine the cavalry and a portion of the

artillery of the defeated troops reached Mouzon, while the reserve artillery and a portion of the infantry, owing to the breaking of the bridge at Remilly, were diverted by the left bank of the river, on Sedan. The several fractions of the 7th Corps eventually reached the right bank of the Meuse in an exhausted and demoralized condition.

The French retreat was conducted with some ability. De Failly rallied his retiring troops at Villemonty and Mont-de-Brune, under cover of rear-guards in the Bois de Givodeau and on a hill north-east of Yoncq. A brigade of infantry and one of cuirassiers were sent forward by the 12th Corps to Mouzon, in support.

After the capture of Beaumont, the main central attack was pushed by the infantry of the IV Corps, which had deployed on the heights north of the town, and east and west of the high road.

The rear-guard position on the hill above Yoncq was carried with little difficulty; but the French contested the Givodeau wood with great bravery. Eventually the effect of superior numbers told, and the northern edge of the wood was attained. Further progress was for a time impossible, as the open ground in front was swept by the fire from the Mont-de-Brune, Villemonty, and the batteries east of the Meuse.

Late in the afternoon the Mont-de-Brune was taken by an enveloping attack of the 14th Brigade, while the remainder of the division pressed up the Yoncq valley towards Mouzon. The artillery of the IV Corps could now come into action against Mouzon; while three battalions hurried forward to the assault of the suburbs. Further to the right, the support

of the XII Corps enabled the troops to advance from the Givodeau woods, and capture Villemonty. The French were in a hopeless plight, and all resistance ceased at nightfall, on the hither side of the Meuse. Some 3,000 prisoners were taken, with fifty-one guns, while many of the fugitives, after the bridges were broken, escaped by swimming the river.

Comments The surprise at the commencement of the battle cannot be defended, but the gradual withdrawal of De Failly was conducted with admirable dexterity. Contrary to the usually expressed opinions, the French, in this campaign, showed admirable power in withdrawing their troops after an unsuccessful action. The German superiority of force did not reap its full advantage, owing to the conditions of the ground. The German artillery was brought to bear in the first phase of the engagement, but afterwards did little, and the cavalry played an unimportant part. The brunt of the fighting lay on the IV Corps, and the action may be characterized in the main as a slow but steady advance of infantry for some seven miles while driving, from one position to another, the forces of a stubborn opponent.

As in the previous battles, the heaviest loss was sustained by the attacking force; and the brilliant victory cost no less than 3,500 men, the majority of whom belonged to the IV Army Corps. The army of the Meuse had not only defeated the 5th and half of two other corps, but had driven the French army into a very unfavourable position. The possibility of MacMahon being pressed back on the Belgian frontier and forced to cross it, became so apparent that

Bismarck forwarded a message to the authorities at Brussels that, in such an event, the troops should be disarmed. Should the enemy not lay down his arms, the Germans would cross the frontier in pursuit. During the battle, the Saxon cavalry on the right bank of the river reconnoitred towards Mouzon and Carignan, between the Meuse and the Bar. The IV Corps bivouacked on the ground they had conquered in front of Mouzon, the 1st Bavarians occupied Raucourt, while the remaining corps were assembled on the general line of the road leading to Beaumont from the westward. With the exception of the 1st Bavarian Corps, the Third Army took no part in the engagement of August 30, but had gained touch of the Meuse Army by arduous forced marches over bad mountainous roads.

The report of the fighting at Beaumont caused the gravest anxiety at the French Head Quarters. The army had been overtaken by a superior force of the enemy, and it was impracticable to continue the march on Montmédy. Were battle to be accepted at Mouzon, a defeat would necessitate the retirement across the frontier, and a consequent disarmament. After much discussion, orders were given for a general retreat on Sedan, where the troops would be provided with food and ammunition, and, after a short rest, continue the movement on Mézières, to which fortress General Vinoy, with the newly formed 13th Corps, was approaching.

To carry out these instructions necessitated a night march to be carried out under cover of the comparatively unshaken troops of the 1st Corps from Carignan.

and the 12th Corps from Mouzon. The unbridged river prevented any pursuit after the battle of Beaumont; but the retirement soon assumed the character of a rout. The troops had lost confidence in their leaders, and their successive defeats had shaken their self-reliance. The night was dark; the roads blocked with trains; columns crossed and delayed each other, and confusion and disorder reigned.

The lighted torches of a demoralized soldiery pointed out clearly to the enemy the direction of the movement. On the night of the 30th, and up to mid-day on the 31st, the concentration of the army of Châlons was effected at Sedan, covered, on the north bank of the Meuse, by the 1st Corps, which joined in the afternoon.

CHAPTER X

SEDAN

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SEDAN

Events of August 31—French Position—Occupation of Position
—Plan of Attack—Attack on Bazeilles—Ducrot and De
Wimpffen—Western Attack, 10 a m—Southern Attack,
10 a m—Eastern Attack till 5 p m—Western Attack till 5
p m—Close of the Battle—Comments

Aug. 31 It being evident that the French were in full retreat, instructions were issued late on the night of the 30th for both German armies to continue their forward movement. The Meuse Army had the task of preventing the enemy escaping towards Montmédy, and was to detach two of its corps to the right bank of the river. The Third Army was to cut off the retreat to Mézières by moving to the westward of Sedan, and, by the occupation of strong artillery positions on the near bank of the Meuse, to harass the camps and movements of any troops in the valley.

The Guard and XII Corps crossed the river near Letanne (east of Beaumont), and, preceded by their respective cavalry divisions, advanced on Carignan and Douzy, and swept the country between the Meuse and the Chiers. There was evidence everywhere of disorderly retreat; tents, wagons, provisions and baggage were scattered over roads and fields. Troops of the rear-guard were met at Douzy and driven out of it, and the cavalry pushed forward to the vicinity

of Sedan. In the evening the XII Corps occupied Douzy, with the Guard on the other side of the railway. The outposts of the two corps extended in a curve from the Meuse to the Belgian frontier, at a distance of about five miles from the French encampment on the Givonne. The IV Corps had ample work in collecting the materiel left on the battlefield, and remained at Mouzon.

The Third Army had orders to advance northwards, and take up artillery positions on the heights south of the Meuse, and prepare to throw bridges across the river. The I Bavarian Corps moved on Remilly, the XI Corps towards Donchéry, and the Würtemberg division to the river further west, towards Mezières. In second line were the II Bavarian and the V Corps; while the VI Corps and a cavalry division were a long distance in rear, on the line of the Aisne. Away to the left of the concentrated armies was the 6th Cavalry Division advancing on Mezières.

Starting from Remilly in the fog of the early morning, the 4th Cavalry Division reconnoitred the south bank of the river up to the gates of Sedan. As the fog lifted, extensive camps of troops of all arms were seen to the north of the fortress, and the horse artillery opened fire on the railway line, and stopped all traffic. Donchéry was found unoccupied; but progress further west was stopped by infantry of Vinoy's Corps advancing from Mezières.

The I Bavarian Corps had the task of keeping up communications between the Meuse Army and the Third Army. Bringing his batteries into action on

th^e hither slope of the river, General von der Tann drove off disconnected bodies of French from the low ground, and seized the railway bridge at Bazeilles. A battalion pushed across to the village, but, unable to maintain a footing, retired to the bridge, which was carefully guarded. Two pontoon bridges were thrown across a little higher up the river, and a portion of the suburbs of Bazeilles were set on fire by Bavarian shells.

To the left of the Bavarians, the XI Corps advanced on Donchéry, destroyed the railway bridge above the place, and, holding the town with an advanced guard, threw an additional pontoon bridge across the river. On the extreme left, the Würtemberg and 6th Cavalry Divisions came in contact with some of Vinoy's corps, who were attempting to advance eastwards. In immediate support of the leading troops were the V and the II Bavarian Corps.

On the evening of the 31st the contending armies were facing each other, with their advanced troops in immediate contact. The boldly conceived flank march of MacMahon had, owing to defective organization, completely failed, and his army now stood assembled in a curve round the small fortress of Sedan. Opposite the French in their cramped position was a victorious and numerically superior German army, deployed on a broad front.

With the Meuse Army advancing from the east, and the Third Army from the south, the French Marshal could scarcely fail to recognize that the only chance of safety lay in an immediate retreat. That the movement was dangerous and would entail an attack in flank, was obvious; but that it was not risked

can only be explained by the exhausted and demoralized condition of the troops.

After their severe marches, it was at first intended to give the German forces a day's rest. But when it came to be considered that any delay could be turned to better account by an enemy endeavouring to escape, measures were taken to press to the attack the following morning.

