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LECTURE.

Friday, March 15th.

GENERAL THE HON. SIR EDWARD CUST, G.C.L., K.C.H.,
Colonel, 16th Lancers, in the Chair.

EMPLOYMENT OF CAVALRY IN WAR.

By Captain H. M. HOZIER.

"THE employment of cavalry in war" may be divided under two heads—the strategical employment and the tactical employment. Of both of these, various examples were furnished during the late war in France; but the strategical employment of the German cavalry was conspicuous from the very moment of the outbreak of hostilities. As soon as war was declared, the Prussian cavalry belonging to the *corps d'armée* of the western provinces was hurried to the frontier, and there established a line of posts. But it was not content with merely watching the enemy, or endeavouring to screen from observation the movements and dispositions of the heavy columns that were being pushed up in its rear. Almost instantaneously after the declaration of war, this cavalry began to prove on the frontier the ability and intelligence which had been so carefully cultivated during peace. With an audacity which astonished its opponents, it quitted without support its own territory. Officers and troopers alone or in small bodies dashed into France. Sometimes in groups of six or seven, they made wide raids into the hostile territory, broke the lines of telegraph, rushed through the villages, picked up stragglers and prisoners, carried off a few magistrates who might give information as to the expected movements of troops, and returned in safety to their own territory.

The French cavalry was more slow to take the field than the Prussian. This was in great measure due to the difference of organisation. In Prussia each regiment of cavalry consists of five squadrons. Of these, four are field squadrons. As soon as the order for mobilisation arrives, these four squadrons are filled up from the fifth squadron and local reserve, to war strength, and are immediately ready to take the field. An Act of Parliament is always in force by which horses can

be taken from the various districts of the country at an assessed price, fixed by a mixed civil and military tribunal.

In France, on the contrary, there was no localisation of corps; the men of the reserve had often to traverse enormous distances to reach their regiments, and then sometimes found them already marched away. There were no normal *depôt* squadrons, and no properly organised system of obtaining immediately the extra horses required in war. Thus the French were still engaged in preparation, while the Prussian horsemen were not only already in the field, but making raids to considerable distances into French territory, which caused serious inconvenience to the French military authorities in their arrangements for the early dislocation of the troops. The French cavalry, the branch of the army which should have been the first arm mobilised, which should have been ready to cover every movement of its own infantry, and spy out every movement of the enemy, was, through the vice of a faulty administration, the arm last ready to take the field, and instead of opening the march of the Army, was only in time to close it. This was the fault of proper organisation; no blame can be laid upon the gallant leaders of the French cavalry, who afterwards so nobly endeavoured to atone with their blood for the errors of administrators.

But when the French cavalry did reach the frontier, it was found that it had been servilely trained in those exercises alone which had been laid down in 1829, and which still remained, with unimportant alterations, the standard text book of the service. A French Officer, Colonel Bonie, who has written a most interesting work on the subject, describes the French cavalry as having learnt nothing in the way of science, and forgotten nothing in the way of bravery, but regrets that consequently its bravery could only save its honour without gaining victory as a recompense. The same Officer also fully recognises the great superiority of the German cavalry in everything connected with activity, outpost duty, or reconnaissance, which he attributes in great measure to the power possessed by the Prussian Officers of reading maps easily. This power permits them readily to find their way in a strange country. He says, "the reading of maps among the Prussian Officers is as easy as that of an open book. Among us, on the contrary, it is a fog; it was in consequence, with a radical vice, that we entered upon the campaign; the result was a disadvantage, for which the most brilliant courage could not compensate."

It is the author of the above who also says, that, in consequence of having practised without alteration the old-fashioned field exercises, when the French cavalry was in the line of outposts brought face to face with the Prussians, it had no idea of the active and dashing method of reconnoitring which the Prussians employed. Instead of employing single horsemen or small groups, the French employed troops, squadrons, and even regiments to reconnoitre; and with these attempted heavily to check a light enemy, whose movements were most rapid on account of their good horses and small numbers, and who eluded by activity the force which sought to grasp him. Thus the French cavalry was wearied out even before the first battles. To this it is due that, in the early portion of the campaigns, in every action the

French were surprised. The French cavalry was at every point either outwitted, or worn out by incessant marching and counter-marching. Without its cavalry, the French Army and its Generals were not only deprived of their own military eyes, but were laid open themselves without screen or hindrance to the unremitting and incessant vigilance of the military eyes of their enemy.

