

Before proceeding, however, to that part of the campaign, I must not omit to mention that it is one of the charges against Marshal Bazaine that he allowed Frossard to be crushed at Spicheren, when, by moving up his troops, he might have converted his defeat into victory. It does not come within the scope of this letter to examine whether that charge be true or not; but from what precedes, it is easy to understand that neither Marshal Bazaine nor any of the other commanders would care to inter-fer unless their aid was invited. Now General Frossard had several times telegraphed to Bazaine that he was "all right." He seemed not to be aware of the serious character of the attack directed against him for it was not until three p.m., that he telegraphed to Bazaine for "one regiment," assuring him that that regiment would be ample, and that he would be able to send it back very soon. It has been said that while the Prussians were attacking, General Frossard was lunching with the Mayor of Forbach, without any idea of his corps being in danger; but the evidence before the court martial will doubtless clear up that and other equally interesting points.

It was on the 12th, as I have said before, that the Emperor appointed Marshal Bazaine commander in chief; but it was not until the 13th that he took possession of his post. The army was then dissatisfied, demoralized and discontented. The troops were harassed by long and purposeless marches and countermarches; the Prussians had effectually placed themselves between Metz and Nancy, and commanded the course of the Moselle. Had the retreat been effected immediately after Spicheren, the railway might have been made useful. But now there were but two directions left open—that of Montmedy and that of Verdun. Orders were immediately given for the army to cross from the right to the left bank of the Moselle, but the Prussians attacked the French on the 14th, and effectually delayed the movement. This battle (which the French call Borny, and the Germans Colomb), is claimed by the French as a success. The fact is, that it gave the bulk of the Prussian army time to cross the Moselle before the French, and precede them on the Verdun road. In his official report on the battle Marshal Bazaine hints that the troops did not keep to their order of march, which would have brought them under cover of the guns of Quenlen, St. Julien and Bellecroix, and thus more effectually checked the German attack. As it was, the troops which had already crossed on to the left bank of the Moselle had to retrace their steps, and thus the whole of the day, which would have been spent in a rapid march to Verdun, was spent in repelling the attacks of the army of General Steinmetz, Marshal Bazaine though claiming Borny as a French victory, had nevertheless the candour to admit that:—

"Il n'en fallait pas moins reconnoître que malgré notre succès le but de l'ennemi avait été en partie atteint—il avait retardé l'exécution de notre mouvement et permis à l'armée du Prince Frédéric Charles de franchir la Moselle sans résistance, et de nous prévenir sur la route de Verdun."

This notion of a "success" is certainly peculiar. The Prussians succeeded in their object, and prevented the French in carrying theirs; but yet Marshal Bazaine will have it that it was a French victory. This is carrying the virtue of not knowing when one is beaten very far indeed. In spite of this delay the troops continued their movement across the river, and occupied the