Leaving its strategical situation out of the question, the position taken up by the French Army was well calculated for a stubborn defence. Towards the south and west it was protected by the broad valley of the Meuse, which, by damming the river, was completely under water between Sedan and the west side of Bazeilles. The unimportant little fortress was exposed to artillery fire from the heights across the river, and could neither contribute to the defence, nor serve as a rallying point in case of disaster. The heights to the northward attained their greatest elevation in the Calvaire d'Illy, where the two fronts of the army, one facing east and the other north-west, were joined. The eastern boundary of the position was marked by the valley of the Givonne, from the heights of which an effective fire could be brought to bear on almost every point of the opposite field of approach. In front of the north-west portion of the battlefield lay the stream flowing past the villages of Illy and Floing. Continuous ranges of hills formed several ramparts of defence, and ravines and depressions, in conjunction with the Bois de la Garenne (a large wood that covered the centre of the position from Calvaire d'Illy towards

Sedan) and other copses, afforded good cover. In order to advance against the position from the west, a detour had to be made round the bend of the Meuse, on a road presenting the characteristics of a defile. The strongly built village of Bazeilles afforded a support to the eastern front; but its salient position rendered it liable to attack on two sides. In the triangle between the Meuse, Givonne, and Floing brook, the army of Châlons, showing front on three sides, awaited the German attack.

Occupation
of Position In the early morning of September 1 the 12th Corps stood on the heights above Balan and La Moncelle, with a brigade advanced towards Bazeilles. Further to the northward lay the 1st Corps, facing east, on the high ground commanding the Givonne valley, and occupying the villages of Daigny and Givonne. The 7th Corps, with two cavalry divisions, were facing north-west, between Floing and Illy. With the exception of two brigades posted in rear of the flanks of the 7th Corps, the 5th Corps was posted as a central reserve.

No special orders for the day were issued by the French authorities, and it appears that a day of rest was contemplated.

Plan of
Attack On the German side it was still expected that the French would endeavour to retire to Mezières. Instructions were therefore issued that the attack should be pressed at daybreak, while the corps on the left of the Third Army would cut off the only road of retreat. To carry out these views, the Meuse Army were to attack from the eastward, the Bavarian Corps from the south, while the

V and XI Corps pushed forward across the Meuse, and cut the line of retreat. It is evident from the lie of the ground that two principal attacks would be made from the east and the west, while egress to the south would be effectually prevented by a force, mainly of artillery, on the other side of the Meuse.

The attack on Bazeilles, which commenced on August 31, was renewed by the I' Bavarian Corps in the early morning of the next day. A dense fog rested over the valley when the leading brigade crossed the Meuse by the railway and pontoon bridges. The outskirts of the village were unoccupied, and the garrison—a brigade of Marines—entirely surprised. The houses in rear had been placed in a state of defence, and a fluctuating street fight, that lasted some seven hours, was carried on by both sides with great valour and perseverance. At nine o'clock the artillery crossed the bridges, and the whole of the Bavarian Corps was engaged at Bazeilles and at La Moncelle, more to the northward. The advanced guard of the XII Corps, from Douzy, drove the French from La Moncelle, and established communications with the Bavarians while the two divisions of the IV Corps were hurrying up in support. Bazeilles was finally captured shortly after ten o'clock, by the troops of the I Bavarian Corps, fifteen and a half of whose battalions had been engaged in the conflict, but the combat still raged in the outskirts.

Unfortunately for the French, Marshal Ducrot and de Wimpffen MacMahon was wounded in the early morning, on the heights above La Moncelle and handed over the command to General Ducrot.

Believing that an immediate retreat on Mezières was necessary, orders were given at 7 a.m. for the prompt assemblage of the army at Illy. The divisions in second line were to move northwards, covered, as a rear-guard, by the troops that were already engaged. Scarcely had the movement commenced, when General de Wimpffen produced a secret order from the War Minister, authorizing him to take chief command in case of the disability of the Marshal.

De Wimpffen knew that the Crown Prince had crossed the Meuse at Donchéry, and considered the retreat westward impracticable. Under-estimating the forces of the Meuse Army, he was bent on the diametrically opposite course of forcing his way through to Carignan, to effect a junction with Bazaine. The troops which had begun to retire had again to face about, and a formidable attack was initiated against La Moncelle and the ridge to the north of it. Meanwhile, shortly before Bazeilles was captured, a much-needed support arrived from the leading division of the XII Corps, and a vigorous offensive resulted in the capture of the Givonne valley as far as Daigny, while a formidable line of batteries formed on the eastern heights. At the same hour (ten o'clock) the Guard Corps, which had taken the route through Villers-Cernay, had the whole of its batteries in action, in two main groups, on the more northern heights of the Upper Givonne.

The first attempt of de Wimpffen to break out eastward had been completely frustrated, and the retreat westward was already cut off by the advance of the Third Army.

Western
Attack
10 a.m.

In accordance with their orders to start early, the XI Corps, followed by the V, had crossed the Meuse at 6 a.m., and pushed forward from Donchéry to the Sedan-Vrigne-aux-Bois-Mezières road. The Würtemberg Division crossed lower down, and remained in observation towards Mezières, on the line of railway. The advanced patrols saw no sign of the enemy, and the heavy cannonade in the direction of the Givonne made it probable that battle had been accepted in the Sedan position. The Crown Prince ordered an advance through the road-defile leading on St. Menges, with a view to blocking the exit westward, and eventually gaining Fleigneux, and establishing communications with the Meuse Army. The Würtemberg detachment was to protect the rear of the corps from any attack from Mezières.

On emerging from the defile, the advanced infantry drove French detachments out of St. Menges and Floing, and the artillery of the XI Corps formed up on the heights facing the western French position. The weak escort of cavalry and infantry was charged by three regiments of French cavalry, which were repulsed, chiefly by the rapid fire of the needle-gun, in great disorder.

Thus at about ten o'clock—the time when Bazeilles was nearly captured and the offensive French movement against La Moncelle and Daigny checked—the whole of the artillery of the XI Corps was in action, blocking the road westward to Mezières.

Powerful infantry columns, emerging from the defile, were marching on Fleigneux, while the artillery of the V Corps was advancing into action on the left of the

already formed line of guns. The circle of fire around the army of Châlons was even now almost complete, and, from the German point of view, there only remained the prevention of a partial escape towards the Belgian frontier.

Southern
Attack,
10 a.m.

During the attacks that had been taking place to the east and west, the II Bavarian Corps had been advancing to the position assigned to it south of Sedan. The "great Bavarian battery" was united on the heights about Frenois and Wadelincourt, and with the help of the corps artillery of the IV Corps further eastward, effectively barred any attempt to break out in a southerly direction.

The victory, in a strategic sense, was already gained, and it was now necessary to push the attacks on all sides till the hopelessness of further resistance was made apparent.

Eastern
Attack
till 5 p.m.

After the capture of Bazeilles, a powerful line of guns came into action to the westward of La Moncelle, and a stubbornly contested advance was made towards the fortress. Aided by reinforcements from the II Bavarians and the IV Corps, the French were driven back to the Fond de Givonne and the outskirts of Balan.

The newly arrived Bavarian brigades succeeded in taking and holding the village for a time. Though forced to give way by a vigorous counter-attack about one o'clock, Balan was again retaken, and held to the close of the battle.

The original orders of the Saxon Crown Prince were for the XII Corps to march to the heights by Illy, and, jointly with the Guard Corps, to prevent an

escape into Belgian territory. The 1st Bavarians were to cover the movement by holding Daigny and the Bois de Garenne. The exhausting nature of the fight at Bazeilles rendered this movement impossible, and it was not till after noon that the 23rd Saxon Division advanced up the valley on the western side. But between one and two o'clock, when the state of affairs near Bazeilles was not unfavourable, General de Wimpffen, reverting to his original plan, sent instructions to all the force to assemble, in order to break out towards Carignan. The orders either did not reach the corps, or reached them too late, and the only result was that, at about three o'clock, two divisions advanced from the Fond de Givonne over the ridge to the eastward.

With the support of the left wing of the Guard Corps, this attack on the marching Saxons was repelled, and the hostile masses driven back to the plateau. As soon as a firm footing was established on the heights west of Daigny, the whole of the artillery of the XII Corps came into action. The spirit of the French seemed utterly broken at this period, and hundreds of prisoners were taken.

Farther to the north, the advanced troops of the Guard Corps occupied Givonne without much difficulty; and the Guard cavalry, dashing up the valley, established a connection with the Third Army, north of Illy. The Bois de Garenne still remained to be gained. A heavy concentrated fire of all the Guard batteries shelled the woods, and, under cover of the cannonade, the 1st Guard Division in the valley climbed the western heights shortly after two o'clock. A wild scene of

confusion ensued. Pressing forward on the east were troops of the Guard and XII Corps, while from the north and west portions of the Third Army were closing in. Isolated bands offered stubborn resistance, while others surrendered by thousands. It was not till five o'clock that the battle ceased, and the main body of the Corps of Guards gained the plateau of Calvaire d'Illy.