Part of the weariness of the French cavalry at the very outset of general hostilities, may be doubtless traced to the different manner in which the cavalry was distributed in the two Armies. In the French Army, the various regiments of cavalry were formed into large divisions or even corps, each of which was attached to an infantry corps, and placed under the command of the leader of that corps. In this way the Generals commanding cavalry divisions had great responsibility, but little independence, a certain method of insuring tardy and slow operations. Those who advocate such a disposition of cavalry assert, that unless the cavalry is under the same General that commands the infantry of a corps, the cavalry may move away and leave the front of the unconscious infantry uncovered and unwatched. In the Prussian service a principle has long been adopted which meets this difficulty. To each division of infantry (12,000 men) is permanently attached a cavalry regiment of 600 horses, which furnishes all outposts and vedettes required by the infantry. The remaining cavalry regiments of each corps are amalgamated together into independent cavalry divisions, which can be directed as required to an exposed flank or a dangerous point, which can be pushed miles and miles in front of the Army, and the leaders of which possess that independence and power of prompt action which is so necessary for the efficiency of the arm that they command. Since in our service the artillery has lately been emancipated by the orders of His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief from servile adherence to the movements of infantry, it is not unreasonable to hope that an arm still more mobile, and whose action must almost be as swift as the thought that dictates it, may, after the security of the infantry has been provided for, be entrusted to leaders placed in direct responsibility to the Commanding-General of the Army.

It was with regard, however, to these cavalry divisions that one of the few Prussian errors which could be detected in either the organisation for or conduct of the campaign may be perceived. Unlike all other portions of the Army, the Prussian cavalry division is not organised in time of peace, and had to be composed at the commencement of the war. As actually occurred, the delay that was required to carry out this formation was of no practical importance, but had the French Army possessed a first-rate plan of mobilisation, the disadvantage of not having already in peace told off the different regiments to form each division would doubtless have been experienced.

So much for the preliminaries of the campaign. These continued for twenty days, during which the Prussian Generals were, by means of their cavalry, correctly informed of every important movement of the enemy; while the French Staff were ignorant of even where the headquarters of the various German Armies lay. At the end of that time,

so perfect in Germany was the machinery of mobilisation and the railway transport of troops, that more than 500,000 men were close down to the French frontier, and ready to advance into France. These 500,000 men were divided into three armies, under the respective commands of the Crown Prince (left), Prince Frederick Charles (centre), and Steinmetz (right). The German plan was that the three armies should advance simultaneously in a south-easterly direction. Three German armies, roughly, were on the frontier. The Crown Prince lay about Speyer, Prince Frederick Charles in the centre, and General Steinmetz on the right flank. The idea was that the Crown Prince should move down between the Rhine and the Vosges Mountains, and Prince Frederick Charles and General Steinmetz on the western side of the Vosges Mountains, so that if the French concentrated against the Crown Prince, the whole of the Vosges Mountains would be turned by Prince Frederick Charles and General Steinmetz; while, if they concentrated against Prince Frederick Charles, the Crown Prince was to pass through the Vosges Mountains and take them in flank and rear on the other side. As the Crown Prince had to move *through* the mountains, he had only one cavalry division in addition to regiments attached to infantry divisions. The rest of the cavalry were attached to the more northern armies.

While the German Armies, shrouded by their cavalry, were silently massing on the frontier, the French Army, totally ignorant of the designs of its enemy, lay in scattered detachments from Sierck to Belfort.

On the 4th of August the French corps which occupied St. Avold, a small town on the road from Metz to the frontier line of the Saar at Saarbrück, made a movement towards the latter place. The Emperor and the Prince Imperial were present, and the French soldiery thought that the advance had at last really begun, and that they were upon the high road to Berlin. The movement was not however pushed for one reason, viz., that it would have been extremely hazardous to have made an advance without some knowledge of the enemy's positions; and such knowledge the activity of the German cavalry prevented the French from collecting. It was the more extraordinary that the French had evidently so little studied or practised this primary duty of light cavalry, as after the campaign in Italy of 1859, the Emperor Napoleon himself had drawn the attention of his Officers to their inferiority in this respect to the Austrians, and had ordered them to devote themselves to the study of "outpost duty." It is clear that the Emperor's orders had not been cordially obeyed, as the Crown Prince was able totally unperceived to mass his forces behind the dark fir woods that lie north of Weissenburg. Here were posted the troops of General Douay, the advanced guard of the corps of Marshal MacMahon. These passed the night almost within earshot of the whole Army of the Crown Prince, but their cavalry gave them no warning of his approach. While they were wholly unsuspecting, the Crown Prince sprang upon them on the morning of the 7th, and drove them back with great loss on the main body of Marshal MacMahon at Wörth.

