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# A RETROSPECT OF THE WAR IN SOUTH -AFRICA.

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LIEUT.-FIELD-MARSHAL RATZENHOFER, the President of the Military Supreme Court, gave an interesting lecture on the South African War in the Military Club, Vienna, on 30th November last, and he has kindly given permission for its translation and publication in the JOURNAL of the Royal United Service Institution.

The Archduke Leopold Salvator of Austria and over 600 officers of all arms attended. There were also present Field-Marschals Baron Beck, Schmidt, and von Pitreich; Lieut.-Field-Marschals Pavlek Moravitz, Count Geldern, von Engel, and Beck; Major-Generals Winch, Troll, von Jonak, von Resch, Reznicek, Laube, and many others.

The lecturer prefaced his much-applauded lecture as follows:—

“If I undertake to discuss from this platform the War in South Africa, it is neither my intention to represent its historical events nor to lay down critically their application.

The former are as well impressed on the memories of all officers as if they had taken part in them. For the latter, authentic details are wanting. But, by taking a general survey of all the events, an answer may be given to the question: “What place, broadly speaking, is this war to take in military history as a contribution to military science?”

When we consider that this war was carried out by one of the contending parties with an overwhelming number of European troops in a remote country where peculiar conditions of ground, of climate, and communications not met with in European theatres of war obtained, then the assumption seems at once justified that it offers a succession of practical experiences in the transport of troops, in the establishing, provisioning, and defending long lines of communication, and in sanitary measures. These experiences are the more worth weighing and considering by the heads of every other Army, inasmuch as they present to them a most welcome test of novelties in war which the overwhelming progress in technical appliances has brought about, without any expenditure on their part. In this respect, the sea transport in 280 steam-ships of about a quarter of a million armed men, 70,000 horses, mules, etc., a distance of 26 days' sail, stands out conspicuously.

But the colossal nature of the task may be estimated, and valuable lessons for the future may, as regards the line of communications, be learnt, when we consider that the line of operations of Field-Marshal Lord Roberts from Cape Town to Pietersburg in the Northern Transvaal corresponds approximately to the distance from Vienna to St. Petersburg

in Russia ; that there are no regular roads, in the European sense of the word ; that the railways are of little value as chief means of communication, as the rolling-stock is only calculated to provide for the needs of an undeveloped agricultural industry, and that these lines of communication, especially in the later phases of the war, were frequently endangered and constantly threatened by the enemy. But, however significant these circumstances may be, they only touch that sphere of knowledge which affects technical preparation before the war, and the maintenance of the efficiency of the troops during the war—knowledge which only indirectly affects the scientific *conduct of war*. This includes the leading of the troops up to and in the battle. It is necessary to insist on this, for in these days of technical exuberance, amid the wealth of collateral appliances, motor tramways, cycles, war-balloons, etc., the intellectual aspect is apt to be lost sight of.

In this war the peculiar character of the enemy must be considered before describing the leadership. The Boer is, at the outset, the ideal warrior which we strive, by means both skilful and strange, to create by discipline and training. Of his own initiative he voluntarily carries out that which the regular duty soldier does on compulsion. He arms himself and takes his own positions ; he fights on his own account, and yet takes part in the leading, as he voluntarily anticipates the action demanded by the tactical situation. His training as a horseman and rifleman is a personal pleasure to him. He himself provides his supplies, from which it follows that when large bodies are brought together each individual strives to overcome the difficulties of supply, whereas the duty soldier waits until the bread falls into his mouth. The Boer does not lose his lust of fighting even in misfortune, for he fights for his family, his home, and his political freedom.

These very advantages carry with them, however, the defect, that the Boers are difficult to command in large bodies, for they either do not at once perceive or understand what is required of them, or often oppose what is ordered, not from insubordination in the strict sense of the word, but from a feeling that other ways of doing it, even at greater personal sacrifice, are preferable. Though they may work together ever so willingly, such troops will, speaking generally, manœuvre slowly, and be difficult to use for complicated operations. Indeed, one may say they are only useful for the simplest form of fighting—the defence.

