This article was downloaded by: [University of Arizona]
On: 02 February 2015, At: 15:16
Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered
Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41
Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK

Royal United Services Institution. Journal

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rusi19>

The Wars of Frederic the Great

Maude late R.E.
Published online: 11 Sep 2009.

To cite this article: Maude late R.E. (1894) The Wars of Frederic the Great, Royal United Services Institution. Journal, 38:193, 313-325, DOI: [10.1080/03071849409416993](https://doi.org/10.1080/03071849409416993)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03071849409416993>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not

be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

FOREIGN SECTION.

THE WARS OF FRÉDÉRIC THE GREAT.

By the German General Staff. (Précis of the Introductory Chapters.)

By Captain MAUDE, late R.E.

THE starting point for all modern tactical study in Germany during the last fifteen years has been the first Silesian War. Unfortunately for the cause of progress in England no reliable data as to the methods of war then in use have hitherto been available in our own language, and as the work from which the following notes are taken is far too bulky for private enterprise to translate and publish, the following précis of the most important introductory chapters is herewith offered to the readers of the Journal.

The evolution of the art of war, on the conclusion of the wars of the Spanish succession, had entered on a period of stagnation and partial retrogression. The principles of fighting which had evolved themselves during the Wars of Louis XIVth had remained in the main unchanged, but their practical application had lost in energy, and the initiative of the leaders had been sacrificed.

The actual combatant army practically consisted of cavalry and infantry only in the proportion of one to three in Prussia, one to four in Austria and her allies, and not quite one to six in France. The artillery was very weak indeed, only one light piece (3-pr. generally) for 1,000 men and a few heavy guns, say 10 to 15, 12 to 24-prs. as a reserve.

With a view to maintain unity of direction over the whole, and to develop the fire power to the utmost, the "Line" had been evolved.

The tactical unit of the infantry was the battalion in line four deep, but in Prussia for fighting purposes only three deep, which was divided into sections and divisions, which stood side by side without intervals, so that the battalion formed a unit complete in itself. The number of the sections and divisions differed, but was usually four of the latter, each of two sections, so that the sections corresponded with our companies, but the division was made on parade with no reference to the actual strength of the "company," which was purely an administrative unit, as it still is in our own service. The line was the sole fighting formation; columns were only used for purposes of movement, and of these there were three forms, viz., column of divisions, column of sections both at wheeling distance, and for short lateral movements a column formed by turning

the line, to the right or left, which gave fours or threes. It is curious to notice that just as till quite recently the Prussians recognised two forms of line, viz., three deep for manœuvre and two deep for fire, so they then had a four deep line for drill purposes, but only used a three deep one for firing. Column of sections was formed from the right only, exactly in the same manner as we still do on the command. "Advance in column from the right." To move to a flank the companies are wheeled as in "Break into column to the right or left," and this was the ordinary formation, for though the roads were far worse than nowadays, they were mostly much broader, and on approaching a defile the front was reduced by breaking off files, generally from the left, and during the march the distance between the ranks was increased to four paces. To form line from this column to the front, the head changed direction right or left, and continued to advance the full length of the column and then wheeled into line. To form line to a flank they merely wheeled into line in the usual way.

Fire was only delivered by word of command and either by ranks, or by sections or divisions. The former was the usual method in all other armies, but the Prussians used only the two latter; but in all, the first rank knelt and the other two locked up. The division or section fire began on the flanks and worked inwards, and was so regulated that one half of the battalion always stood with loaded arms at the shoulder, whilst the remainder were loading or firing, and the utmost possible care was given to secure machine-like precision and rapidity in its delivery by ceaseless practice in the firing exercise, thanks to which, after the introduction of the iron ramrod, the Prussian rate of fire reached five rounds a minute—about three times faster than in any other nation. Generally speaking, the attack took place in line, and in order to bring up the battalion as a closed body, it could only advance with small and slow steps, the pace of 28 inches and the cadence 75 to 80; but marching in step was as yet unknown, though they did march in time to the beat of the drum, increasing or diminishing the rate as indicated by the instrument.

