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"THE OPERATIONS OF WAR EXPLAINED AND ILLUSTRATED."

(CONTINUED.)

The chapter on the "Supply of Armies at a Distance from their Base," which we published last week from Colonel Hamley's treatise on the "Operations of War," completes the first part of that work. The second part treats of the "Considerations which must Precede the opening of a Campaign."

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE WAR.

The considerations which induce a power to choose between an offensive and defensive attitude may be political, or geographical, or dependent on the relative strength of the belligerents. At the beginning of the American civil war the Confederates stood on the defensive. That this attitude was not chosen from weakness is proved by the successes they met with in the first operations. In separating from the union they declared that they sought only their own independence, not the subjugation of other States. Had they made war in the North, as the Federals made war in Virginia, Louisiana, and Georgia, they would have falsified the principles for which they took up arms. And it is said that their President prevented them from advancing upon Washington after the victory of Bull's Run, lest an invasion of the North should injure the cause of secession. At any rate, sufficient political reason may be assigned for their defensive attitude.

In 1812 and 1813 Wellington held the fortresses which close the only highroads between Portugal and Spain—namely, Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajos. Thus he possessed an impregnable frontier, and also the means of issuing from it. These geographical circumstances gave to him and denied to his adversaries the power of becoming the assailant.

When Denmark, in 1864, was assailed by united Germany, it was out of the question that she should do more than defend her own territory as best she might. The fact of her inferior force reduced her to the defensive.

But the reason for introducing this subject is not to discuss the various cases where belligerents have chosen a part, but to point out the conditions which attach respectively to offensive and defensive war.

It is evident that when one belligerent power feels secure behind an unassailable frontier, and holds many issues into the enemy's territory, either by command of the

sea or otherwise it can assemble its forces unknown to its antagonist upon some point selected by itself, from whence to make an irruption into the theatre of war. And if the belligerents be divided only by a frontier line—a river such as the Rhine or Potomac, or a mountain range such as the Alps—the army that passes it will nearly always find itself immensely superior to the force that can immediately interpose. For the defender's army has by the conditions of the defensive been spread so as to guard all possible avenues by which the attack might be made. Thus, in the Waterloo campaign, Wellington and Blucher, being on the defensive, were guarding all the roads from the French frontier into Belgium, along a front of a hundred miles. Napoleon suddenly assembled his whole army upon the centre of their line, and, on first entering Belgium, was greatly superior to any force which the opposing generals could interpose between him and his object, Brussels.

In the late civil war, Richmond being the point aimed at by the principal Northern army, the Federals could, behind the screen of the Potomac, concentrate their forces and advance, either from the Upper Potomac down the Shenandoah Valley; from Washington along the Orange railroad to the Rappahannock; from Aquia Creek, by the Fredericksburg and Richmond railway; by the Peninsula between the York and James rivers, adopting either stream as a base; or from the south side of the James River by Petersburg. They used all of these lines, and frequently advanced at first with numbers greatly superior to those which the Confederates could assemble to oppose them. Thus the great advantage conferred by the offensive is the power of concentration. And if this advantage be not neutralized by artificial or natural defences, behind which the enemy can, with such forces as may be at hand, retard the advance of the assailant till the whole defensive army may also be concentrated, it entails enormous chances of success. For, the defensive cord being ruptured, and the concerted action of the parts of the army lost, the assailant deals his blows right and left on the scattered fragments, till his road to his object is clear.

At the outset, then, the assailant, when operating in a country suitable for military movements, and defended only by an army—not by fortifications—has great chances in his favor. Nor does his advantage end with the first onset; for the defender is obliged to follow his lead, and to parry his blows, instead of actively assailing him; and while the invader is executing designs already laid down in their minute particulars and

knows what he is aiming at, and what steps the enemy will take to foil him, which, being foreseen, may be provided for, that enemy is operating to a certain extent in the dark, and perhaps even neglects to use what power of concentration he may possess till too late, fearing lest the attack should be a feint. Dislodged from his first positions, and disconcerted by finding that his troops are still scattered in the presence of a concentrated enemy, he will probably be too completely absorbed in the essential measure of collecting them in some position between the invader and his object, to devise offensive measures against him. Thus the first success will lead to others, and each will more and more confirm the invader in the possession of the advantage called by military writers the initiative—that is, the power of compelling your adversary to make his movements dependent on your own.

But it is evident that the power which commences operations in this decisive way must not only possess great resources, but must also be able to render them immediately available in the district wherein lies the destined starting point. And great preparations must be made not only for the collection of supplies, but for the causing them to follow the forward movements of the army. The most abundant stores will be of no avail if there be deficiency of transport. The army, checked in its career, must halt to await its supplies, or spread to gather them from the country. In either case the impulse of the advance will be lost, and the initiative will be seized by a ready adversary.

On the other hand, the defensive army, being distributed over a wide area, is much more easily supplied. The resources of each district are probably adequate to maintain the troops occupying it. The necessary stores, instead of being directed at great cost of transport upon some peculiar focus, are collected at many central points. The roads by which the army is supplied from the rear are numerous, and transport is thus immensely facilitated; and when compelled to retire, it falls back amidst its magazines, and the requirements of transport are more likely to diminish than to increase. Thus, comparing the tax which war levies on belligerents, the greater strain evidently falls at the outset on the power that undertakes offensive operations: and, in modern times, none but a highly organized system for developing and administering the resources of a state, directed by a paramount and concentrated authority, such as that of a despotic government, can be adequate to begin and maintain them effectually.

If, however, a belligerent has the means