

THE USE OF CAVALRY.

(The following article, referred to in our last, was obliged to postpone until this week for want of space:—

It was a remark of that eminent Scotch logician, the late Sir William Hamilton, that there is nothing which men seem to admit so lightly as the simple assertion of a statement as a fact; hence arises popular credulity as to quack medicines, fortune telling, hobbie companies, bogus mines, ghosts, spirit rapping, and, we may add, the doubtless well-meaning, but often rash and ill-founded utterances of the special correspondents of the daily newspapers. Accordingly, when, during the late Franco-German War, some of these writers—admitting, not wisely, but too well, the splendid way in which the Prussian Uhlans were used in covering the advance of the German armies—maintained that in future cavalry would be chiefly employed in this way, the dictum was very generally accepted as correct—at least, by those who were not regular students of the art of war. Not, however, that there has been wanting some further corroborative evidence tending more or less in the same direction, supplied by the objections recently raised by some German theoretical tacticians, such as Colonel Verdy and Major Schettf, against the use of cavalry in masses. On the whole, therefore, it has been of late a vague idea prevalent that the importance of cavalry in the line of battle has been seriously impaired, and its general status greatly affected, by the increased destructiveness of infantry and artillery fire. Hence, we believe we are right in saying that some little surprise was felt in certain quarters when it was lately announced, in connection with this autumn's Prussian cavalry manoeuvres, that there was probably to be a return to "the traditions of Zieten and Seydlitz," inasmuch as the intimation recalled to a writer in the *Globe*, and doubtless to many other people, a remark of a great general to the effect that "he liked to see his cavalry charging, jumbled boot to boot." We therefore now propose, not to give a disquisition on cavalry tactics, but to glance briefly at the aspect of matters just stated, and to indicate what, so far as we can see at present, seems to be the probable nature of the Prussian official views as to the future use of cavalry.

Now, in the first place, as regards the handling of the German cavalry in the late war—which we readily admit is, so to speak, a most important point of departure for the discussion of the subject—it is to be noted that there was after all nothing new in the principle of the method in which this arm chiefly and most successfully employed, namely, in covering the main body of the Army and in reconnoitring, for the last Napoleon constantly employed large bodies of cavalry in this way. It must be allowed, however, that this duty was probably never so thoroughly and efficiently discharged as by the German cavalry during the late war. But, on the other hand, it must be remembered that the Prussian Chivars, when engaged on the service, were seldom opposed by the enemy, owing to the great remissness of the French in the organization of outposts and patrols. Then another circumstance which prevented the German cavalry from playing a more conspicuous part on the field of battle was the Prussian mode of attack, which threw the great bulk of the fighting on the infantry. Thus according to Colonel Hamley, "the history of the victories of 1870, is that the German

corps march straight for the enemy, that the leading troops at once attack, that the rest hurry up to their support, extending and deepening the skirmishing line, and that after a severe engagement an extension beyond a flank renders a position untenable.