The great difficulty of the time was to combine fire and movement, for only under these circumstances did the attack become possible. but in most armies the want of adequate peace-training placed almost insuperable difficulties in the way. As a rule the attack came to a stand after passing through the zone of the artillery fire and entering that of the musketry, the losses then soon brought the assailants to a halt; then ensued, either with or without word of command, a stationary fire-fight. After this had lasted a time the officers either did or did not succeed in stopping it and forcing the line forward with the bayonet.

Of course there was no want of suggestions as to how to secure the desired end. Some Generals believed it possible to push straight in with the bayonet without firing at all, and amongst these was no less a person than Maurice de Saxe, who says in his *Reveries*, "The fire-arm is not so terrible as one thinks, few men are killed in action by fire from the front. I have seen volleys that did not hit four men,

and neither I or anyone else saw an effect sufficient to have prevented us from continuing our advance and revenging ourselves with the bayonet and pursuing fire." All, however, agreed in the importance of postponing the halt to fire as long as possible, and then keeping it strictly under control.

The Austrians covered their advance by their grenadier companies who were employed entirely as our old skirmishers, halting, firing, loading, and running forward, whilst the closed battalion followed in rear without checking. If the attack failed, then, whilst retreating, named files had to halt, front, fire, and regain their places in the ranks. This was the general method of fighting in use in all countries, and if the Prussians succeeded therein in excelling all their competitors, this was due to their better peace-time training and to their truer comprehension of the spirit of the game, which led them to attach greater importance to increasing the development of fire, its utilization in the attack, and the maintenance of unquestioning discipline in all movements. Their three deep formation gave them a marked advantage in development of front, and the march in step, which they had been the first to introduce, gave them an additional means of securing order and accuracy in their movements.

The fire in attacking was thus regulated. The battalion advanced in line with bands playing and drums beating. On the command to fire being given, the music ceased, and the portions designated to commence firing halted and made ready, then advanced three long steps, whilst the rest of the line continued to move at the ordinary pace. At the third pace the front rank dropped on the knee, and the two rear rank ones locked up, the volley was delivered, and the body regained its place in the line, loading on the march.

Thus the whole line during the firing of the different portions remained in constant though slow motion, and ceaseless practice as well as the iron discipline in which the troops were trained guaranteed that even in the sharpest fire the movement would be carried out with the regularity of machinery.

The cavalry of the line was organized in cuirassiers, carbineers, and dragoons. As the value of infantry had been so much increased by the introduction of firearms, it was hoped to secure the same improvement in the mounted forces by arming them with the carbine and devoting equal attention to their training in its use. But the idea was overdone, and the true spirit of the arm suffered in consequence. This was more the case in Prussia than in Austria, in which country the true cavalry spirit with which Prince Eugene had inspired his regiments protected them from a similar misapprehension of their duties.

The squadron was everywhere the tactical unit, formed in three ranks, and subdivided into "troops," in Prussia into four as at present. Line was formed by wheeling from column as described above for the infantry. On the march along the roads open column of troops was the normal formation, but across country they often moved on a squadron front. The execution of the charge varied in different armies. In Prussia the regulations of 1727 laid down: "All

squadrons shall advance to the attack with swords at the engage, standards flying and trumpets sounding, and every commander is held bound, on his honour and reputation, to allow no shooting, but always to ride home with the sword." "When squadrons attack they are to move at the trot, and never to wait to be attacked, but always charge first," but at the period of the first Silesian war, these regulations were by no means always attended to. In advancing cavalry against cavalry they generally went straight at each other without manœuvring, sending some skirmishers out from the flanks of the squadrons to prepare the attack by their fire. There was little scope for manœuvring, for the half column was still unknown, and the line to the front, by squadrons moving up by the shortest way, as practised nowadays, was also of subsequent invention, and further the troops were not sufficiently drilled in close bodies, and in jumping obstacles, &c.

