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"THE OPERATIONS OF WAR EXPLAINED AND ILLUSTRATED."

(CONTINUED.)

The fifth chapter of Colonel Hamley's work is as follows:—

In the days when armies subsisted of necessity on the pilage of the country they made war in, the rigors of war were inseparable from the fact of war. The theatre of hostilities, like the English lines of invasion in France, like parts of Germany in the Thirty Years' War, became a hell, the soldiers demons. Any narrative of the time will show that life was to the wretched inhabitants filled with elements which make no part of the existence of any modern European people—terror ending in recklessness, the absence of all that provision for the future which hope and security induce, a greedy snatching at any present employment or respite from evil, and a general impression that the world was a scene of injustice, given over to the dominion of devils. These rigors naturally reacted on the character of those who inflicted them; soldiers grew remorseless, indifferent to suffering, fond even of inflicting it; friends as well as foes were subject to outrage, war was licensed devastation, and the territories which were the scene of hostilities became frightful deserts.

With the establishment of standing armies and the necessity of supplying them from their own resources, these horrors in great measure ceased. They were no longer inflicted by an army on its own or a friendly territory, but were used as a weapon against the enemy. But enough of the former spirit of cruelty still identified itself with war to cause commanders of high honor and reputation to commit deeds which from our point of view must always stain their names. Turenne ravaged the beautiful territory known as the Palatinate; and Marlborough, after marching from Flanders across Germany, supplied by the contributions of friendly States, resorted, on entering Bavaria, to what he calls "military execution," or systematic devastation, as a means of detaching the Elector from the interests of France, by compelling him to witness the sufferings of his subjects and the ravage of his dominions.

A little later than this, when discipline grew into paramount importance, when movements were quicker, and when armies in the presence of a ready foe found they must always be prepared to fight, the question of supplies came to be a still more considerable element in war. A curious calculation exists, made by Tempelhoff, a Prussian general, the historian of Frederick's wars, which shows how vigorously the operations of his master were fettered by the necessity of providing assured subsistence for his army.

"A hundred thousand men," he says, "consume daily 150,000 pounds of flour, equal to 200,000 pounds of bread.

"Bread and forage are seldom to be had in sufficient quantities on the spot—hence magazines are established along the line of operations.

"The bread-waggons carried a supply for 6 days—the men for 3 more.

"In commissariat-waggons, flour for 9 additional days could be conveyed—1 waggon to 100 men for 9 days; thus 1,000 waggons supplied the army for that time.

"An operation of 18 days' duration could thus be conducted without an intervening magazine; but field ovens were required to make the flour into bread. But bread for 3 days requires 2 days to bake it. At the end of 6 days, therefore, a halt must be made to bake, or else the ovens would fall behind hand with the supply. So that, advancing into an enemy's country, before magazines could be formed there, 6 days was the extent of march practicable without a halt.

"But when the ovens were at a greater distance from the magazines than the commissariat-waggons could perform, going and returning, in 9 days, the army fell short." Sixty miles was therefore the maximum distance to which the field ovens could advance from the magazines. If we add to this 40 miles, for the space which the bread waggons (which held 6 days' rations) could traverse in 6 days, going and returning, we have the full extent to which an army could venture in an enemy's country without forming magazines there—namely, 100 miles.

As at this time an army, instead of being an assemblage of bands or companies, each under its own immediate leader, had become an integer which did not admit of ready separation into parts; so the system of supply had also been highly organised in order to maintain this somewhat cumbrous machine in working order. Communications, to manœuvre against which scarcely entered into the combinations of the generals of a preceding age, had now come to be of the first importance, and the capture of a great magazine or a great convoy was a matter serious enough to derange a whole plan of campaign.

This ultra-methodical method of campaigning continued till the time of the French Revolution. Confronting all Europe, and destitute of all the material of war except men, France poured forth armies half-clad, half-fed, half-armed, but filled with valor, intelligence, and zeal. Old traditions of methodical war, where troops slept under tents and were fed from magazines, were of no value to armies which possessed neither tents nor maganizes. A new organization became necessary to meet these new conditions. An army, no longer itself an integer, was resolved into divisions, each complete in itself in all arms, and capable either of fighting alone or of taking its place readily in line of battle. The amount of independence thus gained rendered the task of supplying them comparatively easy. Alike in the plains of Flanders and on the summits of the Alps, the soldiers of the Republic learned to bivouac, and to maintain themselves in the country they made war in. What they lost in method they gained in nobility; taught by always present and always pressing necessity, they acquired the secret of spreading in order to subsist; but, being opposed to disciplined troops, they were forced also to possess a due facility of reassembling for battle. They were at once the most accomplished of marauders and the most intelligent of soldiers. And it was this combination of seemingly adverse qualities that distinguished them from the armies of the middle ages, where the troops were indeed skillful in the art of plundering, but had neither the discipline nor intelligence necessary for forming out of the scattered units a combined force that could oppose a regular army.

Formed by this rough training, the French army became an instrument in the hand of the most subtle, inventive, and audacious leader in the world. The old system of Frederick met the new system directed by Napoleon, and were shattered to pieces. And at the root of this new system lay the new method of procuring supplies.

But it would be a great mistake to suppose that Napoleon, when he became both chief of the State and head of the army, led on to conquest merely a horde of plunderers, who lived from hand to mouth. No general was ever more careful in accumulating great magazines and in protecting his communications. All his precepts prove that he felt more strongly even than the strictest generals of the old school the necessity of holding fast to the links which united him with his base. After Jena, for instance, when he had broken in a single day the power of Prussia, his first thought, after providing for the pursuit of his defeated enemy, was to establish a fresh and shorter line of communication with France, and to station on it great hospitals and depots of stores. In what, then, it may be asked, did the advantage of the French system consist, since it did not free him from the restrictions which hampered others? This question has been answered by one of the greatest of the gen