The student will, therefore, learn from these battles none of the higher tactics. Now, as it is universally admitted that cavalry cannot nowadays attack the front of prepared infantry with any hopes of success, it is obvious that the use of cavalry in the line of battle in combination with artillery or infantry, or alone, for making sudden flank attacks, must belong to the man to those higher tactics which was not practised at all, according to Colonel Hamley, by the Germans during the late war. Hence it seems to us, by no means improbable that the Prussian military authorities are now striving to devise a more scientific system of attack which will not involve that enormous infantry loss—often locally much greater than that of the French, whom they defeated—which was occasioned by their maintaining a frontal attack in order to distract the enemy's attention from those flank movements, which were really intended to decide the fate of the day. In his higher tactical system of attack, we apprehend that the cavalry will be destined to play a most important part, and hence, we fancy, the reason for the establishment last year in Prussia of special cavalry manoeuvres. But that anything very new and startling is likely to arise from these manoeuvres we do not believe; and, indeed, the fact of their being confined to the cavalry must give them the character of mere brigade drill, rather than of tactical manoeuvres for any extended exercise, in which latter the presence of the three arms is necessary. A correspondent of a contemporary (not a cavalry officer he says) writes from Berlin *appos* of these manoeuvres to "call the attention of thinking military readers to the part cavalry may be called upon to play in future wars." Now, after this preliminary flourish of trumpets one does expect to hear something new about cavalry tactics. But the writer really says nothing at all on the subject, although, with respect to cavalry organization, he proceeded immediately to make the following remarks:— "The old system of the distribution of cavalry amongst the various divisions of a grand army may be considered as condemned by experience. For the future each army corps of moderate strength must have a special strong division or brigade of this arm. The system will be a simple one since each mixed division in the Army Corps, often obliged to act independently, cannot of course be left without a certain small force of horse for various duties. This there will be divisional cavalry and independent divisions of cavalry." Very good, but there is nothing new in this. It is, in the main, simply the change which was made by Napoleon when he reorganized the French army in 1804, at which date the old divisional system of the Republican armies was supplanted by the army corps system. On this point Colonel Hamley says (*Operations of War*, page 352). "The idea of imparting the necessary concentration and unity of action to an army was completed in the camp of Boulogne in 1804, when Napoleon's authority as Emperor was supreme and the army was shaped into the instrument of his vast designs of aggression. It was soon that great masses of cavalry might produce a decisive effect on a field of battle. They were, therefore, abstracted from the divisions, and these were now united into

corps, under a marshal or lieutenant general," &c.

We believe then, on the whole, whatever changes the Prussians now introduce into their cavalry organization and tactics—so far from being startling novelties—will proceed rather in the direction of revising some of the principles adopted by Frederick the Great and Napoleon Bonaparte, that is to say, as regards cavalry proper. What they may do in the way of mounted riflemen is another matter, for these latter really deserve to be guarded as a new arm of the Service, which as yet, however, does not ostensibly find great favour in the eyes of the Prussian military authorities. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that the Germans may, after all, quietly train a considerable portion of their cavalry to act as mounted riflemen, and as such us with the result in the next European war in which they engage.

The Paris correspondent of the *London News* writes: "At the Correctional Tribunal at Rouen General Lebrun, holding a command in the town, appeared the other day as a prosecutor against a discharged soldier, named Lepretre, for using abusive language to him. The General deposed that on the afternoon of Aug. 2 he went in his carriage to make a call upon the Archbishop. He was in uniform, and as he drew near to the Archbishop's Palace he heard repeated vociferations, when he thought at first proceeded from some drunken people quarrelling. But as he alighted he turned round mechanically, and saw the defendant hooting him, and with menacing gestures pointed him out to a group of people. He heard him say, 'Ah! look at that one who is high up and condemns poor fellows to die of hunger.' The General rushed at him and called him a cowardly and miserable slanderer. The man, after hesitating a moment as if he meant to strike him, rushed round and ran away, and he ran after him. He was arrested by some soldiers and others, who stopped him. The General then said, 'Why do you insult me, wretch that you are?' The man replied, 'It is you who insult me, and you have the best of it, for you are armed and I am not.' Then he continued, 'You do a pretty piece of work; you back up people who betrayed France and sold her provinces. They were not proud then! Oh, no; they crouched before the enemy. And now your journals will say tomorrow that an individual of the worst sort insulted a man who wears epaulettes.' Lepretre pleaded drunkenness, but this was denied by the General and other witnesses; and he was sentenced thirteen months imprisonment and a fine of 100 francs."

An ingenious projectile invented by a Russian officer, is now claiming the attention of military scientists. The Sczaroch, as it is called, is an elongated shell, the head of which is completely spherical; a round shell upon the end of an iron cylinder. The two parts are united by comparatively slight thickness of metal. When fired the sczaroch leaves the gun like an ordinary shell; but when it bursts the cylindrical part alone flies to pieces, while the spherical head continues its flight intact and may ricochet for hundreds of yards farther. The advantage of such a shell artillery, for example, is very great. After bursting and scattering its fragments among the guns of the enemy, the head goes on the plunge into the infantry still further back. It is to be used in Russia, however, only for for cannon of moderate size.