In Austria there were two kinds of attack practised, one employed against the Turks, the other against Christians, in the latter case the squadrons advanced with swords hanging from the wrist, and pistols in hand in two ranks. On approaching the adversary the gallop was sounded, the pistols fired in his face at 20 paces, and then the attack ridden home at the fullest speed of the horses, the men being further instructed to hit the horses of the enemy on the head, as "this always has good effect." Against the Turks, however, they moved in three ranks, slowly and well closed up in order to halt in good order and deliver volleys, so great was the terror which these consummate horsemen and their sharp swords had inspired in the Christian ranks.

If the enemy was defeated, a portion pursued whilst the rest rallied, but rallying was so little practised that after a charge the troops generally got out of hand. "Against infantry their tactics were the same, and as a rule the result of such charges delivered at a trot or moderate canter was often a failure," as might be expected, whereas the Turks charging home recklessly at full gallop usually sabred everything they came across, and were so much feared that the infantry took *chevaux de frise*, connected together with chains, into the field with them, and whenever they halted, put up this obstacle in front to protect them.

All line cavalry were trained for dismounted work, particularly the dragoons, who fought like an infantry battalion. Dismounted cavalry were also much employed in the defence of localities. The French adhered to this line of action the longest, whilst in Austria and Germany the tendency to dismounted fighting gradually disappeared. The hussars held a middle place between the line cavalry and the irregulars, and fought mostly as skirmishers. Their leading sections engaged the enemy in front with fire, whilst the remainder followed close behind the flanks, to be subsequently extended against the enemy's flanks. If charged they gave way and sought shelter behind the line cavalry. The irregulars fought partly on foot and partly mounted, much after the manner of hussars, but without closed reserves, and generally with less approach to order. On foot each man fought as a skirmisher for his own hand. In a battle they were

chiefly employed on the flanks and in difficult ground which protected them from the volleys and closed attacks of the regular infantry. The Austrians had in this respect a great advantage over the Prussians and made the most of it, but the want of discipline and love of plunder which characterised these hordes often proved a serious trouble to their own side, particularly when fighting in their own country.

Up to the beginning of the first Silesian war, the artillery had no tactical training to speak of. The men were trained to serve their guns, to prepare ammunition, and in the construction of batteries, and in Prussia they had an annual course of 14 days' target practice. But no artillery regulations existed, and special orders were necessary on each occasion to put together groups or batteries. The light artillery, 3-, 4-, and 6-prs., with an effective range of 1,500 yds., were allotted by pairs to the battalions, and the heavy 8-, 12-, and 24-prs. with howitzers were united in large batteries and employed in the line of battle at suitable places. In the attack after a short period of preparatory fire, the heavy guns were brought up to case-shot range, about 500 yards, and the battalion guns sought to get in to 200 or 300 yards before opening fire, and were dragged up by hand, in advance of the battalion intervals till the infantry firing began. In defence, the guns were placed somewhat in advance of the infantry line and on its flanks, and, where possible, the heavy guns were grouped together in positions from which they could bring a fire to bear on the advancing enemy's flank, and when time permitted they were protected by earthworks and obstacles.

The position of the three arms relatively to one another was laid down in the "Order of Battle," a document which had to be specially prepared for each campaign or minor undertaking. The desire to develop to the utmost possible pitch the fire power of the infantry had led to the diminution of depth with extreme extension of front, the first line being made as strong as possible at the expense of the second, and the third line was very rarely seen at all. The cavalry were placed on the flanks, both to protect these, and also to secure a free field of action. The artillery found no place in the formal order of battle, but, as above mentioned, orders had to be issued for its employment on each special occasion.

