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## Lessons from the Past for the Present

Lieut.-Colonel Henderson

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Friday, May 25, 1894.

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Quartermaster-General of the Forces, in the Chair.

### LESSONS FROM THE PAST FOR THE PRESENT.

By Lieut.-Colonel HENDERSON.

It is scarcely necessary, I think, for a lecturer at the Royal United Service Institution to dilate on the advantages of the study of military history. As there are none here who are not familiar with Napoleon's maxim, "Read and re-read the campaigns of the great captains; this is the only way of rightly learning the art of war," so there are none here who will dispute the soundness of the opinion of the greatest captain of them all.

But although every soldier who takes his profession seriously admits that there is much to be learned from the experience of others, especially when these others were far greater men than he is himself, I think that the extent and nature of the knowledge to be acquired from a study of military history are not always recognised.

In the first place, this study, in my opinion, is far too restricted. It is true that ever since war became a science, since battles ceased to be mere gladiatorial combats, and since campaigns have been won rather by the intellect of the commander than the skill at arms of the men, military history has been considered as a valuable means of war training. But I venture to think, however, that this means of training has not only by no means reached its full development, but that it has stopped short at the very point at which it was beginning to be really useful.

It will probably be said that to England, at all events, this assertion can scarcely be applied, that there, at least, the theoretical

education of the soldier has reached its limit. I grant you that appearances are in favour of this view. Our text-books are all based upon the experiences of the past, and when we recall the frequent illustrations, furnished by innumerable campaigns, which add such weight to the deductions drawn by Home and Clery, we cannot but admit that the essence of military history, so far as regards Minor Tactics, has been by them most ably extracted. Sir Edward Hamley, again, did the same for Strategy; and it is unnecessary to expatiate in this place on the ability with which he dissected the manœuvres of the acknowledged masters of the art of war. Nor is this all. The very list of lectures delivered in this theatre, as well as in kindred institutions, is sufficient in itself to prove that the study of military history has attracted for many years the very greatest interest; whilst in our official publications—the infantry, cavalry, and artillery drill-books—those sections which are devoted to tactics are inspired throughout by the actual experiences of the battlefield. There is no want, moreover, in the English language, of books of another kind to teach us, so far as books can, what war is really like. I do not refer to our regimental histories, for war pictures are too often absent from their pages, but to that long catalogue of memoirs, narratives, and biographies, embracing every climate under heaven, and introducing enemies of every nationality, from the Old Guard of Napoleon to the tribes who hold that far-off country “where three empires meet.”

Still, with all this mass of literature at our command, and notwithstanding the interest evinced in the study of military history, I believe that, even with ourselves, this method of fitting men for war is still in process of evolution, and I hope this afternoon to give you some idea of the direction which I think the next steps in this process of evolution ought to take.

I will first of all ask what the lessons are which are taught by Hamley, Home, and Clery, and whether their teaching is not confined within too narrow limits? Do their books, in fact, draw all those lessons from military history which Napoleon referred to when he wrote the words I have just repeated? I do not wish to be misunderstood. I have not the very slightest intention of decrying works to which every educated soldier owes so much. If they are limited in their scope it is because their scope was limited of set purpose; because they were only intended for a certain class of student, and for the inculcation of a certain amount of knowledge. Not one of them aspires to comprehend the whole art of war. They pretend to be no more than introductions to a more extended course of study, no more than elementary treatises on strategy and tactics.

Let us take Home and Clery, as the best known of our tactical manuals. What do they teach? The very title of Colonel Clery's book answers the question, so far as this one work is concerned. It teaches Minor Tactics, and the preface to the first edition declares the limits of its lessons. “The following pages formed originally a course of lectures delivered to sub-lieutenants studying at Sand-

hurst." That is, the book was written for the instruction of officers of the most junior rank, and a reference to the table of contents, comprehensive as that table is, shows that the scope of the book goes no further than the title. It deals with *Minor Tactics* only; with the elementary knowledge without which it would be difficult to handle troops efficiently either on manœuvres or on service. Nor does Home's *Précis*, although it appeals to a higher grade of officers than the Sandhurst text-book, it is little, if at all, wider in scope. "It has been prepared," says the original preface, "chiefly to aid officers in the examinations for promotion," and to give the several branches of the Service "knowledge of each other's capabilities."

Nor is the last issue, so admirably edited by Colonel Pratt, a whit more ambitious. "A work of this kind," he says, "has no pretension to be exhaustive."