In this action of Weissenburg, which was fought among rugged and

hilly ground, little opportunity was given for the action of cavalry on either side. The French cavalry only came into action when the contest was already decided, and its infantry already in retreat. The German cavalry found no ground suitable for its movement, but this made it only the more active and unwearied in pursuit of the beaten foe. A French Officer, writing of the retreat from Weissenburg, says, "The weather was fearful; a storm broke out, and torrents of rain transformed the fields in which we camped into morasses. Notwithstanding this hurricane, the enemy's vedettes never lost sight of us; ever on the watch, they studied our positions, reported that we were not sufficiently strong to fight, and allowed their Army to prepare everything for an attack at daybreak."

In consequence of the excellence of these vedettes, Marshal MacMahon, on the 6th of August, was obliged to accept battle at Wörth, without any idea of the line of march or strength of his opponent. His considerable cavalry of reserve (six regiments of cuirassiers, and two of light cavalry) being hermetically attached to the infantry, was not, as reserve cavalry should be, kept out of fire, but massed in rear of the centre and right wing. Here, soon after the commencement of the action, it was reached by the German shells, and suffered perceptible loss. At last four regiments of cuirassiers were launched against the enemy to restore the battle, which was being quickly lost. Without any preparation, without in any way reconnoitering the ground over which they had to advance, they dashed forwards with the old French enthusiasm. Only a *débris* of the glittering squadrons returned, without being able to reach the ranks of the enemy, who was unassailable on account of his fire and his position. The Germans, unimpeded by this unfortunate charge, continued to press forward. The French infantry, taken in front and flank, and deeply ploughed by artillery, began to waver heavily. There was only one hope left of saving the infantry; it was the cavalry. Again two Cuirassier regiments thunder against the enemy; again only a few bleeding fragments rush back. The enemy still press forward; and hundreds of fallen men and horses proclaim the impossibility of the success of a cavalry charge against infantry not thoroughly shaken by the fire of artillery or small arms. But these charges were not even made with the best chances of securing success. It was not fully explained to the leaders of the cavalry what was the object of their attack. They were merely told in vague terms that they were to impede the advance of the enemy. The ground over which they were to pass was on this occasion, as on many others during the war, wholly unconnoitered. As Colonel Bonie, himself an eye witness on the French side, writes, "They, the Cavalry, set out without knowing their object; they galloped far and wide, and, after having lost many men, those who escaped, returned without having been able to close with the enemy or to make use of their arms." Far different was the case in the Prussian service. There no regiment ever moved in line or any close formation without being preceded by scouts. These are usually selected as the best riders in the regiment. They move forward at a rapid pace in front of the regiment, and if they come upon an impass-

able obstacle, such as a morass or a rivulet, gallop along its bank till they find a passable point, and then halting for a few moments, form a landmark to guide the march of the regiment.

Valuable experience with regard to the cuirass was, however, gained in the battle of Wörth. Like the noise of hail on window panes was heard the sound of the bullets on this defensive armour, but no cuirass was pierced, and cuirassiers were seen dismounted, but unwounded, in large numbers. This remark is important, because it demonstrates the necessity of preserving these cuirassier regiments, which some have pretended to be mere relics of mediæval absurdity. It has indeed been urged, that in consequence of modern inventions, the cuirass is solely fit to adorn the museum of the antiquary. The contrary has now been practically proved to be a fact, on the field of battle; and heed should be taken of this fact in the composition of future divisions of cavalry.

There seem to have been, in the French Army, as many controversies and as much dispute on the score of the responsibility for these rash cavalry charges at Wörth as there were on the subject of a light cavalry charge in which our own countrymen rode on a memorable occasion to a glorious decimation, or perhaps rather annihilation. A French eye-witness gives as his experience of the result, that an Aide-de-camp sent with an order to a cavalry Officer to charge, should not appear flurried; for the instinctive idea of the leader is to start on the instant, without, so to speak, taking time to reflect. The sentiment is perfectly natural, since such a leader fears above all else, to be accused by his troops of hesitation or wavering. But if he does not clearly comprehend the aim of his attack, and take time to reconnoitre the ground over which he must advance, he is very likely to cause the total loss of his troops.

Such was the case at Wörth. The wholesale sacrifice of the cavalry saved nothing before the rout of the infantry, and having been sacrificed, was of little use to retard the pursuit after the rout.