The army was further divided into wings, each under a special commander, but these commanders had no separate power of their own. The leading idea was to bring the army into action as a whole, and this intention was further indicated by drawing up the battalions of the first line at equal intervals of 20 paces throughout the line, no special intervals marking the limit of the wing or brigade commands. The sole duty of the leaders of these subdivisions being limited to maintaining the direction ordered, the closing of gaps and the timely support of any portion of the line that might happen to be driven in. (It does not, however, appear how this last duty was to be performed, for the brigade and regimental commands stood side by side, and not one behind the other, so only the wing commander would appear to have had the power of ordering up a battalion or any portion of the second line to the support of the first line.) The second line followed

the first at 300 paces distance as a rule. This distance being fixed so that it should not suffer from the fire aimed at the first one.

The sections devoted to the arrangement of encampments and the different orders of march are hardly of sufficient general interest for reproduction here. It will be enough to call attention to the extreme formality of all proceedings which followed as a necessity from the prevailing conditions of enlistment and culture of the people generally, and the sparse population of the districts in which the fighting mostly took place. As soldiering was unpopular, desertion was rife, and hence it would have been impossible to quarter the soldier in towns and villages, even had such cover existed in sufficient quantity. As the trained soldier represented a considerable sum of money, he was too valuable to be exposed to the chance of sickness which bivouacs would have entailed, and hence the necessity of tents; and the general ignorance of troopers and the absence of reliable maps, more perhaps the want of newspapers, rendered it a matter of extreme difficulty to get full and reliable information of the enemy's movements, hence the necessity of camping in order of battle ready to turn out and fight at short notice.

When a battle was imminent, the General of the attacking side rode out with the advance guard, in order to see with his own eyes where and how his enemy was drawn up, and thereby to regulate the approach and formation of his own forces. As in those days he could approach to a distance at which all details were clearly visible, it will be evident what a wide difference there is between his position then and now, when, owing to the increased range of all arms, and still more to the enormous increase in the numbers engaged, he is compelled to base his plans on the reports conveyed to him by others, frequently emanating from private soldiers who in the first engagements, at any rate of the next war, can only know what the manœuvres have taught them, and hence the extreme importance of making these as like the real thing as possible is apparent. Thus at Blenheim, Eugene and Marlborough preceded their army with 40 squadrons taken from both wings. The consultation as to the manner of attack and the issue of the necessary orders occupied about an hour, during which the army approached and halted at a distance from the enemy of about a mile.

The formation of the lines then followed. The heads of the columns wheeled to either flank, marched forward their own length, and then wheeled into line. Owing to the low degree of skill in manœuvring these generally possessed, this operation took considerable time, and, when completed, the advance guard fell back into its place, as assigned to it in the normal order of battle, unless meanwhile some special mission was entrusted to it.

The artillery was now brought up to the front, and endeavoured to silence the enemy's guns, whilst the line remained halted out of their range. After this fire had lasted an hour or so, the army moved slowly forward to the attack, halting now and again to correct their order and direction. The cavalry kept its place throughout this movement on the flanks, till within 500 to 600 yds. of the enemy,

when they rode forward and engaged him. This slow advance, and the constant halts within effective range of the enemy's artillery, was an exceedingly trying ordeal for the cavalry, and demanded a very high order of discipline; as a consequence its leaders were always inclined to curtail the period as much as possible, and attack at the earliest opportunity. Whether such attacks—of which there are many examples—were actually due to impatience of loss, or to a truer conception of the duties of cavalry, in either case the book tacticians of those days seriously blamed them.

If their charge was successful, then, theoretically, only a few squadrons were to pursue the beaten horsemen, but the bulk were to wheel in and fall on the flanks and rear of the infantry. Practically it generally happened that after an obstinate hand to hand fight, the victors stuck to the defeated cavalry, and together drifted away from the battlefield, not returning to it for the rest of the day.

