

## TACTICS.

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If the campaign of 1859 had been of longer duration, the inexpediency of eliminating from a regiment of the Line its talent and its muscle, in order to form *corps d'élite*, must have met with practical demonstration. The Zouave regiments were ever in the van, not optionally, but as the price paid for favour enjoyed; the Linesman had enjoyed no such favour. Conspicuous individual merit was rewarded by translation to the higher class. Still, after the battle of Solferino, it is said that the Zouaves gave vent to the following ominous expression: "Nous sommes toujours le bouf." It so happened that days of piping peace arrived, and murmurs gave place to pardonable braggadocio. The system which almost led to disaster was established in full force, for it had one great charm counterbalancing defects—a charm appreciated by men of the Leboeuf school—it opened wide the door of patronage. From these remarks it must not be inferred that the French Line regiments are wanting in a noble, warlike spirit, or that they are bad soldiers. The Frenchman is by nature courageous, but his body is the dwelling-place of a most sensitive, volatile mind; if you depress the mind, the body, especially a weak body, does not become a servicable, warlike instrument. The historical fool of the family accepts his position, and is a happy, contented, unprofitable member of society; but he may be no fool, although educated to play the part of one. Similarly, a regiment may be rendered inefficient by depressing influences, and to complete the work of degradation *remete the best officers*. The word best, perhaps, ought not to be used; one might rather say, best bred, or best educated. There must be a firm barrier of social rank between the commander and the commanded to keep up discipline, without which an army is nothing worth. As we know, a great proportion of French officers rise from the ranks. What an officer was, need never be asked; what he is forms an all-important question. Is he a gentleman? is he educated? Now, if the most gentlemanly and the best educated officers are removed, what tone is likely to prevail in the bereaved regiment? Off duty as well as on duty, the barrier between an officer and his men must be impassable, and every grade of rank should be distinctly marked, even in social intercourse.

In the year 1870 we remember the French Minister of War and the Commander-in-Chief (under the Emperor), a fine, good looking soldier of thirty-three years' service, educated at the Artillery School of Metz. Marshal Leboeuf was a polished courtier rather than a soldier; and those who read the pamphlet of lamentations, ascribed to the Emperor, on the disaster of Sedan, will blame the master for putting implicit trust in an untried servant, rather than the incompetent but actual recipient of courtly favour.

It is fair to suppose that Napoleon was rather deceived than a party to deception; but nevertheless, culpable neglect is a crime. Why was the tried and trusty MacMahon in Algeria? The French seem to have combined the functions of Minister of War, Commander-in-Chief, and Chief of the Staff, in one individual. Now, if an honest soldier like MacMahon had held a position similar to Von Moltke in the German army, the nation had not fallen. General Von Moltke is the head of the staff, or the reasoning intellect of the German army. A commander-in-chief uses his staff as a sup-

plementary addition to his powers of vision and thought. (The staff should be the cream of the intellect of an army presided over by its best soldier.

Colonel Stoffel, French military attaché at Berlin, failed not to call the attention of his Imperial master to the superiority of the Prussian staff system. The staff is selected from the whole German army. The selected even are weeded out, and General Von Moltke is the schoolmaster of the remnant. In Germany, the officer known in England by the term field officer is a staff officer. Col. Stoffel reports that mediocrity is banished from the Moltke school, and uses the forcible expression, "Let us (the French) beware of the Prussian staff. No one will question this assertion, that if a staff does its duty conscientiously, and actually represents the eye of a general, very little can go wrong in an army, provided that the general be the right man in the right place. The staff will soon neglect the duty of lens and retina, however, if the general officer shows an inclination to avoid interference, or if action taken is confined to a routine abnegation of responsibility. Here the writer may be pardoned for recording an example of what may be considered a line of conduct breaking through the confines of routine, but adhering strictly to the necessary bonds of discipline.

An officer commanding a cavalry regiment reports, through the staff, that he possesses eighteen old horses which are quite unfit for any cavalry duty; that they are not even available for recruit drill. The general officer forwards this report, with his own recommendation that the animals be at once sold for the good of the public, the more so as every day they consume money's worth, their market value decreases.