Western The infantry of the Third Army gradually
Attack emerged from the defile, and spread to
till 3 p.m. the northward, following the artillery. By
eleven o'clock the batteries of the V Corps were massed on the high ground south of Fleigneux, to the left of the artillery of the XI Corps, and a line of twenty-six batteries crossed their fire with that of the Guard batteries on the eastern slope of the Givonne valley. The effect was overwhelming. The fire completely dominated the open slope, and every attempt by the French to advance was beaten back. Constantly arriving reinforcements poured into the captured villages of Floing and Illy, while skirmishers were pushing forward into the interval between them.

De Wimpffen, on realizing the serious nature of the attack, ordered reinforcements of the 5th and 1st Corps to the assistance of Douay, and rejoined the 12th Corps, which he found retiring before the Bavarian attack on the other side of the battlefield. Help for Douay was imperative, and the resulting marching and counter-marching were executed on the ground dominated by fire, both from east and west, of the German artillery. The resulting confusion led to the

abandonment of the Calvaire d'Illy at two o'clock, and the retreat of many battalions into the insecure cover of the Bois de Garenne.

Of the troops of the 7th Corps, one division still maintained a strong position to the north of Cazal. A vigorous attack was made by some seventeen battalions of the V and XI Corps, which had gradually been accumulated near Floing, and were now climbing the steep slopes to the eastward. To arrest this movement, General Ducrot ordered Margueritte's cavalry division to charge over the ground east of Floing, and then, if possible, by wheeling up, to take the enemy's advancing line in flank. Three times was the charge renewed, but, though the enemy's skirmishers were ridden through, the supports in line mowed down the squadrons with such a withering fire that a breach was nowhere made. The gallant charge of the French cavalry resulted in the loss of half their numbers, but could not change the fate of the day. The Prussian infantry, which had lost but little in the interlude, pressed forward and stormed Cazal, while the French drew off to their last refuge in the Bois de Garenne.

Close of
the Battle Early in the afternoon fugitives from all parts of the battlefield began flocking into Sedan. After three o'clock the confusion was so great that the demoralized French soldiery were deaf to the remonstrances and heedless of the threats of their officers. On the heights near Frénois the Prussian King, to convince the enemy of the hopelessness of his position, ordered the Bavarian artillery to concentrate their fire on the fortress. Pillars of smoke soon rose in several places, and the Bavarian rifle-

men were preparing to storm the Torey gate, when the white flag of surrender was hoisted.

Negotiations were carried on during the night, but it was not till 11 a.m. the following day that the terms were finally arranged for the disarmament and captivity of the entire French Army. The victory cost the German Army 460 officers and 8,500 men, while the French losses amounted to 17,000 men, and were chiefly due to the fire of the artillery. During the battle 21,000 prisoners were taken, and at the capitulation 83,000 surrendered—a total of 104,000 prisoners of war. The French troops were assembled on the peninsula of Iges, formed by the bend of the Meuse. The XI and I Bavarian Corps were told off to escort them westward in convoys of 2,000 men by the roads to Etain and Pont-à-Mousson, where they would be taken charge of by the troops investing Metz, and forwarded to Germany.

Comments The main losses of the French Army were due to artillery fire, and Sedan was essentially an artillery battle. With the exception of the fighting at Bazeilles, the action of infantry was deferred until the guns had produced their full effect. The deployed batteries of the V and XI Corps had, for a time, to defend their own front with fire, and that they should have been allowed to emerge from the road-defile of St. Menges with so little loss seems unaccountable. The attack from both sides of a position of little depth led to a cross-fire, which effectually checked the movements of the French from side to side, while towards the close of the battle there was little refuge left from the bursting shells.

The German infantry fought almost entirely in open order. To advance in column under the fire of the superior French rifle was impossible, and the company columns in support could not, for long, retain their closed formations. The tactical lessons of the war had already been learnt, and the dangers of open order formations and intermingling of units were counteracted by the discipline and devotion of the men, and the able control of the regimental officers.

The vigorous charges of the French cavalry had but little effect, and afford one more proof of the often told tale that steady infantry has nothing to fear from mounted men under the ordinary conditions of the modern fire fight.

The ten days' campaign against the army of Châlons forms one of the most striking phases of the War of Invasion. A second French army had assembled at Châlons, while the whole of the German forces not occupied with the investment of Metz were marching on a broad front towards Paris. The plan projected by the French Ministry for the relief of Bazaine was undoubtedly bold in its conception, though difficult to defend on strategical grounds. To successfully evade the attack of the advancing German force by a flank march two conditions were necessary—sufficient time to gain a fair start, and ample space to develop the movement. On the day Châlons was left, the most northern German corps was in the vicinity of Verdun, and a march had to be effected between that fortress and the Belgian frontier. Assuming the greatest expedition to have been used, it would have been impossible, under ordinary circumstances, to

escape the notice of the cavalry of the Meuse Army, and contact with the enemy would have taken place somewhere in the vicinity of Montmédy or Etain. If an extensive territory had existed to the northward, it might have been possible to make a wide detour and thus escape observation; but the limited zone for manœuvring forbade the hope of any such advantage. To gain the requisite time on the enemy, it was necessary to draw him further away from Metz, either towards Paris or the south, or, by a feint, deceive him as to the projected movement. As it happened, the German armies were in a central position, and able to take advantage of the lesser distances they had to traverse on the interior lines they occupied.

In addition to the strategical difficulties of the situation, the army of Châlons did not possess the degree of preparedness for war that was necessary to the requirements demanded of it. Although stores of provisions were collected at several points, the system of distribution to the troops was defective, and caused considerable distress. The supreme command was, moreover, held in a state of indecision and hesitancy as to whether purely military considerations, or the fate of a dynasty, was to have the predominance. In spite of these unfavourable circumstances, a partial success was at one time by no means impossible.

Although precious hours were lost in the movement on Rheims and Rethel, yet on August 25 a force of 150,000 men was on the flank of the German advance, and might, if expedition had been used, have beaten in detail the northern corps of the Meuse Army. Whether Metz could have been reached is a matter

of opinion; but undoubtedly a well-timed sortie by Bazaine would have given an impulse towards success.

To an army incapable, from its nature, of rapid manœuvring, the safest movement was a retirement towards the fortified Capital, where a prolonged stand might be counted on, and an investment rendered nearly impossible. As, however, in the political situation this course was forbidden, it would seem that a retreat to the north-west towards Laon, drawing the German armies after it, would have been advisable. Paris might have been left to defend itself (as it was afterwards compelled to do) with the nucleus of regular troops it possessed. The further advance of the German forces would be endangered by the position of a powerful field army on its flank, and, in any event, time would be gained. The deplorable slowness of the marching, and the insufficient scouting of cavalry that led to the surprises at Nouart and Beaumont, have already been alluded to, and, combined with the want of definite purpose in the supreme direction, formed a series of secondary faults that conduced in no small measure to the disastrous capitulation.

The unfortunate delay at Sedan on August 31 is not easy to understand. The last decisive hours were passed in apparent self-delusion as to the hopelessness of the situation. The retreat on Mezières, according to MacMahon's opinion, would have been practicable on the morning of September 1; but it is inexplicable that, as a precautionary measure, more care was not taken in scouting with cavalry along the flank of the projected movement, and destroying the bridges over the Meuse, as well as securing the defile through which

the army must pass. That MacMahon was wounded in the early morning was unfortunate; but no explanation has been given as to the reason of the presence of the Marshal in the front line of battle. The whole Head Quarter Staff, apparently, accompanied their leader to Sedan, and thus left Ducrot without information as to the state of affairs. As soon as the retirement ordered by Ducrot had commenced, de Wimpffen, making use of the secret order given him by the Minister of War, assumed command, and sent the troops back to their former positions, with a view to making a sally to the eastward. Neither commander appeared to realize the exact situation. The numbers of the German forces were underestimated, and it was apparently thought the whole attacking force was the Meuse Army under the Crown Prince of Saxony. That the Third Army, under the Crown Prince of Prussia, was already on the field was not known till the battle was virtually over.

It has been maintained that the German strategy was over-cautious, and that a portion of their forces might have been, after August 25, detached towards Paris. It is difficult, however, to see that much advantage would have been gained. The Capital was too strongly fortified to have been taken by storm, and the great advantage of numerical superiority over the sole French army in the field would have been thrown away.