During this cavalry fight, the advancing line of infantry had entered the zone of musketry fire, and now came the real tussle. Even in those days, however much leaders desired it, practically it was not possible to close with the bayonet without firing, the attacking line therefore halted, and a fire fight ensued—if the first line alone could not establish a fire superiority, it was the duty of the second to come up and carry it on. But it will be obvious what an advantage a highly trained infantry such as the Prussian, whose rate of volley firing was three times that of its opponents, must have had in such a struggle, and the superiority once obtained, the advance with the bayonet followed as a matter of course. There was, therefore, no essential difference of principle between the infantry fight of those days and the present, only the struggle for fire superiority takes place within 700 yds. now, instead of within 200 then, and the magazine fire at 300 has practically taken the place of cold steel. The difference in the detail of execution other than that due to distance is, that since nowadays the rate of fire is everywhere equal, as far as the infantry alone are concerned, the superiority can only be obtained by higher discipline ensuring more accurate fire, and its concentration on portions of the enemy's line only. It will be obvious, too, how great the retrogression was when the column was reintroduced for attack purposes, whereby the defender was able to concentrate his fire on fractions of the assailant's force only, and not *vice versa*; but where both defenders and attackers start equal, as regards discipline, it will be evident that only the previous employment of the artillery by the latter can give them the requisite guarantee of success, though the power the initiative gives to the assailant of concentrating masses against a line equally strong and equally weak everywhere still leaves a balance in favour of the attacking side.

If the enemy's first line was overthrown, then the order of the attacking line was re-established, and operations commenced against his second one, and this process was repeated till at last the enemy took flight in disorder, when any fresh troops at hand were sent in pursuit; but as a rule pursuits were not instituted, the victors reformed on the conquered ground and advanced a short distance. The

rallying took so much time, and the advance in these ponderous lines was so slow, that generally all touch of the beaten army was lost, and it was left free to continue its retreat unmolested. Cavalry was rarely used in pursuits, and in fact they (*i.e.*, pursuits) were generally looked on with disfavour.

The conduct of the defenders generally depended on the result of the above-mentioned introductory cavalry fight. If the assailants were overthrown, then it frequently happened that his infantry renounced the offensive, and this very partial result was in those days accounted as a victory. If, on the other hand, the defenders' cavalry were beaten, the battle was yet not lost to them, more particularly if the flanks rested on a substantial obstacle. The first line received the enemy with its fire, and the second protected the rear of the former against the returning cavalry, and if the first line was penetrated, the battalions nearest at hand in the second advanced against the assailants who had got through, with the bayonet. If their efforts failed, then the battle was lost, for adequate reserves were rarely provided, and it was impracticable to move one part of either line without compromising the whole. If they succeeded in repelling the attack by fire, then it was the custom to rest contented with the result obtained—counter-attacks were rarely attempted, pursuits still more seldom—for one was afraid of relinquishing the substantial advantages of a selected position, or of risking the carefully-arranged order of battle for doubtful results.

Defence, therefore, was confined to the maintenance of a line once selected; the conception of a sectional defence, or of the offensive-defensive, had scarcely developed itself.

In case retreat became unavoidable, the first line retired through the intervals of the second, which had to resist until the first had again selected and occupied a position in order to take up and cover the second, when it in turn fell back, the same course being also followed by the cavalry. If the retreat took place in disorder, then all alike made the best time they could back to the next defensible section of the ground, and in view of the cautious timidity of the assailants, its occupation generally put a stop to the pursuit.

Taken all in all, the battles of this epoch were mostly of the "parallel" order, in which both sides mutually wear one another out in purely frontal attacks, and the side which could boast of the greatest endurance and courage, together with the best discipline, ultimately conquered. Occasionally the timely co-operation of a turning column turned the scale; but more frequently the idea was to "surprise" victory by attacking an enemy whilst passing a defile, rather than by directing the strength of the army against its adversary's weakness to "compel" victory.