The answer to this letter gives excellent reasons for allowing horses to continue the process known as eating their heads off, in common parlance. Now, the voice of routine calls upon the general to pigeon-hole the correspondence. The voice of duty dictates a vigorous protest. There is no doubt that in cases similar the public service will always gain, and that the administration will feel, if it does not express, its gratitude for a soldier-like habit of transacting business on the principle of calling a spade a spade.

This brings with it a reflection. How can eighteen old horses unfit for service exist in a regiment? The staff seems at fault in this instance. Are there many regiments in the same condition? It is fair to assume that the Prussians manage their affairs with a sounder view to economy. The author can stray no further from his subject. Suffice it to say that the Prussians place far more trust in their general and staff officers than we do. If the destruction of eighteen worn out horses in a large army caused one-tenth the correspondence abroad that it does in England, the world would be a great gainer. Standing armies on the scale of France, Russia, or Prussia, must be impossible for want of money, if not of paper. Therefore, by all means, do not give a general officer of thirty five years' service power to sell a horse without making application on the proper form through the various departments, which lead finally, *via* the Horse Guards, to the War office. It is a question worthy of consideration, however, whether this much of power may not be delegated by the War office to the Commander-in-Chief.

But let us resume our review of the Prussian forces after their short repose. If the years 1867, '68, and '69 were years of rest to the army, the staff reposed little enough, for the Prussian had become the German

army. The Saxons, who had fought well, and the Bavarians, who had fought badly, for independence, all marched under the charge of the Prussian Staff, commanded by the Prussian King. The Bavarians, who, though the least brave, were the best soldiers of the confederation, nicely remarked that, in 1866, with as skilful leading, they would have escaped the yoke of Prussia.

Prussian departmental organization was simply miraculous. The men, whether of the standing army or Landwehr seemed broad expressly for fighting. Their equipment was of the rough and ready nature, understood by the word servicable. With trousers tuck'd into Wellington boots; with a pack, looking both clumsy and heavy onward they marched. Discipline was no slender thread in this army; but the respect with which distinction of rank was recognized proved that the superior held his position by right rather than might.

We must be allowed a word on dress, for the German helmet and boot played a more important part in the late war than is generally understood. The cloth garments were inferior to those of their adversary—but the German helmet is a splendid institution. With well burnished spikes to the head-dress, black boots, and clean arms, the Prussian battalion presented a smart, soldier-like appearance, even at the conclusion of a campaign rendered unusually trying by a total absence of tent equipment. Then, again, the helmet was a real protection to the head, and comfortable withal. Landwehr regiments often could compete with Line regiments in "physique," but not in appearance, because they wore a "chaco." This latter head-gear is very inferior to a helmet, though made of leather. The day will, doubtless, arrive when tinsel gewgaws and ornamental deceptions will migrate from the army to their legitimate abiding-place, the stage; not that there is much make-believe in the German army. One's thoughts will wander homewards. Had the British infantry been served out with Wellington boots in place of splatterdashes, loud would have been the howl of malcontents; yet the gaiter is merely a half-measure towards the German boot. It protects the ankle and the trouser, and helps to keep the feet dry, but it performs all these functions in a most imperfect way. Mud which, when dry represents small stones or grit, finds its way into the interior of the stocking in spite of gaiters; and it is fair to assume that the arable land of France would have been sown with gaiters had so feeble a makeshift formed part of the German boot, like everything of leather in that country, is of inferior manufacture; but the soldier in bivouac would have parted with his best friend rather than with his boots. The Prussian need not boast of the remainder of his personal equipment. Two expense pouches of ammunition hang most awkwardly on his waistbelt, which also supports a short sword, of no possible use if it will not cut down a tree; then the bayonet has to remain a fixture at the end of his rifle. There can be no great comfort, either, in having a cloak looped round the body after the manner of a cross-belt. The cloak formed the soldier's only bit of "abri," and was therefore carried without a murmur for a thirty-mile march. What men those were! A battalion actually marched over thirty five miles, thirteen miles without a halt, and five men only "fell out." Could British soldiers perform this feat in marching order? We presume they could, on service, when not surfeited with farinaceous food and alcohol.

The drill of the Prussian infantry is a