Marshal MacMahon, after his defeat at Wörth, retreated on Chalons, closely followed by the Prussian cavalry. All accounts of the action of the latter, from the French as well as the German side, are continuous praise. The French troops were continually harassed by the enemy's presence. To move more rapidly, they sacrificed baggage, equipage, and provisions. Living on what they could hurriedly gather from the country people, they pushed forward, without pause and without any lengthened halt. On the 10th August they reached Luneville, and here hoped to have outstripped their pursuers, and to have a momentary rest. Fires were lighted, rations were served out, and the men began to cook their dinners, when suddenly an order to march at once, arrived. The camp kettles were overturned, the forage was taken away from the horses, and they bridled up in all haste. It was again the enemy's cavalry which was closely dogging their footsteps, and denied them even half an hour's repose. Ever nearer and nearer still, the Prussian cavalry closed on the hurrying columns. Prussian Uhlans dashed into Luneville, almost before the French vanguard had left. Some squadrons even pushed beyond the retreating enemy, occupied the road he

wished to take, and forced the whole army of Marshal MacMahon on to a different line of retreat. In such cases not only the physical, but the moral force of cavalry, came vividly into play.

By the action of Wörth and the subsequent retreat, the French cavalry of the corps of Marshal MacMahon and de Failly was ruined. This ruin was possibly accelerated by the system of bivouacking instead of taking up quarters. The Prussians, on the contrary, always take up quarters, where possible, in villages, instead of bivouacking in the open. This system allows the troops and horses to rest better, and is less severe on the inhabitants of the country, as it does not ruin in the same manner their fields, gardens, and orchards. Many authorities who have written on this subject, have expressed their opinion that nothing reduces the strength of the horses so much, as a continued series of night bivouacks; nothing undermines discipline more, than allowing the men to get accustomed to take everything just as they find it, or the necessity of permitting them to disregard the cleanliness of their persons and equipment; which it is impossible to insist upon, when they are exposed day and night to all weathers. Outposts unfortunately must bivouac; but this necessity should apparently be as far as possible reduced to a minimum. The use of camp-equipment seems to be inadmissible for cavalry in war. In case of hurry or surprise, it would be impossible to pack it in time to allow the squadrons to be of use, and in Europe, where there are always plenty of villages and farms, its employment would be only an incumbrance.

Having so far followed the cavalry, which acted at the commencement of the campaign under the Crown Prince, we must turn to that under the orders of Prince Frederick Charles. This General had under his command five divisions of cavalry. With these he formed a screen across the front of his Army when he pushed forward, sometimes as far as 60 miles in front of his head-quarters; and it is said that the Emperor Napoleon stated, that this screen completely shrouded all dispositions of Prince Frederick Charles, while it is well known that the Prince, by means of his cavalry, was fully conversant of all the general movements of his enemy. Guided by this information, the Prince, directing General Steinmetz to move on Metz, moved himself on Pont-à-Mousson.

General Steinmetz was ordered to march to Metz. As soon as the defeat of Marshal MacMahon at Wörth had been assured, the whole of the French Army began to fall back, and the left wing to concentrate towards Metz. General Steinmetz was ordered at once to push forward along the main road towards Metz. Prince Frederick Charles moved forward to Pont-à-Mousson, and the Crown Prince gradually pushed forward to Nancy.

On the 14th August, General Steinmetz attacked the French rear-guard in front of Metz, and held, in consequence, the whole of Marshal Bazaine's Army in check, and prevented its retreat beyond Metz. On the same night, the cavalry of Prince Frederick Charles crossing the Moselle above Metz, threw its vedettes on to the road by which Marshal Bazaine must retreat from that fortress, in order to concentrate with Marshal MacMahon at Chalons.

On the morning of the 15th, the French General Forton was sent to clear this road, but found that the hostile cavalry had stretched a cordon there, and threatened to envelop the army of Marshal Bazaine in its meshes. To drive away these horsemen the French opened an artillery fire, which naturally did little execution among the isolated vedettes, while the supports were hidden in the indentations of the ground. During this artillery action the Prussian horsemen observed what they required. It is of course easy now to perceive that if General Forton had pushed forward boldly, he might have swept their unsupported cavalry away, but he could not, from the want of knowledge of outpost duty among his cavalry, tell what was before him, and the consequence was that the Prussian cavalry held its ground in the vicinity of Mars-le-Tour.

While the cavalry moved and held the French in check, Prince Frederick Charles was able to bring up two *corps d'armée*, and on the night of the 15th and the early morning of the 16th he threw them right across the road by which Marshal Bazaine wished to retreat on Chalons to join Marshal MacMahon. It was the result of these movements that brought on the battle of Vionville, which was the most important battle of the war, as far as the "tactical action" of cavalry was concerned.