Great leaders, such as Prince Eugene and Marlborough, fully understood both courses; but in long successions of battles, in Louis XIV's time, they stood alone in their art and tactical genius. The others adhered more and more, as time went on, to the hard and fast rules of the game—a proceeding which, in case of disaster, relieved them of *personal responsibility*.

"Thus the tactical science of the epoch had on the whole evolved the form best suited to the characteristics of armies of the period and their weapons, viz., the closed line as principal supporter of the fire fight; but the form had tended towards solidification, and showed itself rigid and incapable of adaptation to circumstances. A false conception of the condition on which success depended had led the minds of tacticians of the day astray in a search after the unattainable, viz., a normal form of action equally adaptable to all conditions. What in the hands of the masters was 'art' in its highest form, in the hands of their disciples became pure 'rule of thumb'—a characteristic tendency of the time which will be found to repeat itself also in the strategy of the same period."

The Strategy, or Method of conducting War.—Apart from the influence of the personality of the leaders and the mental evolution of the troops, the method of conducting war in all periods is conditioned by the politics, the system of supply, the roads or other lines of communication; and the recruiting and tactics of the armies employed.

The political circumstances of the Louis XIV period led to the formation of numerous coalitions, held together by their momentary common interests; and, as these varied, the elements of the coalition also varied; nations fighting one campaign on one side, the next on the other, according as they thought to perceive that their interests lay. Further, besides the interests of the State, a number of other personal considerations had to be taken into account. Dynastic interests, unworthy passions of rulers and their favourites, intrigues in the court parties on either side, sometimes played a decisive part. Thus alliances were lightly entered into, and as lightly broken. Further, diplomacy exercised its influence not only in the stages of operations preceding actual contact, but even made itself felt in the field itself. The result was to weaken the energy with which military operations were conducted. The constant consideration for the wishes of the allies, the striving to induce the enemy's allies to change sides, the fear lest neutral parties should join in—all led to the result that the combatants rarely put out their full fighting strength. To destroy the enemy and compel him to accept peace at any price ceased to be the leading idea; on the contrary, the highest art lay in entangling him diplomatically; and at last it came to this, that war was only carried on nominally; and a further consequence was, that almost every treaty of peace contained in itself the seed of fresh discussions.

By the side of politics, the method of supply also had its influence. In the 30 years' war armies had lived exclusively on requisitions, and in doing so had proceeded to such excesses that war meant utter desolation to the tract wherein it was waged. In the following period as a reaction, an altogether exaggerated idea of the rights of private property prevailed; at the same time, the custom of always marching and camping the armies concentrated as a whole, brought more men together on the same ground than the resources of the farms and villages in the vicinity could supply. One was, therefore, compelled to provide for the troops out of one's own

means, and therefore, in advancing, to drag supplies after one; only forage for the horses was obtained on the spot or brought in by foraging parties, for, with the very considerable numbers of cavalry, sufficient wagon trains were not available. Hence magazines and bakeries had to be provided, and these magazines had to be moved up step by step with the progress of the armies. If the magazine system broke down nothing was left but supply by requisitions, which, for reasons above given, rarely sufficed, and since in those days irregularity in the feeding of troops led to desertion *en masse*, supply played an altogether disproportionate part in the regulation of the marches to what it does nowadays in European warfare.

The condition and nature of the roads by which the supplies were brought up and the troops moved must also be borne in recollection.

The post roads were generally some 11 yds. in width, and mostly of the same nature as the surrounding country from which they were frequently not even marked off by ditches or rows of trees. To keep them in order was the duty of the landowners through whose estates they passed, and they usually confined themselves to pitching down an occasional cart-load of stones, or throwing in a few faggots of brushwood when the state of things became intolerable; but no supervision existed to see that even this was done, only, if things were very bad, the traveller had a right to diverge into the fields and turn the obstacle as best he could. The construction of the great high roads was only taken in hand during the second half of the 18th century, but was then rapidly proceeded with; so that Napoleon found ready to his hand a wide-spread network of well-constructed roads, which alone rendered much of his strategy possible. Things were, of course, much more favourable when great rivers were available as lines of communication, and hence the importance attached to operating, where possible, along the valleys of such rivers as the Danube, the Po, the Rhine, &c.—an importance which, long after the conditions have changed against them, still leads sometimes to misconception as to their value.

