

of these countries, and neither side could afford to do that, the avenue of approach to either France or Germany was that gap, which was further narrowed by the Vosges Mountains, which run up from the bend of the Rhine past Strasburg, and practically die away at Wiessenburg, where they become mere spurs of hills, and practically cease as an obstacle to invasion.

The German plan had been matured years before. Their forces were to be concentrated into three great armies. These armies assembled in the territorial districts where the men lived, and each corps had a line of railway of its own leading up to the frontier, nine in all—six from North and three from South Germany. Each proceeded to the front by its own line of railway, and throughout the entire campaign, even to before Paris, each corps was supplied by its own line. Consequently the burden of the war was spread evenly over the whole of Germany, and confusion was absolutely eliminated. They were further concentrated into three great armies, which were to rendez-vous in the Palatinate, along the line of the River Saar. The base of operations was from Coblenz to Gernershem. They advanced over that space. The first army, under Steinmetz, consisting of 85,000 men, concentrated at Sarrelouis; the second, consisting of 205,000 men, under Prince Frederick Charles, the "Red Prince," concentrated in the direction of Saarbruck, and the third, consisting of 172,000 men, under the Crown Prince, Prince Frederick William, who became the late German Emperor, crossed the Rhine at Gernershem, and concentrated opposite Landau.

I want to show you the perfect working out of that plan. When it was formed two years before Von Moltke did not know whether the French would be able to assume the offensive or not; but he disposed the troops so as to be in the best position, whatever occurred. He formed the best sound general plan. His army was in a central position. No matter on which side the French advanced, he was in a position to fall on their flank. As you know, it would be impossible for an army to advance into South Germany with an immense army on its flank, so he chose a central position, and one which, from its geographical situation, was also the shortest to Paris. These three armies were not acting independently at all, although they were three separate armies. They were joined together by basic operations, and there was constant telegraphic communication between them, and they all subordinated their movements to the general plan. Supposing that the French did not assume the offensive, what the Germans were to do was to come straight down, and turning the French right, drive them away from the south of France, which was the rich portion of the country, where they could get the best portion of their supplies, and try to drive them up to the Belgian frontier, where they would be hemmed in.

Towards the end of July it became very evident that the French could not assume the offensive, and Europe saw that the campaign would devolve into an invasion of France by Germany, instead of Germany being invaded by France, Napoleon III very soon saw the folly of the venture. When war was declared he was passive, because his dynasty was in such a state that he did not like to put himself into opposition to the public feeling. When he saw the folly of the step that had been taken he should have fallen back and taken up a strong defensive position, such as the Rivers Moselle or Meurthe, which had on them numerous large fortresses. If he had done so, he could have opposed the advance of the invader for a consider-

able period. But such was the feeling in Paris that not an inch of territory should be given up to the invader, and he was so ruled in Paris by the general feeling and the press, that he dare not retreat, and so he adopted the half-hearted measure of standing in a position that offered no advantage, and awaited the German attack. When the Germans decided on the offensive the only question was which of the three armies should commence the attack. The army on the right was favorably placed for advancing and turning the French left flank; but owing to the railways in the Palatinate not being constructed for strategic purposes, the concentration of the troops could not be made so perfect. The second army was not in a position for turning either flank, and, moreover, it was intended for a general reserve. Therefore, the third army remained. It was concentrated near Landau, and the whole country afforded opportunities for approaching the French lines with a degree of secrecy. The French neglected all reconnoitring, and were ignorant of the German movements. The country specially favored a hidden advance. If the army could get round the French right, it would compel it either to retreat or to go north. If it went north, it would be driven up to neutral territory, which it could not enter, and it could also be assailed in front by the first and second armies, and if they succeeded in turning it in the other direction, they could take Strasburg without opposition. Supposing they failed, they would be driven back into their own territory, and would not be hemmed in against a neutral territory. Therefore everything pointed to the third army commencing hostilities.