Marshal Bazaine had determined to march early in the morning of the 16th August. The cavalry of General Forton was to move at 5 a.m. to lead the march, but something apparently delayed the French movement, and a countermand arrived at 9; and although the enemy's vedettes were known to be close at hand, it seems to have been totally unsuspected by the French staff that a strong force could be ready to bar a way. The cavalry unbridled, and, what can be hardly comprehended, with the enemy's vedettes so close, even took off their saddles. Some troopers were sent out as outposts, and the Officer in charge of them twice reported that considerable numbers of Prussian artillery and cavalry were approaching. A staff Officer was sent to examine these, but reporting that nothing serious impended, orders were given for three squadrons of each regiment to retire out of sight, while the fourth remained on guard.

While these squadrons were at ease, four Prussian horse artillery batteries, with two cavalry regiments, galloped up and opened fire. The French cavalry were suddenly disturbed by the German shells. They were quite taken by surprise. Forton's dragoons lost their heads, threw themselves on to their horses and fled, and the Officers could with the greatest difficulty get together a few troops. The result of this panic was, that the two cavalry regiments which accompanied the Prussian horse artillery batteries were able to force back two cavalry divisions, consisting of two regiments of cuirassiers, four regiments of dragoons, and two regiments of chasseurs, as far as Villers aux Bois. The French cavalry cannot be accused of want of courage; courage of the highest order they universally exhibited during the campaign, but on this occasion, by remaining quietly on the defensive, they allowed themselves to be surprised and thus lost their heads. Had they, instead of remaining calmly on the defensive, sent forward

even a few troops to make a dashing movement in advance, they would have discovered that their enemy was in much weaker force than themselves, and could have been driven off. This is an example of the old rule which has so often been laid down, that cavalry should never unsaddle or go to rest, till it has thoroughly cleared its front and reconnoitred all ground from which a blow can be struck against it.

Soon afterwards, the Prussian infantry of the 3rd corps came into line against the French left; and Bataille's division of the second French corps began to be severely pressed by the 6th Prussian infantry division; two squadrons of French Lancers were sent forward, apparently to attempt to silence the Prussian batteries which supported the 6th division, but were forced to return under the fire of the Prussian skirmishers. General Desbaux's cavalry division of the Guard was near at hand, so General du Preuil received orders to charge with the two Cuirassier regiments of his brigade. He remarked that the distance to be traversed before reaching the enemy's infantry was too great to allow the charge to be successful, and begged that artillery might at least to some degree prepare his attack. "Charge at once," said General Froissard, "or we are all lost," and the Cuirassiers rattled forward in three echelons, as if on parade. As the cavalry General had foreseen, the attack failed. The brave horsemen came upon unperceived obstacles of terrain, horses were in great numbers shot down, and while impeded under a heavy fire, were charged by Prussian hussars, who drove them back fighting, almost to the very position of Marshal Bazaine in person. Two fresh French squadrons here fell on the hussars, and saved Marshal Bazaine from capture.

To disengage the Prussian hussars, who were severely pressed, it was necessary to send forward the 6th Prussian cavalry division, which did disengage the hussars, but pushing on came into such a terrible fire at 500 paces distance from the intact French infantry, that it had rapidly to retire. This engagement occurred south of the main road.

Between 2 and 3 p.m., north of main road, the Prussian brigade Breslow, consisting of three squadrons of 7th Cuirassiers and three squadrons of 16th Uhlans, received orders to attack the French artillery near Rezonville, in order to give relief to the Prussian infantry, which was suffering severely from these batteries. It was a most dangerous duty which these squadrons had to perform. They rode forward exposed to heavy artillery and infantry fire, but carried the guns, cut down many gunners, and passed beyond the batteries. Here they were fallen upon by the two French cavalry divisions of Forton and Vallabrégne, and a desperate *melee* took place in which the Prussians suffered very severely. But their charge had the desired effect, for after the *melee*, the French cavalry had to retire to restore its order, and an attack which was being prepared against the left flank of the 6th Prussian infantry division, and which threatened to be very dangerous, had to be abandoned. In this case the Prussian cavalry, though it suffered very severely, was not uselessly sacrificed.

With reference to this *melee*, Colonel Bonie says that the French suffered much less than the Prussians. They used the point, while the Prussians cut, and it was found in the *melee* that while those who

cut, only wounded the horses, and could not injure the men protected by cuirasses, these who pointed killed the men through the interstices of the cuirass. This is not a new experience. So long ago as the time of the Peninsular war, Marshal Marmont recommended to the Emperor Napoleon 1st that cavalry should be armed with three-edged swords, so as to make cutting impossible.