As regards the influence that recruiting and completion of the armies had on their employment, it must be borne in mind that the standing armies of this period were on the whole, bodies of men entirely detached from the civilian population—always ready for the war purposes of their king. The Prussian army had carried out this idea to its logical conclusion further than any other, and alone was independent of militia drafts to complete it to a war footing.

But the difficulty was to supply the losses caused by war, by trained men, and the immense expense of maintenance in peace.

Each trained man, in fact, represented so much capital, and considerations of economy therefore modified the daring of the leaders, and also tended to an excess of caution in tactics, and led to an excessive value being attached to the defensive and the use of entrenchments.

All these influences exercised a retarding effect on the plans of campaign, which, as a rule, were not worked out by the Commander-in-Chief destined to execute them, but by the diplomatists who sought

to draft them in such a manner that the private interests of allies were equally well protected, and this naturally led to a dispersion of force all over the frontiers, instead of its concentration on the decisive point.

It will be evident, therefore, how great the advantage was when the king in person drew up his own plans and carried them into execution, and still more so when, as in the case of Napoleon, the conditions of the country placed him at the head of a nation in arms and rendered him indifferent to the expenditure of human life.

"These diplomatic negotiations frequently dragged on for months, so that the best opportunity for action was often allowed to slip. . . . When at last the contracting parties were agreed as to their several shares in the coming campaign, then each court drew up its own plan of operations, in which the general-in-chief might or might not be consulted, but on whom no real responsibility rested; and when this was finally entrusted into his hands for execution it was practically never omitted to caution him specially to take the utmost care not to risk his expensive army, and in all cases of difficulty to call in his subordinates for council. It is obvious what difficulties such a method of procedure entailed and how inevitably the energy of the war was crippled, and only occasionally we find men of exceptional ability such as Marlborough and Prince Eugene, with here and there momentarily a marshal of France breaking the bonds that held him, and acquiring a certain degree of respect for his own individuality."

As a rule the objective of the campaign was a province or frontier fortress, *never* the enemy's field army. This being settled, the next thing was to accumulate the magazines on which to base the movement. Then followed the march into the enemy's country, which, owing to bad roads and the enormous train, frequently was of extreme slowness. Ten English miles a day was considered exceptional, and often four to five was a fair average performance.

When the assailant had thus penetrated a few miles into the enemy's country, generally to some previously agreed on line of defence, a halt had to be made to bring up the bakeries and magazines, and these had then to be protected by detachments, and since no organised "etappen," i.e., line of communication troops existed, the advancing army rapidly became weaker, and when the enemy was at last reached it was only considered advisable to attack if the latter was evidently surprised in his concentration; otherwise manœuvring was resorted to.

Even when a battle had been risked and won, the destruction of the enemy's field army was far from being attained, for, owing to want of energy in the pursuit, the adversary had generally ample opportunity to recover himself, and then reappeared on the theatre of war again, and not without good prospect of results, for the attacking party had meanwhile probably turned itself against the frontier fortifications.

The system of defence was on a par with that of the attack. As a rule, all available troops, i.e., available after a host of points of secondary importance had been attended to, were united in a central

defensive position, where they awaited the attack, and, if manœuvred out of it, then they fell back to another.

To these positions great importance was attached, and they were previously reconnoitred and often fortified provisionally on a large scale in war; but it is fair to say that several of the best men were strongly against them, and pointed out the drawbacks inherent in them.