The failure of the investments of such primitively fortified places as Mafeking and Kimberley shows that the Boers are unsuitable for regular attack.

As their commanders' tactical skill, speaking generally, does not rise much above the instincts of the masses, so manœuvres which demand concentrated striking power and which seek success in bold rapidity and superiority in execution are impracticable. The so-called "mobility" of the Boers is only of account in guerilla warfare. In movements on a large scale it is not perceptible.

The characteristics of the British troops are very opposite to those sketched above. The object of the war is a matter of indifference to the

great mass of the Army. That Army is very unequal in its training and no resolution or personal qualities can improve this. It exhibits only in a small degree the merits of the British nation. As regards supply, the men are very exacting and disinclined to help themselves. On the other hand, these troops have excellent officers, penetrated with the idea of England's invincible greatness and possessed of a reckless daring brought about and nourished by a spirit of adventure. It is, however, a question whether the training and skill in command of these officers are, especially as regards the infantry, on a level with their moral excellence. The result is, that the men are led and follow with a courage that is without any tactical prudence, and, in spite of a fearful sacrifice of officers, the objective is still unattained. This was shown in nearly all the battles; the troops failed in their attempts after losses, from 3 to 6 per cent. among the men, but 12 to 30 per cent. of officers.

#### A NATIONAL ARMY AND A PROFESSIONAL ARMY.

The character of the opposing forces, the "Nation in Arms" on one side and paid troops on the other, offered opportunities for a comparison of the two systems. Shortly after the continued successes of the Boers in the early part of the war, the favourite theories of the advantages of a Militia force over a Standing Army began again to be revived. Their advocates believed that the events in South Africa had confirmed these views. The third phase of the campaign corrected them. It was proved to demonstration that the defence of a country by a Militia with warlike qualities may give good results on the battle-field, but from the nature of its organisation cannot guarantee the successful conduct of a great war. On the other hand, we cannot agree to the general opinion that, notwithstanding the great difficulties which the expansion of the forces in England meets with, the army sent out to South Africa was in no way fitted for its task.

England landed with great rapidity on that distant theatre of war an army equal in numbers to those we were accustomed to see brought into the field in great European wars (220,000 men), and quite strong enough to subdue the Boers. But as regards the system of expansion of such an army, the test of its value is the creation of a foreign service army. For the idea of employing our national Militia in a foreign country has never yet been carried into practice with any advantage. Italy has had bitter experience of this. On the contrary, we see France setting about the establishment of a Regular Colonial Army; Holland has long since been furnished with one; that portion of the United States Army, which has been employed abroad, organised on a plan similar to that of the English Army; and Germany, compelled to adopt the principle of voluntary service in support of its colonial policy. When we speak, therefore, of the critical military condition of England, we do not refer to that of the Army engaged in South Africa, but to the fact that by this employment England was all but denuded of troops.

No great difference existed in the armament of the opposing forces—that most important factor in the conduct of the fighting—at least,

none sufficient to carry with it any advantage worth mentioning to either side. The infantry on both sides were armed with breech-loading magazine rifles. The special preponderance of the English in artillery did not bring about that decisive advantage in battle that we are accustomed to expect. The want of detailed information prevents our forming a judgment as to the cause of this. But the performances of the Boer heavy artillery, especially in action against the besieged towns and troops, did not come up to the expectations formed of it. The employment of ship guns and guns of position in the open field is interesting.

Cavalry, as we understand it, was only brought into the field by the British. It was its especial task to guard their flanks, and in the later stages of the war to carry out outflanking and enveloping offensive movements. Actual cavalry attacks were very seldom delivered, and then were very indecisive or very irregular. The well-known dictum that cavalry is powerless against infantry, unless surprised and in disorder, always asserted itself. On the other hand—and this is one of the most original of the lessons of the war—this arm distinguished itself as mounted infantry, as did our dragoons in the seventeenth century.

The majority of the Boers being mounted, we can look upon their army, as in the main, a force of mounted infantry.

This fact of being mounted was not only favourable to the individual man, but was of the greatest importance for the rapid manœuvring of small detachments.