The manner in which the strategical wheel of the German armies was carried out is worthy of detailed study. As long as the flank movement of MacMahon was *improbable*, the orders only affected the length of

marches of the various corps, and not their direction. When the relief of Bazaine seemed to be *possible*, the orders issued prepared for a conversion to the right; but it was only when accurate information arrived that the troops started on the northward march. The first movements were directed to a concentration on the eastern bank of the Meuse, and at the same time lent themselves to the possibility of attack on the western side of the river.

The system and style of orders was very different in the contending armies. On the one hand a confident superior command gave general directions in brief terms, and allowed subordinate leaders freedom to act independently and carry out the necessary details. Opposed to this procedure was an undermined authority and over-centralized staff system, which attempted to deal in detail with all its army units.

CHAPTER XI

METZ

CHAPTER XI

METZ

Investment of Metz—Sortie of August 26—Battle of Noisleville,
August 31—September 1—Comments—The Investment in
October—Sortie, October 7—The Capitulation—Comments.

Investment of Metz THE movement of the Meuse and the Third Armies that resulted in the capitulation of Sedan had left about one-half of the German forces stationary round Metz. The investment of the fortress formed no part of the original plan of campaign, and it had been intended merely to observe the place with a division of reserve troops while the main advance westward was taking place. The retirement of the army of the Rhine within the circle of the detached forts necessitated their being surrounded, and the army prevented from breaking out to effect a junction with the remaining French forces in the field.

The German corps bivouacked in the positions they had attained on the night of Gravelotte, and pushed forward the next day to an average distance of two miles in front of the detached forts. Deducting the troops of the newly-formed Meuse Army, there were available for a blockade the entire First Army (I, VII, and VIII Corps): four corps of the Second Army (II, III, IX, and X Corps); one reserve division, and two cavalry divisions; in all, a force of 154,460 infantry, 14,435

cavalry, and 642 guns. The forces at Bazaine's disposal within the fortress were estimated at about 200,000 men.

The X Corps occupied the wooded slopes of the lower Moselle to the northwards, while the II and VIII Corps were posted on the conquered battlefield from St. Privat to Jussy. The VII Corps was astride the Upper Moselle, while the III and IX Corps, with a cavalry division, formed a general reserve to the westward of the fortress. On the right bank of the river, the reserve division was to the north-east, while the I Corps was spread over a wide curve extending from Faily and Servigny to Ars Lacquenexy. Between the I and VII Corps, a cavalry division formed a connecting link. The foremost line of outposts embraced a circuit of over twenty-eight miles, and it was evident that the resources of field fortification must be utilized, in order to resist a serious attack. The ulterior object of Bazaine being a march westward, the main bulk of the forces were kept on the left bank of the river. The following general principles were laid down for the guidance of the corps commanders. Sorties to the north and south were to be opposed in front by troops holding the bridges, and attacked in flank by all available troops. Any attempt westward was to be resisted energetically by all the troops on the left bank, while an outbreak to the eastward, if vigorously pushed, might be allowed to succeed.

The investing lines were rapidly put in a state of defence, and behind them were made roads, communications, lines of telegraph, magazines, hospitals, and posts of observation. As no attempt was made to break

out for some days, the lines were gradually pushed forward, and the girdle of troops, occupying every point of vantage, was drawn together more tightly.

News of the army of Châlons was now anxiously expected. It was known that there was secret communication between the two French armies; and the German Head Quarters was convinced that a plan was being formed of their junction along the northern frontier of France.

A telegram arrived on August 25 that Marshal MacMahon had left Châlons; but his objective was not known. Metz was also astir, and the troops were noticed to be in constant movement to the north-east of the fortress. Anticipating a possible sortie towards Thionville, the German I and IX Corps moved northwards, while the X Corps crossed some of its battalions to the right bank of the river, in support of the Reserve Division.

Bazaine, on August 19. had announced to the Emperor his intention of re-continuing his march westward by the more northerly routes of Briey and Thionville, and was under the impresssion that the army of Châlons would advance towards Verdun to meet him. He determined, accordingly, to retard the march of the enemy towards the Meuse by drawing the bulk of his forces to the right bank of the river. If the projected sortie had favourable results, he would be enabled to profit by it in taking ground towards Thionville.

Sortie,
Aug. 26 With this view, the greater portion of the French forces were assembled by noon on August 26 to the eastward of Fort St. Julien. The German advanced posts were driven in; but no

further measures were taken to forward a general attack, and orders were issued for the troops to return to their former positions. It appears that at a conference of the corps commanders it was decided that, in consideration of the deficiency of ammunition and the comparatively defenceless position of the forts, it was inadvisable to continue the movement. The whole affair may be considered as a demonstration, or parade manœuvre, and Bazaine appears at the moment to be influenced as much by political as by military considerations. It seemed quite possible that an army in Metz might yet play a decisive rôle, either in determining the terms of peace, or in threatening the communications of an adversary pressing forward to Paris.

On the same night, the German Head Quarters were roused with the news that MacMahon was marching on Sedan, and that it was necessary to detach two army corps from the investing force to prevent him crossing the Meuse. The II and III Corps were accordingly detached to the westward, which weakened the investing force, but it was known that the newly formed XIII Corps was already within a short distance. Information as to MacMahon's march subsequently reached Bazaine, and it seemed probable that a sortie would be attempted without much further delay. An issue to the west could not be forced, and there only remained the possible courses of breaking out to the south-east towards Belfort, or to the northward towards Thionville. The latter course entailed more danger and greater obstacles, but the march would be in the direction of the army of Châlons, whose approach was reported.

Battle of Noisseville, which the army of Châlons reached Sedan Aug. 13 — the army of the Rhine prepared to issue from Metz. As the mist rose, long columns of troops were seen to be filing across the river, while large masses appeared to be assembled near Fort St. Julien.

A number of pontoon bridges had been thrown across the Moselle below Metz, and it was anticipated that by noon five French corps would be ready to attack the section of the investing line from Retonfay to the river. To oppose this sortie, there were in position only two German divisions ; but in the morning Prince Frederick Charles despatched reinforcements from the left to the right bank of the Moselle, and General Steinmetz forwarded such troops as could be dispensed with from the weakly-held southern line of investment. The divisions of the IX Corps were concentrated to the northward in readiness to cross.

It was the intention of the Marshal to gain the neighbourhood of Thionville by the road leading from the plateau of St. Barbe, as well as by the direct route through Malroy, and at the same time, if necessary, to maintain his ground firmly on the left bank of the Moselle. By directing the sortie to the north-east, it was his design to leave the adversary as long as possible in doubt whether an attempt to break through to the northward was contemplated, or whether it was intended to sever the German communications lying to the south. It was, moreover, necessary to gain ground in an eastern direction in order to secure the right flank of a direct advance northward, as the German artillery from Servigny swept, with their fire, the plain as far as the

Moselle. The ground towards St. Barbe favoured the deployment on a broad front of the French Army, and as the Germans were in weak force, a temporary success was not unlikely. The ultimate result could not be foreseen, but the movement was decidedly hazardous. The investing forces on the left bank would move forward in a northerly direction, while the still effective parts of Manteuffel's troops would hang on the flanks and rear. Even should Bazaine gain Thionville, any further progress along the Luxemburg and Belgian frontier would be subject to the attack, in flank, by the bulk of the German forces. The risk, however, had to be faced, and there was the possible contingency of a diversion being effected by the advance eastward of the army of Châlons.

The measures for assembling the French troops on the right bank of the Moselle have been criticized with some severity. Every moment lost was to the advantage of an adversary spread over a wide front. The 4th and 6th Corps crossed each other at the bridges, and did not arrive at their positions till one o'clock. The Guard did not come up till near three; the reserve artillery till six; and the cavalry till nine o'clock p.m. It was not till after noon that Bazaine assembled his generals, and gave the verbal instructions to advance to the attack at two o'clock. Marshal le Bœuf, with the 3rd Corps, was to outflank the St. Barbe plateau from the south, while the 4th Corps attacked it in front. The 2nd Corps was to follow the 3rd, and protect its right flank in the advance. The 6th Corps was to push forward on the direct Malroy road, while the Guard was held back in reserve.

The early afternoon passed without any movement of importance, and the Germans had retired part of their reinforcements when, at four o'clock, the heavy guns of Fort St. Julien preluded an general attack.

It was evident that an attack was about to be made on the St. Barbe position held by the bulk of the I Army Corps. After some discussion, it was decided to fight on the front line of Servigny-Failly, as the ground afforded better scope for the use of artillery. A Landwehr brigade was ordered up from Antilly (where it was replaced by part of the IX Corps); while ten batteries were brought into action in front of the villages.

Behind a powerful line of batteries, the 4th French Corps formed up for the attack on Servigny and Failly, and in the artillery contest that ensued the German guns obtained the mastery, and for a long time checked any forward movement. Further to the south, the 3rd Corps batteries formed up on both sides of the Vallière stream, and the infantry, pressing forward with vigour, captured Noisseville, Montoy, and Flanville, and forced back the German outposts further south.