From all the aforesaid reasons the chief characteristic of the wars of those days were "positions and manœuvres, avoiding, as far as possible, the decision of battle," and, as a rule, the attack usually did come to a stand before these defences, for the fire power was already sufficient to make the success of a direct assault pretty uncertain, more especially owing to the absence of a sufficient artillery power to prepare the way. The assailant then deployed opposite to the defender, and formally "offered him battle," an offer not often accepted; or, if roads permitted, sought to frighten him out of his position by threatening a flank. If neither succeeded, then both sides entrenched themselves and endeavoured to starve each other out, or to induce each other by diversions to disperse their force, and then attack before these could be called in again.

Generally the tendency was to avoid fighting; the destruction of the enemy's field army was not the object of the war, only the occupation of a province or fortress, and manœuvres sufficed for the attainment of this without incurring the risk of a battle.

Many reasons gave an apparent justification of these views: first of these was the necessity of economising the troops. Battles, owing to the tactics of the day, were very bloody, and the losses very difficult to replace; and further, the issue of a fight depended more on chance than in the present day, owing to the want of adaptability to circumstances in the troops themselves, due to deficient military education, and still more often to the petty jealousies of the subordinate leaders. The results of a battle were also too small owing to the tardiness of pursuit rendered necessary both by the tactics and conditions of supply, and finally, whilst all the glory of a successful manœuvre belonged of right to the leader, the credit of a victorious battle fell to the troops almost entirely, the leader being liable to blame for sacrificing his men.

The above does not pretend to be a verbal translation of the whole of the chapters referred to, space alone would utterly forbid the attempt. But it gives all the main points, and more especially the spirit of the original. The point I wish to notice is the influence which this old-fashioned school of thought has had on the evolution of existing conceptions of strategy, more especially in our own service. It was from the writers of those days that Frederic's generals, and the bulk of his officers who studied at all, derived their ideas—and though he himself broke with the system as far as his conditions allowed him, and was never afraid to trust all to the decision of the battle, yet his absorption of all duties in himself, and habit of keeping his instructions secret, accessible only to the few and not to the army at large, resulted on his death in the resur-

rection of the old ideas; and thus when the revolution broke out, and the armed nation it produced gave Napoleon a weapon such as no other general in Europe could boast of, the Prussians were in as unfavourable a position to encounter him as the rest of the Powers who had had no Frederic to boast of. What need for wonder, therefore, at his astounding successes? But the evil of these mistaken notions did not die here. Writers, not soldiers, then attempted to explain Napoleon and Frederic's victories in conformity with the old traditions, and this was more especially the case in France, from whom again we have always borrowed most largely. There is an excuse for this retrogression, more especially in our case, for, except in Prussia, during the long peace, the idea of the standing army was everywhere revived, and with it came the need of economy of lives in battle, which gives a specious appearance of correctness to the idea of manœuvring, as against fighting, strategy, and which also prepared the way for the ready acceptance of the doctrine that the chief object of the training of troops for war is to teach them how to avoid getting killed and not how to kill.

The main difference between the conditions then and now which requires to be brought home to the public, more particularly as regards England, and possible European war, is this, that, whereas in those days three things were necessary for success, viz., "money," "money," and "more money," for money could buy men, as we know from experience: now it is "men" "money," and "more men," for though money is necessary for armament and supply, it can no longer buy men.

But the whole conception of modern war is based on a ruthless expenditure of life to gain certain ends, quite as much on the line of march, and indeed more so, than in the field, for there skilful massing at the right place and time, the mutual support of the three arms, and a training in discipline in peace so thorough that troops can be counted on to face even the heaviest losses when ordered to, still enable great results to be obtained with a small total expenditure of men, though locally the losses may amount to annihilation; but to ensure the arrival of the men at the right time and places may entail losses on the line of march far exceeding in the aggregate those incurred in the field. This utter ruthlessness with regard to the suffering of the individual was the true mainspring of Napoleonic strategy, and alone rendered his battle policy possible. Frederic and Wellington were both too much hampered by the money value of their soldiers to dare to emulate his feats in this respect.