ground between Gravelotte and Metz by the evening of the 15th. The Emperor spent the night there, and had an interview with the marshal in the morning. The next time they met was at Cassel, in Germany, both being prisoners of war. It is said that Marshal Bazaine did not conceal his satisfaction at the Emperor's departure, leaving him at last his own master; and, according to one who professes to have been an eye witness he expressed that satisfaction, "*dans les termes les moins équivoques.*" Before the day was over he must have regretted that the undivided responsibility fell exclusively on his shoulders. The principal charge against the marshal is precisely his conduct on the 16th of August, the day of the Battle of Rezonville (or Gravelotte), and therefore it is necessary to go into the subject somewhat fully. And, first, it is necessary to remind the reader that there are three roads by which Verdun may be reached from Metz. To the north west there is a road which passes through Briey and leads to Etain; there is another road which leads to Etain through Conflans; and a third road which leads direct to Verdun by Mars-la-Tour and Fresnes; the two last roads join into one at Gravelotte, and so on to Metz, while the two first join at Etain, and so on to Verdun. It is one of the charges against Marshal Bazaine that he did not make use of the Briey road but availed himself solely of the roads *via* Conflans and Mars-la-Tour; and, secondly, that instead of pushing on and attacking the Prussians before they were fully concentrated, he ordered his troops to wait for the third and fourth corps, that had not yet come up, and thus gave the enemy the great advantage of assuming the offensive, which they did with the greatest vigour. It is also made an accusation against Marshal Bazaine that he constantly mistook the objective of the Prussians; he fancied that their great object was to cut him off from Metz, when, as it now clearly appears (it is very easy to be wise after the fact) that their real object was to prevent his gaining possession of the Verdun road. During this battle of Gravelotte the marshal behaved with conspicuous gallantry and admirable coolness. He himself claims Rezonville as a French victory, on the ground that the French retained their positions; and he is charged with great error of judgment in not awaiting himself of his success to renew the attack and force his way through. It is also one of the charges against him that, finding the road *via* Mars-la-Tour held in force by the enemy after the battle, he did not make a flank march and push on to Montmedy, or avail himself of the road *via* Briey. The marshal's answer to this is that he had more than 16,000 men *hors de combat*; that provisions and ammunition ran short; that the troops imperatively required a day's rest; and that a flank march would have exposed him to a disastrous onslaught at the enemy's hands. On this point very full evidence will be given before the court-martial.

After the battle of Rezonville (or Gravelotte) the troops were moved back towards Metz, and positions were assigned them covering the western front of the city from St. Privat on the north, Rozérieulles on the south. In these positions the French were attacked on the 18th, and the loss of the position of Amanvillier, St. Privat, and Ste. Marie-aux-Chenes, effectually deprived them of the Briey road. A grave charge is brought against Marshal Bazaine, that throughout that hard day's fighting he remained on the plateau of Flappeville, and did not even proceed in person to the field

of battle. The evidence on this point is very conflicting, and no doubt will take up a great deal of time. It would be unfair to prejudge the nature of that evidence. To a non-professional mind it appears that neither Rezonville nor St. Privat can be considered anything but great Prussian victories, and they fully account for the subsequent inability of Marshal Bazaine to march on Montmedy, so as to effect a junction with MacMahon's army advancing from Chalons. But this branch of the subject, together with the subsequent attempt at breaking through, and the capitulation, requires to be dealt with in another letter.

CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor does not hold himself responsible for individual expressions of opinion in communications addressed to the VOLUNTEER REVIEW.

RIDEAU COTTAGE, Ottawa,
Oct. 21, 1873.

Sir,—In the report which you have been good enough to make of a speech delivered on the occasion of the presentation of the prizes to the Battalion of His Excellency's Foot Guards, there is a mistake which I think requires correction, as otherwise it may lead to misconception. It is stated that in the Italian war the Austrians were beaten by the French using a breech-loading rifle—the Chassepot. Now, the French infantry were armed with muzzle-loading rifles at Solferino, the Chassepot not having been issued to them generally until after the English army had received the Snider. In the Danish war the great advantage of breech-loaders became apparent when the Prussians used them against a foreign enemy. They had been previously employed in the revolutionary contests of Germany. The inferiority of the needle gun is, I need scarcely say, relative, *viz.*, in comparison with other breech-loaders. As a military weapon, it was proved at Sadowna to be far superior to the Austrian muzzle-loading rifle.

Trusting that you will kindly give publicity to these corrections.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
H. C. FLETCHER, Lt.-Col.,
Scots Fusilier Guards.

The Russian Government has received information of a series of battles between the Russian troops under Prince Leuchtenberg and the Turcomans. The Russian force was sent to collect the war contribution of 300,000 roubles imposed in the Jurmerden, and consisted of eight companies of infantry, eight hundred cavalry, and several batteries. On the 22nd of July the first serious encounter took place, and on the 25th July the Turcomans, having attacked the Russians, were repulsed with great loss. Two days afterward a sanguinary conflict took place. The Turcomans made a night attack, and a hand-to-hand combat took place, in which they lost 800 men.