I shall possibly be met with the enquiry, whether, no matter for whom they were written, Clery and Home are not in all conscience enough for anyone? I can well imagine those of my brother officers who are concerned more directly than I am at present with the training of the troops, with field-days and manœuvres, asking in consternation whether I really propose to increase the burden of theoretical knowledge under which they labour. I can well fancy even the keenest of them being horrified when they hear me assert that the man who has Home, Clery, and the drill-books at his finger ends has yet to learn the most important part of his business. I shall most certainly be told that if such be the case, life is not long enough, and that superannuation must inevitably intervene.

As a matter of fact, however, the study of Home and Clery, as those authors well understood and took care to explain, is no more than the first step in a most important section of the art of war. That this is not always recognised is due to the fact that the division of tactical science into two parts—*Minor Tactics* and *Grand Tactics*—is very generally overlooked. The very phrase "*Grand Tactics*" looks strange in its English guise, and I cannot help thinking that Colonel Home, when he called his book a *Précis of Tactics*, instead of a *Précis of Minor Tactics*, did something towards confusing the minds of his brother officers. This, however, is not a question of importance. But it is of importance that it should be clearly understood that the science of tactics is divided into two parts, and, also, that the difference between *Minor* and *Grand Tactics* should be clearly defined. This last is difficult, for in many respects the two branches of tactics overlap; and I must regret that as I can nowhere find, although I have no doubt it exists, an exact definition, I have to ask you to accept one of my own, which I cannot help suspecting will do very little towards establishing the distinction which undoubtedly exists. However, as definitions—even feeble ones—are necessary when it is desirable that lecturer and audience should consider a subject from the same point of view, I may say at once that *Minor Tactics* include the formation and disposition of the three arms for attack and defence, and concern officers of every rank; whilst *Grand Tactics* are the art of generalship, include those

stratagems, manœuvres, and devices by which victories are won, and concern only those officers who may find themselves in independent command.

Minor Tactics are more or less mechanical. They may be called the drill movements of the battlefield; they deal principally with material forces, with armament, fire, and formations; and their chief end is the proper combination of the three arms upon the field of battle.

Grand Tactics are far less stereotyped. They are to Minor Tactics what Minor Tactics are to drill, *i.e.*, the method of adapting the power of combination to the requirements of battle; they deal principally with moral factors; and their chief end is the concentration of superior force, moral and physical, at the decisive point.

This is neither the place nor the time to discuss this distinction at greater length. I will only ask anyone who believes that Home and Clery are sufficient in themselves to fit a soldier for independent command against a civilized enemy, whether he is of opinion that the art of Napoleon, Wellington, and Von Moltke is contained within the covers of those unassuming volumes? Whether a man who has mastered those admirable chapters in which they treat of attack and defence, and of combined tactics, possesses all the knowledge—putting aside the question of practice—which a General should possess? Or, again, will a thorough acquaintance with Hamley's "Operations of War" make a strategist of the same type as any one of the three great leaders whose names I have just mentioned?

I have already said that not one of those three books pretends to be anything more than elementary; and I may add that not one of those three distinguished authors has touched, except incidentally, upon the art of generalship.

The methods by which the great Generals bound victory to their colours are scarcely mentioned in the tactical text-books; and in Hamley's "Operations of War" the predominating influence of moral forces, which Napoleon declared was as to the physical as three to one, is alluded to only in a single paragraph. In short, the higher art of generalship, that section of military science to which formations, fire, and fortifications are subordinate, and which is called Grand Tactics, has neither manual nor text-book.

But whilst recognising the imperative necessity, if the three arms are to work in harmony, and the General-in-Chief is to find in his army a weapon which he can use with effect, of the thorough knowledge and constant practice of Minor Tactics, it should never be forgotten that success depends far more on the skill of the General than on the efficiency of the troops. There have been soldiers' battles, it is true, battles like Albuera and Inkermann, where the Generals gave no order, and which were won solely and entirely by the courage and endurance of the officers and men; but soldiers' battles are only exceptionally victories. The truth of Napoleon's saying that in war "it is the man who is wanted and not men" is incontestable; and his own magnificent campaigns of 1796 and 1814 are sufficient in themselves to prove that an able General, although

with far inferior numbers, need never despair of success. Let the converse—that superior numbers, if indifferently commanded, may be utterly defeated and demoralized—be taken to heart, and the supreme importance of good leading, and of thorough training in the art of leading, becomes at once apparent.