It affected the question of supply also, for each man personally rode away from his detachment and foraged or "requisitioned" for himself.

Most of the Boers capable of bearing arms join mounted, because after a certain period of service furloughs are granted to enable them to look after their farms and families, and so recoup themselves the expense of their outfit and equipment. The commandos are, therefore, of constantly varying strength. The going and coming entailed by this system of interchange of men would without the aid of their horses be quite impossible, and the Army would soon break up, notwithstanding the well-known fidelity and trustworthiness of the Boers. We observe little, however, of the great advantage which we should look for in large bodies of mounted troops, that is, strategical mobility.

In the decisive days of February in this year (1900) we expected to see a concentration of the Boers against Bloemfontein while General Buller was held in check in Natal. It is true that after Colenso they did move a certain number from the Tugela and around Ladysmith, but no real combination against Lord Roberts was made. In April only were from time to time efforts made to harass the flank and rear of the British Main Army.

All these facts show that we cannot look upon the Boer mounted infantry as a new factor changing the art of war, but that they are only special troops fighting in a peculiar country, which, strictly speaking, did not influence the conduct of the war in general, or its decisive actions in particular. At the same time, an exact study of the details of the war

could not fail to be of great use in determining the proper dismounted action of cavalry, as the British also brought large bodies of mounted infantry into the field. We miss, however, in spite of the well-known excellence of the British cavalry, any great performances in marching, by which the chief element of cavalry superiority, surprise, can alone be effected.

In the much talked-of relief of Kimberley by Lieut.-General French with 4,000 horsemen three marches were made, the second of which, 40 kilometres (25 miles) long, so knocked up the horses that the Cavalry Division had to make a day's halt on the Modder and give up the idea of surprise.

If we consider what has been said above, we see that the war in South Africa loses on close examination its extraordinary character, or, at all events, merely confirms previous experience. Nothing has transpired to change the accepted principles of war. This war, like all those since 1870-71, only illustrates certain principles of action established in that war and in the Bohemian campaign of 1866 in such epoch-making manner. The place of the South African War is also to be judged by the same standard.

We find many details of great interest in the Boer War which confirm the deductions from the Franco-German War. The Boer War again teaches us that the whole course of a campaign is shaped by the strategical idea which governs the commander in his conduct of it, and that it is false teaching to allow "strategy" as the especial province of the commander to sink to the lower level of so-called "practical knowledge of war." Von Moltke said, "Strategy is the application of sound common sense to the conduct of war." The application of common sense to quantities and values is mathematics. No one ventures to dispute this as a science. He who does not bring common sense to bear upon the strategical idea can form no sure judgment in regard to this.

#### THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR.

The early opening of the campaign, probably originating from President Krüger in concurrence with General Joubert, is one of those ideas whereby we recognise great characters and acute thinkers. The mobilisation of its 1st Army Corps at the end of September, 1899, left no doubt as to the intention of Great Britain to overthrow the Transvaal. If the Boers were to attain any success in arms, therefore, it was imperative on them to attack before the English could bring overwhelming forces to bear. These hoped-for successes would, it was thought, cause the Cape Boers to rise and friendly foreign Powers to intervene. Any successes which the Boers gained were due to this early opening of the campaign, which found the British unprepared.

By these the Transvaal brought Great Britain into a predicament, of which the impression is to this day in everyone's recollection. The above resolution is not affected by the fact that this crisis was not taken advantage of by the Boers or by hostile foreign Powers, or that the Boers showed themselves incapable of an offensive on a large scale,

and that, consequently the insurrection of the Cape Boers failed. It remains for all time an example of rare decision and clear perception of the exigency of the case, an example of what can be accomplished in this world, if we only know what we want and do not shrink from carrying it into execution. To this firm resolution is to be attributed the fact that the greatest Empire of the present time trembled<sup>1</sup> before a little Republic not more populous than a suburb of Vienna.

But the British also took a strategic resolution that deserves full attention. It not only evinced a clear-sighted perception of the situation, but it was also the cause of the rapid and decisive change in favour of the British arms in the third phase of the campaign.

