

knows vastly more about it than can possibly be said here. It is, roughly, as follows:

Four direct lines of railway lead to Paris from the eastern frontier. 1. By Mulhouse, Belfort, Chaumont, and Troyes; 2. By Strasbourg, Nancy, and Toul; 3. By Metz and Verdun; 4. By Thionville and Mézières. The first of these lines is commanded by the fortress of Belfort, and cannot therefore be followed by an invading army; the second is covered by the guns of Toul; the Metz-Verdun line passes beneath the fire of Verdun; while the fourth line is guarded by the cannon of Montmédy and Mézières. So long, therefore, as these various fortresses remain in the hands of the French, no hostile force can use the railways which pass within their range. This being so, it was natural that the first measure adopted should have been to largely strengthen Belfort, Toul, and Verdun, so as to bar the straight paths to Paris; and that intrenched camps should be simultaneously established at Belfort, Langres, Vesoul, and Besançon, so as to close the route to the south and centre, and to thereby cover Dijon and Lyons. According to this theory, an invading army would have to take or turn the fortresses in front, and would be stopped by the Luxembourg frontier on the right, and by the fortified camps on the left. A fifth camp in the neighborhood of Soissons will provide the means of attempting a flank attack on the invader, if, after leaving sufficient forces for blocking Toul or Verdun, he marched on towards Paris. It is, however, round Paris itself that the greatest mass of accumulated obstacles is to be prepared; some twenty forts and camps are being constructed in a circle, at an average distance of about twelve miles from the capital, so as to attain the double end of protecting the city from bombardment, and of rendering the ring too large to allow of an investment. The entire plan is well imagined, and the critics seem to unanimously approve it; the one objection urged against it is, that it proposes to do but little for Mézières and Montmédy, for the reason that they lie too close to the Belgian frontier for an enemy to risk a failure in attacking them. This argument is thought insufficient, especially when it is remembered that the battle of Sedan was fought precisely between these two fortresses. The details of design are of course kept as secret as possible, and no advantage could arise from alluding to them; but it may be said that, as a whole, the plan creates a new eastern frontier guard very nearly as strong as that which was lost four years ago. Originally it was thought that seven years would be required to carry it to thorough completion; but the works have been pressed on with unexpected vigor, and it seems now quite possible that they will be entirely terminated in 1878.

OLD FAULTS UNCHANGED.

There finishes the tale—so far, at least, as we propose to tell it here. It is very unsatisfactory. It shows up the old faults of France, unchanged, perhaps unchangeable; and it introduces into her history a totally new defect which nobody was prepared to find in her—a strange inaptness for fitting herself to a novel situation. Of all the consequences of the war this is amongst the gravest, and it is, certainly, the most unexpected. That France should be conquered was foreseen; that she should have taken her beating with the astonished rage of a spoiled child who is whipped at last, after years of kisses, cake, and indulgence, is not surprising; that she should have paid off her money losses with almost contemptuous

ease, appears quite natural—now that she has done it; but that she should muddle, dawdle, waver, and bungle over the reorganization and reconstitution of her army, is certainly astonishing. Some few elements of the work are being well done; the plan of fortified defence is excellent; the system of complete *corps d'armée* in each district is wise and practical; the new rifle is a good one; but nearly all the rest is weak and disappointing. Four years have passed, and no solution is yet adopted for the Intendence and the Staff; the new regimental basis of 18 companies diminishes the army; the reserves have no existence. The great question of artillery has been dealt with amidst hesitations, indecisions, and frequent changes the suppression of the premium of re-engagement is driving out the *sous-officers*; the *volontariat d'un an* is a delusion and a fault; the new *matériel* is being partly paid for by forbidden *virements* of account; and as for superior direction of the whole, it is a compound of old prejudices, habit, and antiquated regulations, mixed up with irresolution, doubt, and vacillation. It is in the insufficiencies and the defects of that direction that the great danger lies, and it seems to be a general opinion amongst well informed people that there is not the slightest reasonable probability of a change in it. The evidence, indeed, points straight the other way, and indicates that the directing hand is resolutely incapable of dealing firmly with all the difficulties of the case. Here is one more final example in support of this.