I know of no instance more convincing of the truth of this assertion than our great war at the beginning of the century. Of what fine material our armies were made there is no need to speak. But it is a significant fact that during the period of the Peninsula and Waterloo campaigns those magnificent soldiers, when neither Wellington nor his great lieutenants, Hill and Graham, commanded them, were unable to win victories. Pakenham, with a force of those veterans whom Wellington declared could go anywhere and do anything, was decisively defeated by the American Militia at New Orleans. Other veterans were beaten by their own General at Plattsburg. The unfortunate expedition to Walcheren, undertaken in the same year as Corunna, cost the army the lives of thousands without a single success to compensate; in the same year 5,000 English soldiers were turned out of Egypt by the Turks; and the campaign in Holland of 1814, although conducted by Lord Lynedoch, was not fortunate. It is a melancholy fact that throughout the great war the army suffered in its leaders. We may recall the Duke's scathing observations to the Military Secretary:—

"When I reflect upon the character and attainments of some of the General officers of this army, and consider that these are the persons on whom I am to rely to lead columns against the French Generals, and who are to carry my instructions into execution, I tremble; and, as Lord Chesterfield said of the Generals of his day, 'I only hope that when the enemy reads the list of their names he trembles as I do.' And — will be a nice addition to the list! However, I pray God and the Horse Guards to deliver me from General — and Colonel —."

I fear that I am wearying you with truisms; but in the present condition of tactical study it seems to me that it is scarcely out of place to emphasize the momentous issues that hang on the higher leading. This study, as I have already suggested, suffers for want of expansion. It has been restricted to Minor Tactics, and Grand Tactics, the Art of Command, if it has not been forgotten altogether, has been very generally overlooked. Yet it is to Grand Tactics that Napoleon referred when he said, "Read and re-read the campaigns of the great captains." He was not thinking of Minor Tactics, of formations, of fire, and of the combination of the three arms, for he added the list of the campaigns which he considered useful. And what were they? They were not alone the campaigns in which the troops had been armed with the weapons then in use. They were not his own campaigns, or those of the Archduke Charles, or those of Wellington; but they were campaigns in which the battles were fought out with swords and spears, with slings and arrows, in which the infantry wore armour, and the cavalry used no reins; they were the cam-

paigns of Alexander, Hannibal, and Cæsar, as well as those of Gustavus Adolphus and Turenne.

I cannot believe that he thought there were lessons in Minor Tactics to be drawn from the battles of Cannæ or Arbela, or that the formations of the legion and the phalanx could be advantageously imitated against the musket and the cannon, or that the combination of slingers and archers with swordsmen and spearmen could have anything in common with the co-operation of infantry and artillery. It was, on the contrary, the Art of Command he had in mind when he penned his advice; the stratagems of Hannibal, the manœuvres of Alexander, Cæsar's utilization of moral forces, and the strategic marches of Turenne. His meaning, however, has not been always rightly interpreted; it is not generally understood; and it is, perhaps, for this reason, that the study of military history is very largely confined to the study of Minor Tactics.

I must again say a few words to prevent misunderstanding. My remarks are by no means intended to apply to everyone. I have not the very slightest intention of claiming to be first to explain the true meaning of Napoleon's advice. The list of recent publications and forthcoming articles would in itself be sufficient to prove that there are many students of Grand Tactics amongst English officers. We have the Commander of the Forces in Ireland attaining the highest literary fame as the biographer of Marlborough, the late Commander-in-Chief in India engaged on the life of Wellington, and the Quarter-master-General recording the achievements of cavalry. Nor is the study, and even the writing, of history a new feature amongst officers of high rank. You may not all of you be aware that we have the very highest authority for both these practices. The Great Duke himself was not only an indefatigable student, but he was also an author. He had been accustomed to study his profession, so he told Sir James Shaw Kennedy, for some hours daily throughout the greater part of his military career, and in one of the volumes of his despatches is to be found a long review of Napoleon's Russian campaign, written in 1825. Moreover, the majority of our military heroes are numbered amongst the students; Wolfe, Sir John Moore, Picton, Craufurd, Sir Charles Napier, and Sir Henry Havelock. But, at the same time, notwithstanding this array of famous names, I believe that regimental officers, as a body, are content with Minor Tactics, with Home and Clery; or, if they go further, with such study of recent campaigns as will enable them to understand what a battle between modern armies means, and to realize the effect of modern fire. With the art of independent command they have little concern, and Napoleon's maxim carries no weight whatever.

