

of the position where the most vigorous resistance was required, devolved upon the weakest corps. Neither the Artillery of the Guard nor of the reserve was sent to its assistance, nor was a single man or implement sent from the Engineer reserve, by means of which the soldiers could have thrown up some protection from the German missiles. Up to four o'clock in the afternoon the left of Canrobert's corps only had been exposed to the overwhelming fire of the Artillery of the Guard. Its own artillery ammunition was nearly exhausted. The eighty-four guns of the Prussian Guard were consequently able to approach the French position, whilst thirty-six guns belonging to the Saxon reserve, together with forty-eight more belonging to the divisions of the Saxon corps, which were in line between St. Mary and Jœuf, were added to the former. The 6th Corps thus found itself exposed to the fire of no less than 163 guns, 120 of which concentrated their fire upon Privat, whilst the French, owing to the want of ammunition, were only able to fire one round every quarter of an hour, from each of their seventy-six guns. Canrobert sent to borrow ammunition from Luchinault's corps, and the only two waggons which that General could spare him, were on the road when the Prussian Guard attacked St. Privat. Three brigades advanced in line of columns, preceded by skirmishers from Hobouville and from St. Marie; their attack was covered by the concentrated fire of their artillery. The front of their attack was extended over rather more than 2,000 paces, but the effect of the enemy's fire was so murderous even at a distance of more than 1,500 paces, that according to the accounts received, nearly 6,000 men fell in ten minutes, and the attack had to be immediately discontinued. This result is attributable entirely to the fire of the French infantry. But towards six o'clock ammunition failed to the infantry as much as to the artillery. The pouches of the dead and wounded were emptied by the survivors, but there was not a sufficient supply to keep up a sustained fire in case of a second attack."

The second attack did not succeed, but it was not made until the advance of the Saxons had rendered the position untenable but in spite of its final success, "the attack in line of columns over open ground was marked out as an impossibility and a useless loss of men, and definitely rejected." Captain Laymann in the second chapter of his admirable little work, "Attack or Defence," asks this pertinent question—"Can we hope ever to gain anything by attacking in the face of the enormous advantages which modern improvements in fire-arms have conferred on the defence?"

Theory has in all ages proved that the advantage lies on the side of the defence; but then experience has almost as invariably proved the reverse. Let us proceed to examine the method of attack employed by the Prussians, and that advocated by some of the authors before us.

After the Prussians had discovered their mistake of attacking in column, even though these columns were so modified as to consist simply of company columns covered by skirmishers, but supported always by troops in column (generally in half battalions) they adopted the attack in open order, joined to the attack of skirmishers; and it was strictly forbidden to lead bodies of troops in close order within a nearer distance of the enemy's fire than 2,000 paces. The Duke of Wurtemberg gives the taking of Le Bourget as an instance of this manner of attacking. Le Bourget is a village of some length, the gar-

dens of which are surrounded by long straight walls, six feet in height, intersecting each other at right angles. These were prepared for defence by loopholing and heaping up earth, and the entrance of the village was barricaded. The attack was undertaken from three sides, viz., from Blane, Mesnil, Dugny, and along the road between them. The two flanking columns sent to the front clouds of skirmishers, which gained ground at the double and then threw themselves down. The supports and reserves followed these, spread out in extended order, and also at the double. As these latter threw themselves to rest, the skirmishers again ran forward, and at the same time bore off towards the flanks. When they arrived within range, they again threw themselves down, and opened fire upon the enemy. The gaps which occurred from drawing off towards the flanks were filled up by extending sub-divisions. In like manner the flanks were prolonged by single companies advancing one after the other, but always in extended order, so that the concentric attack which had, moreover—as the enemy was approached—become denser in character, kept always assuming a more enclosing form. Each of the extended bodies of troops took advantage of whatever cover offered, in order to rally behind it and collect together. Thus, in front of the north-east flank, a row of dung heaps had been left upon the field, which afforded a rallying-place for an entire company, which opened behind these a destructive fire upon troops who came forward to attack. On the other flank, the bed of the brook Le Moleret afforded a slight protection, and was at once turned to account by a few formed companies, in order to cover an onset against a counter attack delivered from Drancy. The mechanism of the attack consisted principally in the rapid change from open to close order directly the most trifling cover admitted of the rallying of a subdivision or company. On the other hand, every advance over open ground took place in widely extended skirmishing lines, which moved on like ants.