Another serious cavalry contest occurred during the battle, brought on apparently by an attack of some French squadrons on a Prussian battery near Mars la Tour. Both sides were gradually reinforced, till six Prussian regiments and eleven French were engaged hand to hand.

These were not all the cavalry engagements of the day. On the Prussian side there were 22 regiments in the field, of which 19 took part in the various charges; the French brought 28 under fire, of which 22 were actively engaged. Thus about 25,000 horses were engaged. Eight times were there charges by the cavalry on both sides on artillery or infantry, in which the hostile cavalry came to the rescue, and twice there were serious hand-to-hand contests of large numbers of horsemen. For ten hours the battle continued, and some of the German regiments were seventeen hours in the saddle.

A French writer, speaking of this battle, says that it was by means of the action of his cavalry that the enemy was able at the commencement to supplement his numerical inferiority by replacing the troops which were wanting by reiterated charges, which brought a period of forced quiet, and so allowed time for his reinforcements to arrive.

When we consider that Prince Frederick Charles, by means of the action of his cavalry, was enabled to hold in check for the greater part of a long summer's day the whole of Bazaine's Army, 180,000 strong, with only 24,000 infantry, it must surely be acknowledged that the effectual action of cavalry, even on the very field of battle, is not, despite modern inventions, a matter of the past, as some are prone to argue.

Critics on this battle have said that the cavalry on both sides attacked at too great distances, and so took too much out of their horses before the final close; but it must be remembered that the ground was particularly open, and gave little opportunity for unperceived approach. It has also been said that both sides attacked infantry and artillery which had not been previously well shaken by the fire of the latter arm; but the Prussian cavalry had by self sacrifice to compensate for the absence of the other arms, and the French had at all price to break through, before the arrival of these arms, so that there was little time on either side for a scientific display of artillery fire. The rule is doubtless good, but the exception may be allowed under exceptional circumstances.

Colonel Bonie draws considerable attention to the superiority which the Prussian cavalry gained in hand-to-hand contest over the French, from the excellence of their horses. The Prussian horses are excellent and very well bred.

There was a large number of establishments throughout the country for breeding cavalry horses. The sires were also available for farmers in the district, on the condition that their foals should be available for military purposes, if required, at a certain price. The French light

cavalry were generally mounted on Arabs. As a rule, these Arab horses were found in the *mêlées* to be too small and too light to resist the great onset of the Prussian attack. There is no doubt, as German and French critics on this battle remarked, that the Prussian cavalry always had a great moral effect from the size of the men and horses. Still it appears to have been supposed that the Prussians always employed heavy cavalry in this encounter. That was not the case. The Prussian Dragoons were light cavalry, only the Prussian light cavalry were almost as heavy as the French heavy cavalry, except the Cuirassiers and the Carabineers.

Colonel Bonie thinks that heavy are better than light cavalry. Doubtless in the shock it has greater weight and greater moral effect.

The battle of Vionville was succeeded in two days by that of Gravelotte.

Gravelotte was almost entirely an infantry battle, except in the single instance, when a French cavalry regiment came into play. A regiment of Chasseurs in a charge was stopped by a wall, was held there under infantry fire, and lost an enormous number of men and horses.

The result of the battle of Gravelotte was, that Prince Frederick Charles, being supported by the King, threw back Marshal Bazaine into Metz, and surrounded him there. As soon as this was accomplished, Prince Frederick Charles was left with his Army to surround Metz, and watch it till it fell, which it did in October. During the investment of Metz, cavalry were of little use. Three of his cavalry divisions were therefore taken from him, and sent to the Army of the Crown Prince. The Crown Prince, during the time that these actions of the 16th and 18th at Vionville and Gravelotte were going on, halted at Nancy, and during this halt Marshal MacMahon gained several marches from him, and the Prussian cavalry lost sight of the French. As soon as the Army of Marshal Bazaine was securely invested in Metz, the Crown Prince set out from Nancy, in order to follow the Army of Marshal MacMahon to Chalons.

On the 16th of August the Crown Prince had reached Nancy, and halted there till after the battle of Gravelotte. He then advanced. After the battle of Wörth, the Armies of Marshal MacMahon retreated on Chalons. They were there reorganised and recruited by the levies of recruits that could be hurried up from Paris and from the various provinces of France. Thirty-three cavalry regiments were given to this new Army, of which fifteen were light. The Marshal was determined to relieve Metz. The idea was that he should move from Chalons on Rheims, by Bethel, Mézières, and Sedan, down to Thionville, leaving the Army of the Crown Prince well to the south. On this march the French cavalry seem to have been of as little use as vedettes as they had been before Weissenburgh.