Everyone remembers the critical condition of the 10,000 men with 1,200 horses shut up in Ladysmith at the beginning of January last, while General Buller had definitely given up the relief of that town after the unfortunate combats round Spion Kop. The capitulation of General White was daily expected. From the beginning of the war it was thought that any attack on the Transvaal should be made from Port Natal, and aim at Pretoria, as the shortest way to strike at the heart of the Boer resources. Now in the middle of January we learnt that the British in the face of this irrefutable calculation were sending no reinforcements to General Buller, but were pushing forward bodies of troops successively as they arrived towards the Orange River, and had decided on the line Cape Town-Port Elizabeth-Bloemfontein-Pretoria as the main line of operations. Field-Marshal Lord Roberts united his main army far away from the hitherto decisive field of battle, to lead them forward on a line of operations two or three times as long as that of Durban-Pretoria, and against the less important body of the hostile army. Yet this decision was justified not only by the result, but by every consideration.

Lord Roberts, like the rest of the world, must have suffered from the depression caused by the continued British defeats. It must have seemed to him, therefore, of the greatest importance to restore the self-confidence of the British troops. There was no certainty that this would be regained on the Tugela against the main body of the Boers, even with overwhelming numbers. The nature of the country there was favourable to the Boers and their fighting methods. They had everywhere entrenched themselves. A victorious advance even of the British would carry them forward into the mountain range of the Drakenberg. It was, moreover, to be expected that the Boers of both Republics would hasten with every exertion to the support of Joubert's force immediately they heard of the concentration of the main British Army in Natal. His invasion of the Orange Free State offered no such disadvantages. On the contrary, it offered many decided advantages. Above all, the main army in its advance covered the Cape Colony, which prevented the insurrection of the Cape Dutch in support of the Boers. Success against the weak forces of the Boers in the west was also reckoned on.

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<sup>1</sup> Is not this a little exaggerated?—TRANSLATOR.



As we know, the Boers who after their fashion trekked in small bodies to the theatre of war in the Orange Free State after a short furlough to visit their wives, in February, March, and April last year were no longer in a condition to carry on a powerful active defence. All the world, and certainly Lord Roberts, thought that the main body of the Boers would make a stand at Kroonstadt or on the Vaal. Nothing of the kind happened. Partisan warfare with many Boer successes was carried on in the neighbourhood at Bloemfontein, but no decisive action was fought. The change of the line of operations had completely upset the Boer plan.

The success of the British would have been great had they decisively defeated the Boers in Natal, as the occupation of Pretoria would have followed thereon most rapidly. On the other hand, had England's last army met with defeat on the Tugela or in the Drakenberg mountains, the disaster would have been even greater. The flames of insurrection in Cape Colony would then have burst forth with renewed vigour. Lord Roberts has, therefore, by his choice of the Orange Free State as the theatre of war, shown remarkable intuition as a commander, or has had remarkable good luck, which is also as a secondary thing of much value, but only as secondary, for, as is well known, the wheel of fortune is ever round; careful strategic calculation can alone give any security for the future.

#### THE LEADERSHIP IN BATTLE!

The leading of the forces in action seems at first sight to be less interesting than the leading features of the war which we have discussed. We see nearly everywhere the British frontal attack. At all events, the Boers generally succeeded in forming front to the British attack at the right moment. It follows from this, as we had already deduced from the campaign of 1866, that defenders armed with breech-loading rifles (and *a fortiori* with magazine rifles) cannot be driven from a position by frontal attack, and that piercing the enemy's centre is only possible at manœuvres.

The consciousness of this inability to break the enemy's front was strongly impressed on public opinion by Councillor von Bloch (who is said to be the originator of the Hague Peace Conference), by his having subtly proved that war is now impossible, because both sides would remain on the defensive, and so no encounters take place. Bloch will, perhaps, have changed his opinions since then. For professional military men these battles have shown that now, as heretofore, the problem of infantry attack is the most important and the most difficult in the training and leading of the troops; that, in fact, everything turns on infantry attack, especially the effect of the auxiliary arms; that the value of its infantry is the measure of the worth of an army; that the excellence of an infantry may determine the fate of States and nations; that by the side of the great question "What can its infantry achieve in attack?" all other questions concerning an Army are collateral and of little importance.

