

be driven on to neutral soil. By the southern route he had a shorter line of advance, and a the whole of the south of France behind him to threaten to force the whole German line back to Germany; and if the Germans had had to wheel to the left, instead of to the right, they would have got completely mixed up, as they were in echelon. Everything pointed to the propriety of MacMahon advancing by the southern route towards Metz; but instead of that, he took the northern one, and was completely hemmed in. Further, taking the question of a march, a flank march like he executed is one of the most difficult operations that can be performed by a general. To do it satisfactorily requires not only secrecy, but perfect discipline of the troops, in all of which there was a lamentable deficiency. He took no precautions in the march to hide his route or protect himself from the German flank, with the result that we have seen. There is one more excuse for him: When he got to Vouziers and did not hear any news of Bazaine, he concluded that the enterprise was hopeless, and made up his mind to fall back on Metz, which was the last point eastwards where he could maintain communication with Paris. But he was not allowed to take this course. He received peremptory orders to advance on Metz, and was thus driven on to his fate.

Let us now consider Bazaine's errors. He totally misunderstood the true use of the fortress of Metz. Instead of using it as a pivot for his movements, which he should abandon when it became of no further use, he treated it as his actual base of operations. As General Hamley has said in his book, "He acted like one who, when the ship is foundering, holds on to the anchor to save himself." As soon as he saw that he was cut off, he should have abandoned Metz altogether and gone to Verdun; but after the battle of Rezonville he retreated to Metz, and was shut up there, instead of going towards his friends. The battle of Borny Colombey was almost the most serious blunder of the war. Instead of retreating to Verdun, he gave the Germans sufficient time to come up and cut him off. It has been stated that, in spite of this, by being in Metz, and keeping 200,000 German troops around there, he did as much service as by being in the field. But this is a tame view to take, for it must be remembered that, though he neutralized 200,000 men, he at the same time neutralized himself, and eventually succumbed with his whole force. It has been suggested that there was a brilliant stroke open to him on the 17th August. At that time the first and second German armies had come across the Moselle, and were advancing on Rezonville, and there was only one corps to watch Metz. It has been said that if he had seized this opportunity he could have broken out of Metz, got through the corps, and have got small forces to watch the Moselle to prevent the Germans recrossing, have cut their lines of communication to Germany, have gone back to Strasburg, based himself there, and gone back to the south of France. That looks very well on paper; but in practice it is difficult to see. He, however, held on to Metz like grim death, until he surrendered. I think those are the chief errors committed by the French.

The strategical principles which are chiefly illustrated by the campaign are that an angular frontier, or a salient angle, is an advantage to a nation, if it is actively used. You have the choice of advancing on either side. In this case it is of no significance, because the French did not use it. Their original idea was to leave a force on one side, and the main army to cross and attack south Germany. At

Woerth is shown the folly of attempting to cover two divergent objects at Metz, we see how a small force, such as the seventh German corps, was able to detain the whole French army. At the action at Rezonville we see the effect of one army being compelled to form up front to flank; the French were driven away from the line of communication. Here we see the truth of the old maxim, "The most perilous thing that can be attempted is a flank march in the presence of the enemy." At the battle of Woerth, which was brought on prematurely, we see the disadvantage of large advance guards. The third German army had a very large advance guard, which took a large force out of the hands of the Crown Prince. It got mixed up with the French without the command of the Crown Prince, and as it had to be extricated, this brought on the general action. As a result of that lesson alone, the tendency in recent years has been to reduce the strength of advance guards, so as not to give them a chance of engaging in a conflict.

I think that practically closes all the strategical lessons of this campaign, which are, perhaps, only of interest to the students of the military art. But turning from these, we may come to the great moral lessons which should interest all classes of society. The first is the utter madness of subordinating strategy to politics. In moments of great national emergency—in fact, at all times—the military institutions of the country, that is to say, the army, navy, fortifications, volunteers and everything else, should be the very first concern of the government and of all classes of society, and their management should be left entirely in the hands of those who are thoroughly competent to provide for military exigencies. All political considerations should be ruthlessly thrown into the background. In nearly all great national disasters the downfall has not been traced to the failure of generals in the field, but to their being hampered by the interference of ignorant politicians at home. Take the great Napoleon. The secret of his great success was simply that he was the government and the general in one. He did not consult anybody as to whether he should do this or that; and the result was that the world saw the most extraordinary series of successes that has ever been known. The man acted according to his own intellect.

We also see the folly of relying upon untrained troops, however brave they may be. The French raised large masses of men; but they were quite unable to compete with the splendidly trained German soldiers. Likewise, we see the immense importance of the strictest discipline; and this applies especially to short service troops, and still more to volunteers. In all service nothing but the strictest and most unyielding discipline can hold troops together in the presence of a trained foe. In the French troops want of confidence in their leaders became apparent, and they suspected their officers. Therefore, besides the necessity of the strictest discipline among the men, comes the need of a high moral tone among the officers. They come from the best ranks of society, and must entirely command the confidence and the sympathies of their men; otherwise they will not follow them, and disaster must result. The men themselves were brave enough, but they were not trained, and they had no one they could trust.

Another thing we see is the necessity for a careful system of campaign being drawn out beforehand. Everything should be most carefully arranged in advance; and the system of mobilization of the material economy of an army should be brought down to the finest point possible.

The material of the army should be of the highest quality. The arms, accoutrements, equipment, and everything for the comfort of the troops should be the best procurable. As Lord Chatham said: "In war expense is the true economy;" and this holds good for all time.

Again, we see the fearful evils resulting from the misuse of the press and mob rule in a case when a nation is staking its existence on a great struggle. The movements of all the French generals were hampered by the goadings of the press in Paris, whilst the mob opposed Napoleon in every movement he took, and completely stultified the plans of the able men with the army.

Looking at all these considerations, it seems to me that all the leaders of every party in every country should ever keep before them the folly of subordinating strategy to politics; otherwise the nation used to peace and security may find itself suddenly surprised by all the horrors of national disaster; and in its degradation and ruin it may, perhaps, learn the truth of the words of one of our great poets:

A thousand years scarce serve to form a state;
An hour may roll it in the dust.

(Loud applause).

Admiral Colomb discusses in the *National Review* a phase of the question of Imperial defence which has hitherto received little attention. Admitting that the Colonies maintain 77,000 troops and spend a couple of millions a year in defence, he asks the very pertinent question, what is the use of it all as things are? If Canada and the Cape maintain troops and expend money for the defence of their landward boundaries it is good, because these are boundaries of the Empire. But the other provision (including the annual subsidy of £126,000 which Australia pays to maintain a fleet in her own waters and 32,000 troops) is in a different category. In the event of the outbreak of war, probably neither would be of the slightest use as means of Imperial defence. "They are no defence for Australia if the Imperial defence is complete. They are no defence for Australia if the Imperial defence is so incomplete as to allow her to be attacked, because then their numbers are too small." This is an argument for the concentration of defensive action, and for the contribution of all our colonies to it. In a phrase which irresistibly recalls Artemus Ward, Admiral Colomb speaks of the British Empire "as the greatest thing on earth." It is not a happy way of putting it, but what he means is that being great we may stand against a world in arms—if we choose to be prepared for such an eventuality. But the colonies by themselves can do nothing, and must either stand by the mother country or be prepared for absorption by older and grunter nations which fancied them. Admiral Colomb's view is, therefore, that the colonies would, as a mere matter of economy, find it cheaper to contribute to the general defence, and help to make this efficient, than to dream either that the matter is no concern of theirs, or that if the British Empire went to pieces they would by some means manage to escape the wreck.