While a partial success was being obtained in this quarter of the field, determined attacks were being made by the 4th Corps and a division of the 6th Corps, and the German artillery was forced to retire from the forward position in front of Servigny. The outskirts of the village were carried, but again retaken by a counter-attack. The fight seemed now everywhere ended; but at nine o'clock a French division advanced in the darkness without firing, and drove out th

by a hand-to-hand fight. The nearest German troops rushed to arms, and quickly repelled the intruders.

The German 1st Division at Servigny had maintained its position against an enemy of superior strength; but the French had penetrated the investment line further south, and the capture of Noisseville seriously menaced the flank of the troops on the St. Barbe plateau.

In expectation of a renewed attack, the September 1 remainder of the IX Corps were passed over to the right bank of the river, and posted one division on the line Malroy-Failly, and the other in reserve at St. Barbe, while a brigade was sent from Courcelles northward, to reinforce the I Corps on its left.

Early in the morning, a Prussian brigade deployed on the Saarlouis road, to prevent the further progress of the enemy on the left flank of the 1st Division. When the mist rose, a powerful artillery fire was directed on Noisseville, and the village was subsequently carried by storm. Two French brigades now struck in, and drove out the assailants. Further south, Montoy and Flanville were captured, mainly through the effect of artillery fire. Guns, both from the north and south, now commenced to deploy in a great mass about Retonfay, and formed a rampart against any further progress of the 2nd and 3rd French Corps. The combined fire of the German batteries south of Servigny, on Noisseville, for some two hours produced an enormous effect. The village was everywhere in flames; the enemy's guns in the neighbourhood silenced; and every attempt to bring up fresh reinforcements checked. Towards eleven o'clock the village was captured, and the fighting had died out from the French right wing.

On the northern front, the 6th Corps made two fruitless attempts against Faily, while the 4th French Corps rested in their positions opposite Servigny. An advance further west of Canrobert's corps, after a temporary success, was driven back by the Reserve Division, supported by part of the IX Corps. All fighting was broken off by midday, and the French Army again retired within the circle of the detached forts.

The army of the Rhine engaged at Noisseville numbered about 120,000 men ; and to this was opposed some 70,000 Germans, but of the combatants only about half were actually under fire. The loss in killed and wounded on each side amounted to about 3,000 men. On the day of the capitulation of Sedan the remainder of the French forces retired from the battlefield to an apparently hopeless detention in Metz.

Comments According to his own statement, the tardiness of Bazaine, when attacking on the 31st, was due to a wish that as many of the German troops as possible should be drawn to the right bank of the river, both with the view of facilitating MacMahon's movements, and preventing them from anticipating him near Thionville on the left bank. How to reconcile these views with the intentions of piercing the line of investment, is not easy. It may, at all events, be fairly concluded that the battle was waged throughout in a half-hearted manner, with an ill-defined object, and was, therefore, not likely to be attended with success.

Whereas in all previous battles the Germans had played the part of assailants, the opportunity was now, for the first time, afforded them of testing the value of their troops in a defensive struggle. The effect of

massed artillery and a superior fire discipline was again strikingly exemplified. The French batteries were in every case overpowered, and the infantry attack held in check. The bombardment of Noisseville revealed the fact that under the modern fire of an adequate number of guns no village is tenable. Comparatively little use was apparently made of shelter-trenches and field entrenchments, and the defence of the infantry was mainly characterized by its frequent and vigorous counter-attacks.

The line of investment had stood its first test. It became evident that with a thorough method of communication any attempt at breaking out would be met by reinforcements acting on the flanks with telling effect. It was not a rigid ring that encircled the enemy, but a flexible chain, which, if it yielded to the onset of a force at one point, clung with the more force to its flanks as it advanced.

The In consequence of the ineffective sortie of
Investment Noisseville and the disaster at Sedan, it
in October became probable that the next effort for
deliverance would be made in a southerly direction. Strassburg still held out; Belfort was not threatened; and a sally across the main German lines of communication presented obvious advantages. The investing corps on the south and south-east were accordingly reinforced, and the newly arrived XIII Corps placed so as to cover the roads down the valley of the Seille.

Meanwhile, the beleaguered army maintained a waiting attitude. The supplies for the regular garrison and inhabitants were calculated to last for months; but for the army of the Rhine there was only sustenance

in store for some forty days, and there was little forage for the horses. The compulsory inactivity and the bad weather dealt hardly, also, with the investing forces. It had not yet been possible to provide sufficient shelter for the troops on the wide circle of the blockade, and over 40,000 men were in hospital. The supply of provisions and forage for 200,000 men and 30,000 horses was a work of difficulty, as the country in the vicinity of the fortress had been cleared. A temporary abandonment of the investment was contemplated; but events passed so quickly that this bold, but not very hazardous, course was not carried out.

Early in September a distribution of horse flesh was substituted in the fortress for the ordinary meat rations, and it was evident that a passive resistance could not long be prolonged. With a view to procuring what scanty supplies there might be in the vicinity, sorties were made in all directions from the 22nd to the 27th of the month. In this species of petty warfare the French soldiers displayed great dexterity, and their experience in Africa, Mexico, and the colonies proved of service. In proportion as the blockade continued, the chance of breaking out grew less. The energy and fitness for work of the troops were impaired; the horses were diminishing in number, and the entrenchments round the fortress were daily increasing in strength.

By the end of the month, Strassburg and Toul had fallen, and it appeared, in consequence, probable that any future sorties would be directed to the northward. The garrison of Thionville had been displaying especial activity in scouring the country for stores, and the fortress would form an important rallying point, if

the line of investment could be broken. The troops before Thionville were accordingly reinforced, and the corps blockading Metz increased their strength on the northern side.

Under cover of the fire of the forts, the French established themselves firmly in Lessy and Ladonchamps, on October 2, and made preparations for a sortie in force on the 7th instant.

The attack towards Bellevue, on the left bank of the river, was made with great impetuosity, and the combat raged along the full breadth of the Moselle valley. Bazaine apparently at first intended to break through with part of his troops, but his heart failed him at the last. The reserves were not pushed into the fight, and at nightfall the Germans reoccupied the outpost line, and retained their positions.

It is possible that the sortie was only a tentative preliminary to a real effort to break through; but the heavy losses sustained, combined with the bad weather, rendered it unlikely that any further sortie would be attended with success.

As a result of a council of war, held on October 10, it was decided that an attempt should be made to gain honourable terms of surrender, and, if unacceptable conditions were imposed, to make a final, desperate effort to escape. Owing to the fall of the Empire, and the absence of any stable Government in the country, negotiations as to the terms of peace were carried on for some days. Defeated in the open, then invested and driven back in every attempt to break through, the French Army had at last to accept the unwelcome conditions offered it, there

The Cap-
tulation

being no choice between surrender and starvation. By the terms of the capitulation, signed on October 27, the whole army of the Rhine, 173,000 strong, became prisoners of war, and the fortress of Metz, with all its stores and matériel delivered over into the hands of the conquerors.

Comments The investment of an army of 170,000 men in a powerful fortress by a force but little stronger than itself seems a matter requiring explanation. With 130,000 men available to take the field from a central position against a line of investment 33 miles in extent, it is obvious that numerical superiority at any one point could always be gained. It had hitherto been laid down that a large entrenched camp, protected by permanent detached forts, and possessed of a powerful field army could only with difficulty be invested by a force at least three times the strength of the garrison. Modern conditions of warfare have, however, modified these views—chiefly from the great defensive power of the present firearms when combined with earth entrenchments, and the facilities for massing troops afforded by telegraphs and railways. When the ground is favourable for investment, it seems feasible to blockade an army with a force less than double its strength, provided sufficient time is allowed to throw up works of circumvallation. On the other hand, it appears that fortresses have lost their value as a protection to a large field army. The works, temporary or permanent, may enable a force to gain time in its resistance, but it does so at the expense of its mobility. A great camp has a sort of magnetic attraction to a weak army; but delay within the circle of its en-

trenchments leads to disaster. For an army in the field, the true value of a fortress lies in its forming a pivot of manœuvre and base of supply, and it should not be used as a base of refuge.

If of necessity an army is driven within a fortified camp, it would seem that its main object should be so to use its position as to render a complete investment impossible; in other words, to wage a series of offensive battles at the commencement of the blockade. By holding the ground gained in each effort till the mass of investing troops came to the attack, and then taking the offensive against another portion of the investing circle, on the interior lines naturally possessed by the besieged, a blockade by any but very superior forces would be rendered very difficult.