Although this war, like others, teaches us that all frontal attacks must be accompanied by simultaneous flank attacks, it reminds us also that every infantry attack, except that of the extreme outer flank of an envelop-

ing force, must partake of the character of frontal attack, because it is met by a portion of the enemy's force, either previously drawn up to resist it, or suddenly brought up to do so. This being the case, the essence of infantry tactics will always be how to devise and carry out successful frontal attack.

The most prominent tacticians of the day have busied themselves with this problem, which is now, as heretofore, one of the most important questions for the Army.

I will, for reasons stated in the preamble, abstain from criticising the English method of infantry attack, in order to turn to the contemplation of the character of the leadership in general. The character of the battle of Colenso is typical. It was fought on the 15th December, 1899. When we read the dispositions for the advance made by Lieut.-General Clery, the Divisional Commander, they seem on the whole at first sight suitable enough, and their author may have thought such a thing as a repulse impossible. In these dispositions the one idea seems to have been to bring the force in the best arranged order in *échelon* to bear against the enemy. Everything that technically the staff could wish seems provided for. The dispositions of Generals Methuen and Gatacre for their disastrous actions, as far as they are known, do not at first sight appear defective. If we, however, examine them closer, and do not content ourselves with the mere technical arrangements, we seek in vain for the tactical idea which should not only lead the troops into the fight, but guide them through it to victory; and that is, after all, the chief object of the disposition of the troops in the first line.

In these a distinct tactical idea which is to bring about the desired victory should take into consideration possible contingencies. This idea generally finds expression either in the distribution of the troops to carry it out, or in the direction given to the attack with regard to the enemy's known positions in the arrangements for surprise, etc.

Battles should not be fought unless there is hope of victory, and even in peace manœuvres no violence should be done to strategical feelings by hopeless engagements.

Several causes seem to have contributed to the omission in their engagements of this leading tactical idea by the British commanders. The chief cause probably was, that the British troops were accustomed to fight inferior and worse-armed opponents, whom they could with their better weapons and superior *moral* easily overwhelm.

Their defeats in the previous Boer War (1881) were on so small a scale, that they were hardly to be taken as warnings by the large forces (Brigades and Divisions) now brought into action. The British officer has now become reckless, owing to his constant wars and life of adventure in all lands, and inclined to solve all tactical questions by *l'audace, toujours l'audace*. This character is kept up by the "sport," which overrules everything in England. This, with all its practical advantages, has the defect of leading to the under-estimation of brain power.

Such victories as Tel-el-Kebir in 1882, where the whole Egyptian army fled before the unprepared assault with the bayonet of a British

force, are not without their disadvantages. He who has once felt the passion of the shout of victory, thinks he can repeat it until an unlooked-for repulse comes. Now, according to all accounts, the manœuvres in England are carried out in a cut-and-dried manner. There is generally a pretty spectacle without any tactical idea, ending with a bayonet attack *en masse*. A thorough tactical training of the troops penetrating the minds of officers of all ranks does not exist. Nor is it possible, for the troops in Great Britain are not allowed to move across country. Under these circumstances, the leaders place their confidence not in the tactical ability, but in the *moral* of their troops. To allow reliance on this to predominate is the first step towards defeat. It certainly is one of the chief duties of the leaders of an Army to raise its *moral* by discipline, by promoting patriotism, and by praiseworthy care for the well-being of the men; but to rely on this alone is a capital crime in a commander. He who reckons upon the courage of his men is only too much inclined to neglect in leading them, that which secures victory. There is nothing easier than to base success upon courage only. We can thus avoid all study in peace and war. The result is, as with the British, immense loss in officers without attaining the objective. The whole training of an Army in peace, and its conduct in war, should aim at gaining the object fought for with such a minimum of loss that would show that it was not necessary for the officers to unduly expose themselves to get the men to do their duty. The best way to do this is to let the conduct of each fight be penetrated with a tactical idea which shall organise victory. Then the troops will fight with less loss, and, between officers and men, that bond of mutual confidence be ratified, which is the surest guarantee of victory.