One Cuirassier regiment and three regiments of Chasseurs, were on the right flank, two of Hussars were sent to the passage of the Argonnes; the other regiments marched compact with their corps.

The halt at Nancy had delayed the Crown Prince's cavalry, and

they had lost MacMahon; when the Crown Prince was at Ligny his cavalry discovered his line of march, and never lost it again.

Marshal MacMahon moved by Rheims, Mézières, Sedan, with Thionville as his object. He could learn nothing of the enemy's movements, but at every step his army encountered hostile vedettes, and even little groups of five or six horsemen, who appeared and disappeared incessantly, but always without the possibility of attacking them. The French cavalry always marched without reconnoitring. Once a strong force approached a wood in which were Prussian dragoons dismounted, and was only saved because the latter fired a little too soon.

It is said that on this march the Emperor's own household was sent forward to take up quarters for him. A few days before the battle of Sedan they arrived at the top of a hill, and were moving down quietly with an escort of the Cent Gardes towards a village where they intended to pass the night. As they approached the village an old woman came out and met them. They asked her what troops were in the village, expecting to find some other French cavalry were there, on which she told them the Prussians were there. That was the first intimation they had that the Prussians were within half a mile of them. Almost at the same moment that they obtained this information, the Prussian shells opened upon them, and they with difficulty retreated without capture.

When the Crown Prince found the direction that Marshal MacMahon had taken, he altered his march, which had been directed on St. Menébould, to Sedan. He turned his army, which had been directed to move along the Marne towards Paris, and struck across the country towards Sedan. At the same time the army of the Crown Prince of Saxony, consisting of three *corps d'armée* and one cavalry division, was detached from the army of Prince Frederick Charles, and hurried across the country in order to head Marshal MacMahon as he came down towards Thionville, while the army of the Crown Prince should attack him in flank. On the 30th of August the Crown Prince of Saxony again surprised the French at the village of Mouzon. On the same day the Crown Prince surprised them at Beaumont. In neither case were the outposts properly secured. Of course the Prussian advantage, and the means by which they could conceal all the movements of their infantry, in order to strike their sudden blows, were entirely due to the information which was brought in by the cavalry vedettes. The fifth French corps was almost entirely overthrown, and when it was being rapidly annihilated, again the French General sent forward a Cuirassier regiment to attempt to save it. They engaged in a vain attempt, their horses were shot, they themselves were dismounted, and the whole regiment was nearly destroyed, and, of course, could have very little effect in averting the impending ruin of the infantry. On the 30th of August, that same night, the retreat commenced upon Sedan in great disorder.

During the retreat the following day, the reiterated attacks of the Prussian cavalry spread a panic and disorder among the French. The French cavalry, instead of covering the retreat, moved compactly with the infantry corps to which it was attached; instead of disputing the

ground and reconnoitring the enemy, they were generally in front of the infantry, offering an obstacle to its advance.

So bad was the information which the French cavalry brought in that Marshal MacMahon, in falling back on Sedan to fight, thought he had only 60,000 men behind him, while in reality he had 200,000. If his cavalry had been able to do their duty better, instead of falling back towards Sedan, he might perhaps have crossed the frontier, and so avoided the catastrophe that occurred at Sedan.

During the actual battle at that place, two great cavalry charges were made by the French with great bravery, but too late, and without proper precautions. The cavalry went forward, but only again to add to the hecatomb of wounded and slain.

The consequence of the catastrophe of Sedan was that the Crown Prince was able to invest Paris, and during the next few weeks, the war was a war of sieges. Prince Frederick Charles was investing Marshal Bazaine in Metz, and the Crown Prince, General Trochu in Paris. The cavalry could not be employed largely. The Prussian cavalry covered the siege, and scoured the country everywhere.