So far in the case of large armies; but if an entrenched camp has, besides its garrison, an effective and mobile field force of the strength of an army corps it would be apparent that, on account of the ground to be covered, the investment would have to be carried out by a large number of troops. According to these views, Bazaine, when once within the area of the detached force, had two courses open to him; either to pierce the lines of investment, and gain the open country (leaving powerful and mobile garrison behind him), or to take such vigorous measures after August 18 as to prevent the effectual closing of the blockading lines.

The battle of Noisseville appears the only serious effort that was undertaken; but the successes gained in it were not followed up, nor was the superiority in numbers of the French forces utilized. Had the Staff been more able, the concentration of troops might have

been completed early on the morning of August 31, and there would have been a whole day available for forcing the German lines. To commence at four o'clock in the afternoon a battle in which, above all, time and celerity of movement were indispensable, points somewhat clearly to a want of defined purpose in the chief command. Whether the direction of the intended movement towards Thionville was judicious or not is a matter of opinion. Had Bazaine gained that fortress, it is undoubted that the strong German force on the left bank of the Moselle would have followed him and forced him to give battle in a position critically near the Luxemburg frontier.

The most feasible quarter for a sortie seems to have been the south-east; and that an effort in this direction could not have been stopped—at all events at the commencement of the investment—seems evident enough from the perusal of the German orders. Even if the trains had been left behind, the French Army would traverse the main German lines of communication, and could obtain supplies of stores and provisions; while such a movement would cause the greatest embarrassment to the enemy. What would have been the ultimate fate of the escaped army it is difficult to conjecture; but assuming the worst, it would not entail the loss of the Metz forts.

∴ The charge of treason made against Bazaine has scarcely been proved; but at the same time it cannot be denied that his despatches to MacMahon after Gravelotte were misleading, and conveyed an idea which he had little intention of carrying out. The whole tenor of his conduct in the defective arrangements made for

passing his troops from one bank of the river to the other; the deliberate concealment of his knowledge of the movements of the army of Châlons and the deceptive statements about lack of warlike stores, lead inevitably to the conclusion that he had at no time any strong desire to quit the vicinity of the detached forts. Whether this tendency to immobility resulted from any political plans for personal aggrandisement, or was merely the natural consequence of fearing to lose, by defeat, an already acquired military reputation, is a matter for dispute. It is surely unnecessary to impute the disgraceful charge of betraying his country to the distinguished French Marshal. A man by nature confident, paralysed by the untoward course of events, unable to cope with surrounding difficulties, unwilling to admit, even to himself, that he was unequal to the situation, might take refuge in the half-hearted policy of remaining quiet till fortune again smiled upon him. The consequences, however, were most disastrous. MacMahon would undoubtedly have not undertaken his perilous flank march unless he had been assured of the co-operation of the army of the Rhine. Even, however, if a union had been effected in the vicinity of the Lower Meuse, the position would still have been most critical, in view of the nature of the country and the close proximity of the Belgian frontier.

CHAPTER XII

PARIS

CHAPTER XII

PARIS

Fall of the Empire—Defences of Paris—German Plan of Operation;—
Retreat of Vinoy—March on Paris—Investment of Paris;—
Plan for its Reduction—Comments—Reduction of Tonl—
Siege of Strassburg—Comments.

As a result of the catastrophe of Sedan, the
Fall of the French Empire was overturned by a bloodless
revolution on September 4, and a Provisional
Government formed for the National Defence, under the
presidency of General Trochu. "War to the bitter end"
was its motto, and the entire nation was to be called
to arms. Not a mile of territory, not a stone of the
fortresses was to be ceded to the enemy.

With the army of the Rhine invested in
Defences Metz, and the army of Châlons prisoners,
of Paris the only immediate bulwark of defence was
Paris. Surrounded on two sides by a complex water-
line, and on the remaining circumference by a double
rampart of hills, the natural defensive power of the
Capital was great. Exclusive of the inner bastioned
line, the city was surrounded by a girdle of sixteen
detached forts of powerful type, which, however,
possessed the disadvantage of being situated on the inner
range of hills, and too near the enceinte to fulfil modern
conditions. Several works were designed for the
outer range of heights, but as time did not admit of

their completion or occupation, these commanding positions were at the service of an enemy.

Energetic measures were at once taken to complete the armament of the forts and increase their powers by the addition of naval guns of large calibre.

Inclusive of the 13th and newly formed 14th Corps, marines, coastguards, police, etc., the regular forces of the garrison amounted to 80,000 men. Besides these, in second line, were 115,000 Garde Mobiles, and 130 battalions of National Guards. On the Seine were some floating batteries and gunboats, while armoured-plated trucks were ready for use on the railroads.

Paris was the base of supply for the army of the Rhine; but as soon as it was threatened, vast stores were added for the victualling of the city. Amongst other items were 3,000 oxen, 6,000 swine, and 180,000 sheep; and the Capital with its 2,000,000 inhabitants, might well calculate on holding out for several weeks.

On the German side there were many difficulties to overcome. A large portion of its army was occupied in investing Metz, Strassburg, and the numerous small fortresses that blocked the lines of communications. The transport and guarding of some 200,000 prisoners required the services of many men; while the losses in fighting, especially of officers, could not easily be replaced. Every advance forward demanded more men to protect the lines of rail and supply, and after Sedan not more than 150,000 troops were available for field operations. It was evident, however, that the objective must now be Paris; and on the very day of the capitulation of the army of Châlons dispositions were made for the renewal of the advance westwards.

German Plan of Operations There was no hesitation as to the proper military course to pursue after Sedan. The reduction of the Capital was the only means of overcoming opposition in a country so strongly centralized as France, and it would at the same time ensure a guarantee for the execution of the desired Treaty of Peace.

The first thing to be done was to open out from the closely concentrated positions, and enable the two armies to advance on a broad front to Paris, north and south of the Marne. By the change of direction initiated on August 25, the lines of supply had been inverted, and it was desirable that each corps should recover its trains as soon as possible.

The advance westward of the Meuse Army was checked until the Third Army made two long marches to the Marne, their right passing by Rethel and Rheims. As soon as their front was cleared, the Meuse Army advanced westwards towards Laon; while the Third Army, south of the Marne, made short marches, so as to allow all the corps to come up into line. No opposition by large bodies of troops was to be expected, but the cavalry divisions were to scout far to the front, and to be supported by horse artillery, and infantry carried in carts.

Retreat of Vinoy The only regular French troops in the field were Vinoy's 13th Corps, which had been hurried up to Mezières, and of which only one brigade had been engaged on the day of Sedan. On hearing of the issue of the battle, the General, after enjoining the strictest discipline, made a night march towards Rethel, which he expected to find occupied by one of his divisions. In the early morning of

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September 2, the French troops came in contact with the scouts of the 5th and 6th German Cavalry Divisions; but it was not till he was within seven miles of Rethel that he learnt it was in hostile possession. Turning off to the westward, he determined to escape towards Laon the following night, and eventually, with the whole of his corps, reached Paris.

The German General at Rethel, meanwhile, being warned of the enemy's approach, marched to the northward; and on the forenoon of September 3 a French and German division had passed each other, travelling in opposite directions, within a distance of about four miles.

That the hasty retreat of Vinoy remained unobserved and unchecked was due to an order sent to the cavalry divisions and the VI Corps to at once advance on Rheims, where a large force of the enemy was (falsely) reported to be assembling.

On September 15 the three corps of the
March
on Paris Meuse Army north of the Marne, together with
three corps of the Third Army south of the
river, occupied a line thirty miles east of Paris, extending from Villers-Cotterets to Rozoy. Each army was preceded by two cavalry divisions; while coming up in rear of the Third Army were the two corps which had conveyed the prisoners of Sedan to the vicinity of Metz, and the Würtemberg division.

The orders issued from the Head Quarters at Meaux charged the Meuse Army with the investment to the northward, in a wide arc extending from the Marne, above Paris, to the Seine, below it. The Third Army was to advance its left across the Seine as the troops

in rear came up ; and to send forward its cavalry to establish connection west of Paris with the Meuse Army, and at the same time reconnoitre towards the Loire. Should any attempt to relieve the city be made from the southward, the investment was to be left temporarily to weak detachments, while the bulk of the Third Army advanced to a distance of not more than one or two days' march to meet the enemy.

The march of the troops on the north side of Paris met with no interruption except that caused by the repair of bridges, and the investment was completed by the Meuse Army without opposition.

On the 18th the V Corps of the Third Army had crossed the Seine at Villeneuve St. Georges, followed by a portion of the VI Corps ; while, further south, the II Bavarians were on the flank. Some troops of the advanced guard of the column nearest Paris met detachments of the 14th French Corps, and drove them back to Bicêtre, on the edge of the Chatillon Plateau. Knowing the importance of the outer heights, General Ducrot determined to hold possession of them, and in vain appealed for the 13th Corps to be placed under his orders.