The second part of the war showed that this mutual confidence was already shaken, for we see actions in which the troops cannot be got to advance after a loss of only 3 to 9 per cent.; or, indeed, as at Stormberg (10th December), Magersfontein (11th December), and Colenso<sup>1</sup> (15th December), take to flight.

Nothing is more often exaggerated than bravery. Military history shows that it is not to be conjured up by mere words, and that in most cases those that have calculated on it as a certainty have reckoned without their host. If a nation is morally healthy, if its politics are sound, if everything has been done for the training of its troops, bravery will follow of itself in time of need without being conjured up.

#### GUERRILLA WARFARE.

In no war has, probably, guerilla warfare played so prominent a part as in that under discussion. If we cast a glance over these small events, we see the English at a great disadvantage. Such few details as we possess show so far similar occurrences to those in the larger actions. The subordinate commanders neglected the ordinary precautions which of themselves ensure success. The British always march by the best roads,

<sup>1</sup> The withdrawal of Sir R. Buller's force from the Tugela can hardly be described as a flight.—TRANSLATOR.

avoid sending out scouts and flanking detachments, bivouac in unfavourable positions, and so forth. If the enemy is met with he is attacked without ceremony and generally without success. This indicates the want of thorough tactical training of the British officer, which must, in order to bear fruit in higher spheres, begin with those of lower rank. This war teaches us that there is no better training for young officers than this partisan warfare, and, in practical exercises, imitating it. It is the province of young officers of infantry and cavalry.

Certainly staff colleges, staff rides, and the larger manœuvres are of importance for the training of tactical intelligence and the forming of quick decisions; but school knowledge and book knowledge can never replace practical exercises, and it is generally too late to acquire the habit of rapid and correct tactical decision if the opportunity for this only comes when an officer is a senior captain or major. You can never begin too early the practice of forming the tactical judgment; and so it is with the half-company and section leaders with, in all cases, an opposing force, that these independent exercises must commence.

Petty warfare, with its thousands of varied problems, which subalterns, cadets, and non-commissioned officers are compelled to solve on encountering the enemy in ambushes, surprises, skirmishes, etc., teaches them to think with hitherto unexercised powers of mind.

By such exercises is the young officer raised above the dead level of his ordinary duty. He also becomes disciplined, and it will no longer be said of him, as in the epic "*Die vier Jahreszeiten*":—

"Lieutenants only now we chide,  
Because instruction they deride."

These young men will then themselves have experienced that it is not so easy to judge whether an independent commander should move right or left, should attack, or should act on the defensive, etc.

But a laudable ambition on the part of any body of troops to come to correct tactical decisions demands, even at manœuvres, a correct method of discussing the measures taken. If the English leaders usually acted in a mechanical way and did not embody anything on their dispositions and orders which would indicate a leading tactical idea, it is chiefly because at their tactical training no instructive criticism is made.<sup>1</sup> This alone compels all leaders to improve their tactical judgment. No one, from the highest to the lowest should leave the manœuvre ground without learning from the Umpire whether the commanders of the forces have handled their troops correctly, and if not, what would have been a better way of doing so.

It is of no consequence whether this judgment is always correct or not. The fact that it has caused the Umpire to think it out, and the commanders to ponder over the situation, awakens in the Army an interest in the essential part of the training. Troops are only too easily disposed to give themselves up to mere drill. People may complain as much as hey like about the constant worries of the Service; the most troublesome

<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, criticisms are made after all manœuvres.—TRANSLATOR.

duty, and the one most constantly shirked, is that of thinking. It is, in truth, the most difficult of all.

When I said that the dispositions of the British commanders generally omitted any indication of the tactical idea, which could lead to victory, I must qualify that by explaining that in several actions such an idea was embodied in the form of night marches, to be followed by night attacks, indicating therefore the idea of surprise.

Buller, Gatacre, Methuen, even Lord Roberts, made use of this. We cannot, however, say with advantage, for not one of these night attacks succeeded. Some, indeed, ended in the rout of the attackers, as at Stormberg and Magersfontein.

