

## THE TRAVELLER.

AT THE SOURCE OF THE NILE.

By Mrs. Hemans.

In sunset's light, o'er Afric thrown,  
A wanderer proudly stood  
Beside the well-spring, deep and lone,  
Of Egypt's awful hood—  
The cradle of that mighty birth,  
So long a hidden thing to earth.

He heard its life's first murmur ring sound,  
A low mysterious tone—  
A music sought, but never found,  
By kings and warriors gone;  
He listened, to his heart beat high—  
That was the sound of victory.

The rapture of a conqueror's mood,  
Rush'd through his burning frame,  
The depths of that green solitude  
Its torrents could not tame;  
There stillness lay, with Eve's last smile  
Round those far fountains of the Nile.

Night came with stars; across his soul  
There swept a sudden change,  
E'en at the pilgrim's glorious goal  
A shadow dark and strange  
Breathed from the thought, so swift to fall  
O'er triumph's hour—and is this all?

No more than this! what seem'd it now  
First by the spring to stand?  
A thousand streams of lovelier flow  
Bathed his own mountain land,  
Whence far o'er waste and ocean track  
Their wild sweet voices call'd him back.

They call'd him back to many a glade,  
His childhood's haunts of play,  
Where brightly through the beechen shade  
Their waters glanced away;  
They call'd him, with their sounding waves,  
Back to his father's hills and graves.

But darkly mingling with the thought  
Of each familiar scene  
Rose up a fearful vision, fraught  
With all that lay between—  
The Arab's lance, the desert's gloom,  
The whirling sand, the red simoom.

Where was the glow of power and pride?—  
The spirit born to roam?  
His alter'd heart within him died  
With yearnings for his home—  
All vainly struggling to repress  
That gush of painful tenderness.

He wept! the stars of Afric's heaven,  
Behold his burning tear,  
E'en on that spot where Fate had given  
The mead of tolling years—  
O happiness! how far we flee  
Thine own sweet paths in search of thee!

INFANTRY LESSONS OF THE  
MANŒUVRES.

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Resuming this subject our contemporary observes that it was pointed out in the first article how plainly the manœuvres showed that the stiff British line is not adapted to the requirements of modern war; for the choice at the manœuvres being only between line and heavy columns, the columns were usually employed for advances even under artillery fire on ground which was especially favourable for line formation, by reason of its openness and freedom from obstacle; deployments being constantly made under heavy fire. When during the manœuvres line had been formed, their old advantages were lost, because the fire of rifled guns at ranges practical for them, but useless for the old smoothbores, flanked the line, so as to take them in the direction of their greatest depth. The next important question (our contemporary proceeds to say) is whether the flank attacks so constantly made were wise or the reverse. We hold them to have been wise, though not always perfectly carried out, and we will now attempt to show how modern improvements in guns and rifles render flank attacks almost imperative, and why they are now superior to the tactics of the great Napoleon, who, as a rule, broke through the centre of

the enemy's line. Napoleon and Wellington, carried the principles respectively of attack and defence to their highest development—highest, that is, so long as men fought with the old weapon. The Napoleon and Wellington of to day would change their system, not because they used to be wrong, but because the two great commanders would know how to adapt their tactics to the new circumstances. Leaving out of question for the moment the advantages of pursuing an habitual system of attack or one of defence, we will consider how attacks should be made for it is certain that one side at least must attack.

If we examine the old treatises on war, we find a number of plans given for arranging troops in order of battle. Two opposing armies used to proceed leisurely, and neither attacked till the other had made its dispositions. They were like two chess players arranging their pieces in the regular order before the commencement of a game. And no wonder, for in those days war was constant; men of rank made it the business of their lives, looked to it for their name, their fame, and often even for their wealth, while the soldiers were either feudal servant, or mercenary who sold their services for pay and plunder sometimes to one nation, sometimes to another. The fiery attacks of the French in their wars of the Revolution gave the death stroke to the whole system, and Napoleon's genius found in the use of requisitions combined with contracts means of moving his troops so rapidly as to out-manœuvre and demoralise all armies led by generals who had been trained on the old system. What happens invariably in such cases occurred now. Napoleon's ideas were adopted and his methods copied to a great extent by other Powers. Some received them in their spirit, others according to the letter. England alone neither copied the letter nor accepted the spirit. Wellington's system was to act on the defensive, tactically, so it is assumed that the defensive must be right for all time. Wellington used his troops drawn up in line with artillery so mixed with them as to be able to take shelter in infantry squares when attacked, so nothing new must ever be introduced. Wellington met the offensive centre attack by a steady front and won, therefore the English must stand with solid impassiveness in every battle for ever and ever. This pride in old achievements and in the memory of a great chief is an excellent virtue worthy of a great and ancient people, but it may be overdone. Now that stiff line of battle and steady endurance of fire without replying have become impossible, may it not be well to ask what would Wellington have done had he lived and retained his youthful faculties unimpaired in 1872?