Early on the 19th, when the 9th Division
Combat at
Chatillon (V Corps) was continuing its advance on

Versailles, it was attacked by the superior forces of Ducrot in the outpost position it held on the Chatillon Plateau. The nearest troops were pushed up in support, and the remainder of the V Corps arrested in its march. Meanwhile, the leading division of the II Bavarians was moving northwards towards Paris from Long Jumeau, and a combined attack in front and

flank drove back the enemy in disorder. Some further resistance was offered to the advance towards Paris of the Bavarians; but in the afternoon the redoubt of Chatillon and all the recently erected earthworks on the plateau were in the hands of the German troops, while the V Corps succeeded in reaching its destination at Versailles. By the evening, the cavalry had joined hands on the Seine with their comrades of the Meuse Army, and the investment was complete. The six Army Corps now occupied a circle some fifty miles in circumference, with their outposts, in some cases, within the range of the guns of the detached forts. The division of the investing line into sections, the assignments of troop for defence, and the strengthening of the positions by field fortification, were matters that were arranged without delay.

Owing to the impossibility of filling up the casualties that had occurred during the rapid advance from the frontier, the German corps were much under strength, and the entire investing force did not, at first, amount to more than 147,000 men, with 622 guns. The numbers allowed for little more than one infantry soldier to a pace; and the investment must be admitted to have been a bold undertaking. The only alternative, however, was to storm the place, and try to force an entry with the aid of the field guns. The strength of the outer works and enceinte made the success of such a proceeding improbable; and to attempt an assault might have led to disastrous results. A defeat would give fresh spirit and impulse to the organization of resistance throughout the country. It is difficult to understand the weak effort made to prevent the closing of the investing

lines. The troops under Ducrot did not amount to more than 28,000 men, and this seems a meagre percentage of the force available in Paris. When once

invested, the question remained as to the manner in which the reduction had to be

carried out. To trust to the gradual effects of a blockade, and allow hunger to do its work; attack in a regular manner one of the sides; destroy the forts by artillery; or bombard the town, were measures open to discussion. The decision rested mainly on two points: the means of resistance possessed by the besieged, and the weapons of offence procurable by the investing armies.

It was assumed that the defending force would naturally increase daily in military efficiency, and eventually be available for powerful sorties. No certain data could be arrived at with regard to the supply of food; but the best informed estimated that, with the most rigid economy, provisions might last for ten weeks.

As regards the military force, it was evident that more troops were necessary to maintain a strict blockade. The corps would have to be filled up to their full strength, and the immediate presence of the XI and I Bavarian Corps from Sedan was most desirable.

Before commencing an attack, or bombardment, it would be necessary to procure a siege train, which would have to be forwarded from the Rhine. This, however, could not be effected until after the capture of Toul—a small fortress which effectually barred the only available line of rail. Additional difficulties were interposed by the blowing in of the railway tunnels near Paris, which would necessitate, for a lengthened

period, the transport of ordnance stores in country carts. Pending the restoration of the line, great difficulty would be experienced in feeding the investing troops, and the armies would have to live for a time, as it were, from hand to mouth, till reserve magazines were established. Resulting from these considerations a resolution was formed to continue an effective blockade as long as possible, and proceed finally, if necessary, to an attack by force. If the latter measure could not be dispensed with, it was decided that the effort should be made against a portion of the south front defended by the forts of Issy and Vanves. Bombarding the city would entail an enormous expenditure of ammunition, besides arousing a feeling of indignation throughout Europe. Even were it used merely to exert a final pressure on the inhabitants, its influence would be more effectual when a long blockade had shaken the resolution of a timid populace.

Measures were accordingly taken to thoroughly fortify the circle of investment. Redoubts, gun-pits, block-houses, and all kinds of obstacles were speedily constructed; villages, isolated houses and walls put in a state of defence; good communications opened up in rear of the whole line; and ample bomb-proof cover provided for the outposts. Observatories were also raised at suitable points, and connected by telegraph with the several headquarters.

Comments Within a few days after the investment the position of the blockading troops was appreciably strengthened by the fall of Toul and Strassburg.

The German Army had now pushed forward like a

wedge into the heart of France ; and the force investing Paris was connected with the frontier by a long, narrow and exhausted strip of country. Irrespective of warlike stores, the armies had to be supplied with food from the Fatherland, and every effort had to be directed to obtaining through railway communication.

The repair of the railway from Saarbrücken to Courcelles was a matter of little difficulty, and traffic on it was resumed even before the investment of Metz. To connect this line with Nancy, a loop was made from Remilly to Pont-à-Mousson, which was finished by the middle of September. Progress further to the west was blocked by the fortress of Toul, the reduction of which became a matter of the first importance.

The place had been invested by Etappen troops of the Third Army, and shelled by field guns without any particular effect. As soon as the danger of a landing on the North German coast was no longer feared, the 17th Division, in combination with a Landwehr Division, was formed into a XIII Corps which, after a short sojourn at Metz, was ordered to reduce Toul and occupy the country between Metz and Paris. The bombardment by the field artillery of the 17th Division was ineffective ; and it was not till a number of siege guns were brought into action that the place surrendered on September 23. The lines from Saarbrücken viâ Remilly and Pont-à-Mousson and Weissenburg through Nancy were thus available for traffic up to within eight miles of Paris.

The network of railways round Paris had gradually to be cleared and repaired, as well as the main lines down the valleys of the Seine and Aube. This, however,

would be a matter of time, and meanwhile the reduction of Strassburg became an object of primary importance.

Siege of
Strassburg

Immediately after the victory of Woerth the Baden Division had been detached southward to invest the city, which commanded the railway, and was a standing menace to Southern Germany. As the armies moved further west it became necessary to besiege the fortress; and in the course of a few days the investing troops were strengthened by the Guard Landwehr and 1st Reserve Division, together with a regular siege train—a total strength of 40,000 men. The defences of the fortress had been neglected in a most inexplicable manner, and consternation was great when the crowds of fugitives from Woerth thronged into the town. The garrison consisted of but a single regiment of the line; but with the addition of some fourth battalions, reserve detachments, and stragglers from MacMahon's force, Mobiles and National Guards, was increased to some 23,000 men, amongst whom there were no Engineer troops. Aware of the incomplete nature of the defences and the weakness of the garrison, General von Werder determined to force the town to surrender by means of a bombardment by both field and siege guns. Fire was opened on the night of August 24, and though directed against barracks, magazines, and government buildings caused great damage to private property, and set the town on fire in many places. After the second day of the bombardment it became evident [that regular siege operations would have to be resorted to, and the first parallel was opened close to the glacis on August 29. Under the protection of the powerful siege guns the approaches,

in spite of repeated sorties, were pushed up to the main walls, and on September 27, after a siege of thirty days, the white flag was seen to fly from the Cathedral tower. The fall of Strassburg released another railway line, which was used to bring up the Guard Landwehr Division to the army investing Paris. A Reserve Division was left in garrison of the captured fortress, and a new Army Corps (XIV) formed, which, under the command of General Werder, marched towards the Upper Seine.

Comments The chances of a prolonged resistance seemed, at this period, to be almost hopeless. Metz and Paris were invested by powerful armies; Strassburg and the minor fortresses had capitulated; the German Reserves were pushing forward to occupy the conquered territory; and the broad zone of country extending from the Rhine to Paris was held by a million armed men. There were very few regular French troops available for field operations, a great scarcity of horses, and a complete dearth of warlike stores. On the other hand, it might be fairly presumed that the Capital was capable of holding out for a sufficient time to enable provincial levies to be raised in the more remote parts of the country. The army of Bazaine retained around it a large proportion of the invading forces, and its active co-operation might, under certain contingencies, be looked for. The lines of German communication were long and vulnerable, and traversed, at many places, a country well adapted for offensive measures and partisan warfare.

In a rich and populous country, animated by a spirit of patriotism, it was clear that large levies might be raised in a comparatively short time; but to what

extent they would be able to make head against the regular troops of the invader was a matter of doubt. By attributing their disasters solely to treachery and political causes, the spirit of the nation had been raised ; and their hopes of a possibly successful issue were further influenced by memories of the result of the general risings in 1793. The Government of the National Defence proceeded to take immediate measures for the defence of the country, and sent, about the middle of September, to Tours a number of authorized delegates, to whose measures a vigorous impulse was given by the subsequent addition of Gambetta—one of the most energetic of the new *régime*.