The French saw that their left was being threatened, so Napoleon, who was practically in command, put more troops to strengthen his left, and the forces were set out from Sarrelouis to Wiessenburg, standing right at the front to try and keep the Germans from crossing, and purely for sentimental reasons. Between Sarrelouis and Metz was Bazaine, with the second, third and fourth corps; at Bitsch was the fifth corps, and at Wiessenburg was MacMahon, with the first corps, and at Strasburg and further south was the seventh corps. The army of Chalons was still there. Here they waited in a line no less than eight miles in length. There was no proper scheme for mutual support, and the country being much broken, it was not good for the support of troops; and they were in about as disorganized a condition as they could be. The people in Paris got impatient, and insisted upon an advance being made. Therefore, at the end of July Napoleon ordered Bazaine to cross at all costs; but he could not do it; the troops were not in a condition to accomplish it. However, on August 2nd, his second corps, under General Frossard, attacked the German outposts at Saarbruck, with the result that the Germans were driven out of that place. The French considered this such a magnificent achievement that they retired to the heights of Spicheren and took positions there.

The third German army commenced to assume the offensive, and on August 6th it advanced from Landau to Wiessenburg. At Wiessenburg was MacMahon's advance guard, the second division of the first corps, which was attacked by nearly the entire force of the German army, with the result that it was practically annihilated, and General Douay, the commanding officer, was killed. MacMahon fell back to Woerth, where he had the first corps assembled—the first division of the seventh corps from Strasburg—and had altogether from 40,000 to 45,000 men there. He had a very strong

position in a strategical, tactical, topographical, and every other sense. Standing here, supposing the third army was advancing on Strasburg, he threatened it and covered the main line to Paris, and also, indirectly, the line to Bitsch and Metz. Therefore, his position was an exceedingly strong one.

The Crown Prince, who was in command of the third army, did not intend to attack MacMahon until August 9th; but his advance guard got mixed up with MacMahon's corps and had to be extricated, and the battle of Woerth occurred on August 6th, instead of the 7th, as was intended. The French were outnumbered and after a severe battle their right was cut off and driven to Strasburg, and their central left was driven back, with great confusion to Saverne.

After the battle the Germans pursued badly. In the first place, they were very much exhausted; and, in the second place, night came on and they were greatly misled by the troops of De Failly, which when driven back, retreated to Bitsch. The Germans thought it was the main French retreat. They concluded that MacMahon would retreat to Bitsch; but he retreated to Saverne. There is no doubt that the Germans did not exercise proper skill in this pursuit, and they allowed MacMahon's force to retreat unmolested, and had only a vague idea where it had gone. When MacMahon retreated to Saverne his force became so disorganized that he never ceased retreating until he had covered a distance of 200 miles, and reached Chalons. Anyone would have thought that he would have established touch with Bazaine; but he fell right back, coming through Luneville and Neufchateau, on the south. On the 14th August he got his men on the trains there, and reached Chalons by rail on the 20th August.

On the 6th August the first German army, consisting of the third corps of the second army, attacked Frossard at Spicheren, and after a severe battle the French were driven back to Sarreguemines.

By these two battles—Spicheren and Woerth—La Fère, who was at Bitsch, found himself a projecting post, so to speak, and he decided to retreat. Consequently, after the battle of Spicheren he followed after MacMahon, falling back through Nancy and Toul, and also proceeding by rail to Chalons, which he reached on the 20th August. Further, the seventh corps, from Coulmiers and Strasburg, also proceeded by rail, and reached Chalons on August 20th.

Meanwhile, the French Government had organized another corps, the twelfth, which joined MacMahon at Chalons, so that on the 20th, he had these troops assembled at Chalons camp—the first corps, the fifth, the seventh and the twelfth—a total of about 140,000 men, in an exceedingly disorganized condition.

We will leave MacMahon for a moment, and will glance at the third German army, which was pursuing him, having found out the direction of his retreat. One division—the Baden division—was detailed down to Strasburg, to invest it, and small forces were left to watch the fortresses in the Vosges Mountains—Phalsbourg, Bitsch, and so on. The remainder then proceeded through the Vosges, spreading themselves as much as possible, to make subsistence easier, advanced by way of Nancy after MacMahon.

We will return to the forces in the north. The battle of Spicheren is over, and Bazaine has drawn in the forces he had on his right and left, and has assembled them, to the number of about 135,000, to the east of Metz, near Boulay. On the 9th of August, Napoleon ordered