Captain C. B. Brackenbury gives the following account of what he saw at Le Mans. He says:—

"I was with Prince Frederick Charles in his attack on Le Mans, and, in order to learn as much as possible, I went with the advanced guards, and with the soldiers when making their attacks, so as really to see what were the latest ideas on tactics in the field. The work was done almost entirely by skirmishing. During the advance from Vendôme, at the battle Chagné, and the three days' fighting before Le Mans the same thing took place. The firing of the French was so awful that it was perfectly impossible for troops in any formation to live under it, though the French soldiers aimed very badly. In woods occupied by the Prussians every tree had several bullet marks in it, and it would have been perfectly impossible for troops in any formation to have lived under such a storm. The only way in which the Prussians did live was by advancing in very loose order; by throwing themselves down; by dodging behind every hedge and bank; assembling in groups behind a house or little hill, and creeping on bit by bit as they could. Then when they came near the enemy, the captain of the company, who knew his men, saw his opportunity, seized it, and calling his men to him dashed in at that place. The moment he was in that moment the French ran. I believe that some such system of advance is most likely to be adpt-

ed of necessity in the warfare of the future."

"The Duke of Wurtemberg gives instances of other exceptional forms of attack in the war. At Le Mans, two battalions of Jagers made an attack in skirmishing order by night without firing or even loading, and succeeding in surprising an important position, taking a good many prisoners. The French also made use of flying sap in advancing against Le Bourget and against Ladonchamps, north of Metz; their work was interrupted by the armistice in one instance, and in the other by the capitulation. On the occasion of this advance by flying sap, and also in their trenches and rifle-pits, the French made use of a new and good method of obtaining cover and defence for infantry. They placed in the thrown-up earth baskets of a conical form, which had a hole in them of only three inches in diameter, so that the soldier did not require to fire over the breastwork, and was better covered than behind a crenellated wall. We must now conclude this article, but hope to refer to the subject again. It is one of great interest and opens a wide field for discussion, but there is no doubt to ensure success in any loose system of manoeuvring, such as that employed by the Prussians in the new modifications of their drill, the principal point to be looked to is the training in detail of the individual man, that he should feel himself independent, that he should be aware of his own power and skill, that he should not anxiously await an impulse from higher authority, but act of his own accord when necessary."

The whole secret of Prussian success, as we pointed out, is told in those extracts; it was not superior strategy or tactics, but it was discipline and organization that enabled them to sweep down all resistance; it was not even the idea of turning a flank however well carried out, but it was attack in open order coolness under fire and an ample supply of ammunition.

Our next period of annual drill should witness the inauguration of a well devised system of skirmishing in open order, not as laid down in the drill books, but in such manner as the nature of the ground to be passed over should dictate, and the handling of supports in such a manner as to keep them under cover.

The test of efficiency being the advance of the skirmish line, the closest to the defence without exposure.

A system of tactics of which this principle should be the basis is that best adapted to modern fire-arms; the days of the evenly dressed line, or the stately columns that halted under fire to correct their dressing and closed the gaps made by artillery with the mathematical precision of parade movements has passed away for ever—the only remnant—the final bayonet charge alone remains of the tactics which more than once changed the map of Europe.

We direct attention to the Advertisement of Mr. D. BATTERSBY, on the First Page, who has opened an office as an Accountant, Agent &c., at No. 171, St. James' Street, Montreal. He is a thorough business man of large experiences and trustworthy, and can therefore confidently recommend him to the business-public.