Men, matériel, and organization were wanting. The cadres of officers had to be filled by many who had never served, and the whole Staff and administrative services had to be extemporized. A small nucleus of regular troops was obtained by assembling the residue of the Reserves, recruits from the various dépôts, refugees from the frontier, and all the old retired soldiers in the country. Besides the Gardes Mobiles, a portion of the Sedentary Guard was mobilized, the formation of volunteer corps legalized, and (after the surrender of Metz) a general levy decreed of all able-bodied men, without distinction, between twenty and forty years of age. These stringent measures resulted in the raising of a force of nearly 700,000 men, who were able to keep the field against the enemy for a period, from first to last, of about four months. By liberal contracts, the formation of new arsenals, and a general appeal to the patriotism of the mercantile classes, the necessary supply of guns, ammunition, clothing, and all warlike stores was rapidly collected.

To effect the more speedy instruction of the new levies, several camps were formed throughout the country : a useful measure, which the rapid march of events did not permit of being fully utilized. For the purposes of local defence, the country was divided into four large commands—in the north, west, centre, and eastern districts. As the available effectives gradually increased, army corps were organized, and eventually grouped into the provincial armies which played so conspicuous a part in the latter portion of the campaign against the Republic. The main object of all the newly-formed armies was to raise the siege of Paris ; and to effect this, directly or indirectly, was the aim of every strategic plan. Paris was France ; and the extraordinary fictitious value placed upon the Capital must not be lost sight of in studying the operations, in the provinces, of an armed people opposed to a regular soldiery.

The news of the surrender of the forces of Bazaine spread consternation throughout France. With the Capital invested and the entire Regular Army made prisoners of war, the situation appeared desperate. The Provisional Government assembled at Tours in the middle of September had, with a view to exciting the spirit of the nation, painted the position of the army of the Rhine in most glowing colours, and the utter collapse of their imaginative hopes was the more painful.

Futile endeavours to obtain peace were made at the end of October ; but the pride of the French nation was not sufficiently humbled to allow the acceptance of the unwelcome conditions offered, and a stern spirit of

resistance to the bitter end was engendered throughout the provinces. The entire north-east of France (with the exception of a few fortresses) was in the hands of the invader, and his whole attention was directed to the capture of the Capital, and the repulsion of any effort to obtain its relief. The capitulation of Metz released for service the greater part of the two armies that originally crossed the frontier. The three corps of the First Army were enabled to cover the investment of the Capital from the north, while four corps of the Second Army, under Prince Frederick Charles, were ordered to advance to the Middle Loire, and deal with the levies that were there being hastily raised.

Reviewing the position for the moment, it will be seen that the German armies had swept across France and occupied a wide extent of country round the Capital. From the enormous numbers of men brought into the field, it is apparent that the regions they passed through must have been denuded of provisions, and that it was incumbent to fall back for, at all events, some of the supplies on the Father country. To meet this contingency, a general Etappen Inspection was appointed to each of the armies in the field, with the duty of maintaining order on the lines of communication, and collecting and forwarding supplies, and removing sick and wounded to Germany. As the armies advanced, large magazines were formed at the principal stations along the lines of railway. These, again, were, for convenience of issue, connected with smaller depôt, the most advanced of which were one day's march in rear of the troops. The available resources of the country were collected at these several points, and from them trans-

ferred, by a regular chain of civilian and military transport, to the units of the forces in the field. As the armies advanced westward, and the region traversed became exhausted, recourse had to be made to Germany to forward the requisite supplies. A consideration of the facts will make apparent the prominent part played by railways in this campaign, and show how very dependent the various military operations were upon the lines of supply. The troops before Paris were at one time dependent for their daily food on a single line of railway; and the cutting of this line by an enemy for a very short period would inevitably entail the raising of the investment.

The lines of road and rail were generally guarded by men of the Landwehr, and the security of the occupied districts maintained by an administration with supreme military and civil powers.

With the capture of practically the whole of the regular French forces, the first phase of the campaign terminated. In the provinces the war was continued; but the result of the national rising could be forecast without difficulty. Against the well-trained and war-experienced soldiers of the North German Confederation, the combat of the numerous, but undisciplined provincial levies could lead to but one result. The war, carried on with such a vast expenditure of national force on both sides, came to an end in the comparatively short period of seven months.

THE END

APPENDIX

GERMAN FIELD FORCES IN AUGUST, 1870, UNDER COM-
MAND OF H.M. KING WILLIAM OF PRUSSIA.

CHIEF OF STAFF—GENERAL V. MOLTKE.

		Bat- tallions	Squad- rons	Gun.
First Army (Gen. v. Steinmetz)	VII Corps (Gen. v. Zastrow)	50	12	180
	VIII „ (Gen. v. Koeben) 3rd Cavalry Division			
Second Army (Prince Frederick Charles)	Guard Corps (Prince of Württemberg)	156	148	516
	III Corps (Gen. v. Alvens- leben II.)			
	IV „ (Gen. v. Alvens- leben I.)			
	IX „ (Gen. v. Man- stein)			
	X „ (Gen. v. Voigts- Rhetz)			
	XII „ (Crown Prince of Saxony)			
	5th Cavalry Division 6th „ „			
Third Army (Crown Prince of Prussia)	V Corps (Gen. v. Kirch- bach)	128	102	480
	XI „ (Gen. v. Bose)			
	I Bav. Corps (Gen. v. d. Tann)			
	II „ „ (Gen. v. Hartmann)			
	Württemberg Division			
	Baden „ 4th Cavalry „			
Reinforcements	I Corps (Gen. v. Man- teuffel)	140	100	378
	II „ (Gen. v. Fran- secky)			
	VI „ (Gen. v. Tump- ling)			
	1st Cavalry Division			
	2nd „ „			
	17th Infantry „			
	Guard Landwehr Division			
	1st „ „ 2nd „ „ 3rd „ „			
Total		474	382	1584

THE TOTAL GERMAN FORCES AVAILABLE FOR WAR IN
AUGUST, 1870

	Field Army			Garrison and Depot Troops			Effective Strength, including Non Combatants	
	Infantry	Cavalry	Guns	Infantry	Cavalry	Horsed Guns	Men	Horses
North German Confederation	385,600	48,000	1,284	237,700	22,400	408	932,064	209,403
Bavaria	50,000	5,500	192	38,800	1,800	24	128,964	24,056
Wurtemberg	15,000	1,500	54	8,000	900	12	37,180	8,876
Baden	11,700	1,800	54	13,000	700	18	35,181	8,083
Total	462,300	56,800	1,584	297,500	25,800	462	1,183,389	205,373

FRENCH FIELD FORCES ON JULY 31 UNDER COMMAND
OF THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON.

CHIEF OF STAFF—MARSHAL LE BŒUF

	Bat- talions	Squad- rons	Guns	Mitrail- leuses	Strength	
					Men	Horses
Imperial Guard	24	24	60	12	40,231	8,045
1st Corps (MacMahon)	52	28	96	24	25,884	4,774
2nd „ (Frossard)	39	16	72	18	37,725	7,934
3rd „ (Bazaine)	52	28	96	24	28,591	5,459
4th „ (Ladmirault)	39	16	72	18	24,780	5,188
5th „ (De Failly)	39	16	72	18	33,701	4,831
6th „ (Canrobert)	49	24	114	6	20,341	3,705
7th „ (Douay, F)	38	20	72	18	21,537	3,883
Cavalry Reserve	—	48	30	6	5,189	4,794
Artillery „	—	—	96	—	*209	*58
Total	332	220	780	144	238,188	51,671
* Details						

STRENGTH OF THIRD AND MEUSE ARMY ON AUGUST 22,
1870.

		Infantry	Cavalry	Guns
Meuse Army Crown Prince of Saxony	Guard Corps . . .	20,027	4,215	90
	IV " . . .	24,916	2,167	84
	XII " . . .	25,085	3,570	96
	5th Cavalry Division .	—	4,147	12
	6th " " . . .	—	2,158	6
Total Meuse Army .		70,028	16,247	288
Third Army (Crown Prince of Prussia)	V Corps . . .	18,574	2,110	84
	VI " . . .	23,953	1,278	84
	XI " . . .	20,638	1,239	83
	I Bavarian Corps	20,817	2,369	96
	II " " . . .	20,784	3,983	96
	Württemberg Division	13,322	1,527	58
	2nd Cavalry " . .	8	3,624	12
4th " " . . .		—	3,435	12
Total Third Army . .		118,095	19,567	525
Grand Total . . .		188,123	35,814	813

STRENGTH OF ARMY OF CHÂLONS ON AUGUST 25, 1870
APPROXIMATELY 150,000 MEN.

		Bat- talions	Squad- rons	Guns	Mitral- leuses
Army of Châlons (Marshal McMahon)	1st Corps (Ducrot) .	56	24	96	24
	5th " (De Failly) .	32	16	72	18
	7th " (Douay) . .	38	12	72	18
	12th " (Lebrun) . .	40	24	150	18
	Reserve Cavalry . .	—	36	12	6
Total		166	112	402	84