Two years ago the Minister of War arrived at the impression that the troops were not getting enough practical instruction, and ordered by a circular to all generals of brigade, that thenceforth the regiments under their orders were to be taken out every Monday for exercise in the country in the various operations of campaigning, and that a detailed report of the operations executed was to be sent to him in every case. One general, who commanded a brigade at Satory, took out his troops for a long walk, smoked several cigars himself, made no pretence whatever of attempting the slightest work of any kind, marched home again, and then called in his colonels, and, with their aid and that of his *officier d'ordonnance*, drew up, in much detail, a report describing the operations which he had not performed. This naturally got known in the brigade; the officers became furious, and one of them communicated the story to a military newspaper, which published it at full length. It must not, however, be imagined that the general was brought before a court martial, or that any sort of punishment was inflicted on him; on the contrary, so far as is known, the indignation of the Ministry was directed, not against the general, but against the officer who had dared to let the public into the secret of what had happened. This is not the sort of guidance which is likely to lift up the tone of the army, or to render it strong and earnest.

ABSOLUTE NEED OF REORGANIZATION.

The Paris correspondent of the London *Times* writes on Aug. 18:

During the last fortnight I have had opportunities of conversing with many officers and others well versed in military matters. I have carefully read the Army newspapers, and I have come to the conclusion that one and all think the writer in *Blackwood* was perfectly justified in his remarks. On one point every one is agreed—namely, that the reorganization of the Army has been attempted solely as a means of defence, and not of offence. In most cases every one,

from the highest to the lowest, is well aware of the position in which their country has been placed by the events of 1870. They know that France is so enfeebled that any idea of turning the tables on their victors must be put off to a far distant future. At the same time there are several Generals of the old schools who would fain attribute the victories of the war less to superior strategy than to good luck. Nothing will convince them to the contrary. Unhappily, moreover, their position gives them a certain weight with younger officers, and they must to a certain degree bear the responsibility of the difficulties which have been thrown in the way of Army reform. During the debates in the Assembly the Minister for War opposed the propositions of the Committee of Forty five, appointed to examine the matter. He refused to listen to the committee, and of course the laws were rather forced on him than freely accepted. Beaten on the Cadres bill, he was nevertheless intrusted with the duty of putting it in to force. Consequently, it would be absurd to suppose that General De Cissey has any great liking for the task which has been imposed on him. It has often been said that the French are peculiarly apt to accommodate themselves to circumstances, and therefore the example set by the administration of the War Office has, of course, been followed in other quarters. Hence, Generals who objected to Army reform have not scrupled to follow their leader. Without method or guide, or even precise orders, they command each one after his own fashion. Some treat the regulations of June 12 as a dead letter, and the troops manœuvre according to the fancy of the commanders of the Corps d'Armée, notably those under the orders of Generals Ducrot, Bataille, Clinchant, and Chanzy. Even simple Lieutenant Colonels and Majors have contributed their quota to changing the regulations for manœuvring troops, so that the subaltern officers are naturally completely at sea as to the right or wrong manner of proceeding. This is surely a strange way of helping to organize the Army, but in truth there are many Generals who, though brave men, are in the art of war mere Captains. The French army reforms should begin from the head, for the War Office and its staff are much too conservative in their ideas, and until a change is brought about no reforms will be possible. Yet individually the officers and men are working as they never worked before. The Colonels pay the greatest attention to their regiments, and the progress made, more especially in the Artillery, is very great. But disunited good will cannot do every thing. These opinions are those of Frenchmen who feel that were Germany once more to cross the frontier France would be all but defenceless; of Frenchmen who dread the return of the days of Marshal Niel and Lebœuf; of Frenchmen who are serving in that Army which individually each does his best to reform, but whose efforts are checked by administrative negligence and want of co operation.

LUNCH. —The officers of the 39th Battalion entertained Lt. Col. McPherson, Major Villiers and Paymaster Alger, and a number of gentlemen at lunch, at the Norfolk House, on their visit to Simcoe, on Friday last. Lt. Col. Mabee occupied the chair, and Adjutant Heath, the vice-chair. Capt. Green; Yerks, Price, Matheson and Coombs were present, and a very pleasant hour was spent. —*Simcoe British Canadian*