Suppose, first, that he would have adhered to the defensive, and that he was attacked by a Napoleon in the old centre attack fashion. He would have argued that his artillery, even if belonging to an army three times as numerous as any he ever commanded, would be able to concentrate its fire upon the advancing columns on the enemy without moving a single gun, supposing the pieces had been well placed at the commencement of the battle. His infantry fire, combined with that of the guns, would throw the enemy into disorder long before they came within reach of a possible charge, and they would inevitably break up. Would he then cause his infantry to charge with fixed bayonets? No, for the enemy would be too far off, and broken as they would be, their fire and that of their artillery would hinder his advance. He would know, however, that the flanks had been weakened to strengthen the front

attack; he would have made his dispositions beforehand, and while driving the defeated columns before him—not with the bayonet, but by fire—he would make a flank attack at the same time. Such, we believe, must be the fate of concentrated centre attacks in our days, and Napoleon, if he lived now, would not practise them, because at different ranges nearly the whole artillery of the defenders could be directed against the attacking columns. All reasoning from facts, all experience of the late war, tend to prove that a trained army, properly covered, either naturally or artificially, properly armed and supplied with ammunition, is unassailable in front with any hope of success. So long as French regular army existed it never once failed to meet and hold back a front attack until its flank was turned. The author of the *Tactical Retrospect* 1866 tells how the fire of a defending force caused the attacking force to steam naturally towards the flanks. With later experience before us we may say that what the troops did by instinct was the right thing to do, and must in future be done systematically and by order of the generals. Von Moltke, in an article published by the *Militär Wochen Blatt*, in July, 1865, says that a line of troops with open ground in front of them can defend themselves against any front attack and be pretty sure of success. On the other hand, "As the chance of a front attack being successful becomes smaller so much the more certain is it that the enemy will direct his attention to the flanks, and so much the more important does it become that these should be well protected." His words have been verified in every battle between armies provided with breechloaders, and it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that flank attacks supersede all others for the real decision of battles. Front attacks must be made, of course, to hold the enemy fast, and we now come to a very important conclusion based upon the rapidity of fire from breechloaders. *If an enemy attacks us boldly in front and we reply by a simple defence, it is almost impossible to know his strength, or to be sure that he is not very weak in front and massing his troops on our flanks.* For, if an equal force can hold its ground with ease against front attack, an inferior one can make the same impression for a certain time and aggressively. Such work was actually done frequently in 1870. Take for example, the battle of Mars-la-tour. The object of the Prussians was to hold Bazaine fast and prevent him from making his escape from Metz. The Third Corps was the first to arrive in contact with the French Army. There was no hesitation or doubt about its conduct, though the French were immensely superior in strength. It laid hold of Bazaine's army like a bulldog and never ceased its apparently reckless attacks, though perfectly certain not to succeed in driving the enemy back. It held him fast, and though it lost nearly 7000 men, maintained its position and its hold upon the enemy until supported by the successive arrivals of other corps. It is now a golden rule with the Prussians never to yield an inch of ground, because once yielded it is so hard to regain it. It is recognised that an inferior force in position can hold its own for a long time against front attack—and for this reason they are not afraid of weakening their front in presence of the enemy, so only that they can use the troops taken away for the purpose of a flank attack. In this the action on the last day of the manœuvres the battle of Amesbury as it was called, was wisely conducted against an enemy so prone to act on the defensive as was the Northern Army. A small force did, in fact, hold the