After the fall of Metz, Prince Frederick Charles marched rapidly in order to cover the army besieging Paris from a contemplated attack from Orleans. But before the Prince arrived, this army had been held in check by two divisions of cavalry alone. They never came to any serious encounters, but, by cutting off vedettes, and always surprising the French whenever they approached any village, they kept them in a constant state of fidget, until time was given for Prince Frederick Charles to come up and put about 80,000 men between Orleans and Paris. The French cavalry, which had been the cavalry of the army at the commencement of the war, was entirely ruined by the capture of Metz and by the capture of Sedan. A few regiments escaped from Sedan, but they reached Paris in such a demoralised state that they were hardly able to take the field. The Prussian cavalry continued the war in the same way, always active and always vigilant. The French cavalry was not able to compete with it. Gradually, the Prussians finding there were no horsemen to oppose them, became bolder and bolder. At the battle of Orleans several instances occurred in which the cavalry rode right into the infantry, and in one instance a cavalry regiment of Prussian hussars suddenly dashed forward and captured a whole French battery, with the gunners and horses, and drove it into their lines. During the remainder of the war the Prussian cavalry was active, ubiquitous, intelligent; it saw everything and announced everything. The French cavalry was ruined, and there was no means at the moment of supplying its place. Hasty levies were of little good.

I have endeavoured to put forward as succinctly as I can the general features of the cavalry actions during the campaign. I only wish now to lay before you a few deductions which I have collected from various books and writings which have appeared lately, both on the subject of this war and others.

It appears that since the invention of rifled arms, cavalry must act at greater ranges in front, and on the flanks of an army during the operations before and between the battles, and that a larger force of

cavalry than formerly must be maintained. There should be two distinct modes of employment of cavalry, first, as cavalry attached to infantry, and, second, cavalry in divisions. In the Prussian service there are about one horseman to every twenty infantry, to do the duty of outposts; one horseman to every twenty men in the army to do the duty of the divisional cavalry. Cavalry should be organised so as to be mobilised with extreme rapidity in case of war. It should have normal *dépôt* squadrons formed in peace, and means should be taken to insure the power of obtaining horses with great rapidity. Cavalry should be told off in peace to accompany infantry. Officers should be well instructed in reading maps, knowledge of country, and outpost duty during peace. During the Prussian manoeuvres, though the troops rested at night, the Officers who were in charge of the outposts were expected to be alert and vigilant all night, so that the commander of the division coming on the ground next morning expected the outpost not only to tell him where the enemy was, but what forces of different arms were lying in the different villages along the line of his outposts. Next, as cavalry must move far in advance of infantry, there must be means of sustaining it independently of the ordinary commissariat. The Prussian cavalry during the war used the system of requisitions. Their advanced troops went into the farms and villages and took whatever hay and corn they wanted. Of course, in a less fertile country than France such a system would be impossible, and the only way it could be compensated for would be by having some system of light waggons attached to the cavalry, or by the troopers carrying their supplies themselves. Cavalry must move over great distances rapidly. All weight that can possibly be taken off the horses should be diminished. From various accounts of the late war, most of the critics on cavalry-matters seem to hold it as extremely advisable that the man should be as heavy as possible, because he uses his weapon with so much more advantage in a close hand-to-hand contest; and some have proposed that the only way to lighten the weight on the horse, and still to retain a heavy man, is to abolish the pack altogether, and the heavy saddle which is required to carry the pack. They argue that in these days of railways, an army never moves far from its line of communication, and that it never can move above three or four days, constantly keeping in motion; that there is plenty of time during the various halts to bring up the baggage; and even if there is not, that the men, if properly equipped, ought to be able to go six weeks without any change of clothes, or without any re-adjustment of equipment. Several writers are especially loud in declaiming against dismounted men being attached to cavalry regiments. They hold that dismounted men, when cavalry are really acting far to the front, could never be up in time to be of any use. As concealment is very necessary, several writers have urged that head collar chains, and steel scabbards, and everything that glitters in the ranks of cavalry, should be abolished; that all burrishing should be abolished, and that spurs and stirrup irons should be browned like gun-barrels. Others assert that as men must now ride for very long distances, sometimes forty or fifty miles, generally at a trot, they should be permitted, except when on parade, to rise in their

stirrups. Then, they assert that cavalry should never encamp, if possible, but always take up quarters, and if surprised in their bivouacs or quarters, defend their horses on foot with their firearms. They think that reconnoitring cavalry should act individually, or in small groups, and that, for tactical purposes, the cuirass should be much more largely introduced into the service.

The CHAIRMAN : I think everybody will agree with me that a clearer account of a campaign has never been given than that which has now been given by Captain Hozier. It is the more gratifying to me as an old cavalry Officer; and we need be under no despair about our arm, about which some persons say that it is now of no use at all. In the campaign just described, cavalry have taken their part, just as distinctly as they have done in previous campaigns. I do not think it is possible for any misgiving to be entertained about the use of the arm after the account that we have heard. It is very clear that when cavalry are under proper discipline, properly looked after, and properly commanded, there is no reason to doubt for a moment, that we shall maintain our ground in any future campaign as effectually and as usefully as we have done in past campaigns.