These events confirm the old military adage that night attacks require extreme caution. In petty warfare, with small affairs of detachments, down to the strength of a couple of companies of infantry or troops of cavalry, no risk is run, for such small bodies are always well in hand, and can easily be moved or withdrawn from attack. But, with a battalion or a complete squadron even, friction often arises if the troops are not in every way exceptionally qualified. The *moral* of the troops is of primary importance; while fairly disciplined troops may do their duty by day, by night all their defects are revealed; officers lose their control over them, and the bonds of discipline are broken on encountering the foe.

An error which may fatally affect even the best of troops by night is the wide-spread idea that they can march and fight in the same formation by night as by day. We see this mistake made by the English also, for they march to the night attack at Stormberg with their advanced guard pushed forward as by day. This advanced party loses its way, and the main body instead of effecting a surprise, is itself surprised, coming unexpectedly upon the enemy in position. Result: the flight of the men after the first few shots<sup>1</sup>—all occurrences which would not have happened by day. The habit of working by night as by day is the fruit of the absence of criticism of field operations alluded to above.

People accustomed to keen criticism would see at once without special instructions the necessity of operating quite differently by night.

#### THE RE-ACTION OF THE BOER WAR.

Herewith I have reached the end of my retrospect, and I think I have left nothing untouched which will repay detailed study. What effects us, however, is the re-action this war is likely to cause in the recruiting systems of the European Powers. In order to subdue the Boers, England had to make greater exertions than at any previous period of her history. Never before has Great Britain placed troops in the field so rapidly, and in such large numbers, or has overcome at enormous cost such unexpected difficulties in reinforcing them. To-day Great Britain, which was so terribly shaken eight months ago, is more self-confident than ever. This shock and this self-confidence require some explanation,

<sup>1</sup> This is hardly a fair statement of what occurred.—TRANSLATOR.

when we consider the comparative insignificance of the defeated opponents.

The shock to Great Britain was not so much the effect of the early defeats as of the impressive fact that this pigmy opponent had caused England's energies to be strained to the uttermost, that the mother country was exhausted to the point of defencelessness, and that its safety rested on its fleet alone. When in the spring of this year an English fleet displayed itself in demonstrative fashion in our harbours, the recollection of those days in 1805 forcibly arose in our mind. Those days when Napoleon encamped his Army at Boulogne, and English policy succeeded in diverting the storm which was gathering on its coast in the direction of Austria.

Might Great Britain repeat this performance ?

England's assurance has much increased owing to the conduct of her Colonies in this war. "How so," is asked ; "what have the Colonies done ?" Certainly they have only furnished some thousands of Volunteers. It is, however, not the numbers they sent, but the fact that they sent any at all that England is proud of. For before the Boer War it was a question whether Canada, and especially Australia, would not take the first opportunity of shaking themselves loose from the mother country. It is a very important and favourable circumstance for England that there is no danger of this in the immediate future. Without enquiring further into the motives of overwhelming financial nature which have influenced the Colonies, it must be allowed that England feels herself more powerful than ever as a great Federal and Imperial Power, a feeling to which Chamberlain has given unmistakable expression. The retrogression from a military point of view is obvious. During the time of the great distress at the end of 1899, as often on former occasions, the necessity and desire for Army Reform were clearly made manifest in England.

Now after the re-establishment of the national confidence it does not require any preternatural insight to prophesy what England will do. Simply nothing ! The same as it did after the Crimea, the Indian Mutiny, the Afghan War, in spite of similar manifestations—nothing ! A nation like the British is too deeply imbued with its political constitution, especially in its relation to the Army, to change its character. Minor collateral changes there may be, but there will be no thought of conscription.

When we contemplate the perturbation of the political world, brought about, seemingly, by the Imperialism of the Anglo-Saxon race ; when we note that the war in South Africa revealed, as a sudden flash of lightning illuminates a dark night, the hatred of Great Britain by all but the Anglo-Saxon people, then England, as a world Power, supported solely by its fleet, stands out in its proper perspective.