I venture to think, however, as all officers may find themselves some day in independent command before the enemy, responsible not only for the lives of their men but for the honour of their country, that lessons in Grand Tactics are amongst the most important that can be drawn for the present from the past.

Unfortunately, the study is difficult and laborious. There are no convenient summaries, like Home and Clery; and without a com-

petent instructor it is no simple matter to extract profit from reading the account of some complicated campaign. There is no guide to tell the student what to look for, or to what points he should direct special attention. To include such summary in a short lecture would be impossible, even if I were capable of making it complete, but as I have brought you so far, it would be scarcely satisfactory if I made no endeavour to point out the lines on which the study of Grand Tactics should proceed.

In the first place, what campaigns should be studied? Now there is an impression abroad that it is of little use, at all events for the acquirement of tactical knowledge, in studying campaigns in which breechloaders and rifled guns were not employed, and I think this impression is due in part to an exceedingly interesting lecture which, nearly 20 years ago, was delivered in this theatre on "The Study of Military History by Regimental Officers," by Colonel Lonsdale Hale. In his introductory remarks the lecturer spoke of two officers who proposed to begin the study of military history by reading Napier's "Peninsular War." "As they told me that their object was to become practical soldiers, I not unnaturally said: 'Then, of course, you have read all about the campaign of 1870-71?' No, they had not read much in connection with that war; that is to say, these two officers, in order to become practical soldiers, were about to study the tactics of a period when men fought, so to speak, across a pocket-handkerchief, whereas they now fight across the mainsail of a man-of-war; of a period when if a man fired at a church steeple he was lucky if his shot fell within the parish, whereas individual men can nowadays be struck by small-arms at 1,000 paces, and artillery boast that troops are not safe from them at upwards of 4,000 yds."

It is evident, however, that Colonel Hale referred merely to Minor Tactics, not to Grand Tactics; and it was because the distinction between the two was not understood by those who heard or read the lecture that the idea arose in their minds that everything which happened before 1870 was obsolete. After what I have said as to the true meaning of Napoleon's advice it is scarcely necessary to say that his advice still holds good, that increase of range and more rapid loading, although they must always be taken into consideration, have affected Grand Tactics to a very small degree. It is to the campaigns of the great masters of war that we must still turn if we would learn the art of generalship, and the campaigns of Marlborough and Wellington are as valuable for this purpose as those of Von Moltke or of Skobelev.

Perhaps the most useful lesson to be drawn from the famous campaigns of history concerns the great principle of moral force; and regarding this principle my own experience, both as student and instructor, teaches me that a few words of explanation will not be wasted.

"Moral force," says Napoleon, "is to the physical," that is, to numbers, armament, and training, as "three to one." Clausewitz, the most profound of all writers on war, says that everyone understands what

this moral force is and how it is applied. But Clausewitz was a genius, and geniuses and clever men have a distressing habit of assuming that everyone understands what is perfectly clear to themselves. They often forget that they are speaking to or writing for men of average intelligence, who do not reflect deeply, and have to be told important truths instead of discovering them for themselves. Referring to my own experience, I am convinced that the young officer of average intelligence but seldom grasps the meaning of Napoleon's maxim. He accepts it, as soldiers accept the words of the greatest soldier of them all, without question. But he gets no further. His text-books repeat the maxim, but being concerned with Minor Tactics only, they do not discuss it; and there is no treatise, so far as I am aware, which explains what the nature of this moral force is or how it has been utilized in the field. I find nothing more difficult than to drive into men's heads the fact that the great Generals took this moral force into account in all their plans of battles, that the effects they expected from their combinations were based upon moral considerations, and that it was because of this that we call them "great." To those young officers, therefore, who find themselves in the same predicament as I certainly was once myself—accepting the maxim without in the least understanding it—I venture to add a few words which may enlighten them.

Such enlightenment may prove of no immediate benefit whilst they hold their present rank. But no General, no commander of an independent force, can hope for great and decisive success without grasping Napoleon's meaning so thoroughly that he is always trying to express it in action; and the sooner officers gain this knowledge the more familiar will it become—the more likely to be utilized when their time for command arrives. Moreover, when they read of war, when they hear of war, or when they criticise Generals and operations, as young officers sometimes do, they will see things from a new point of view, listen to them with a more intelligent interest, and perhaps be more judicious in the way in which they apportion praise or blame.

The first thing is to realize that in war we have to do not so much with numbers, arms, and manœuvres, as with human nature.

What did Napoleon find in the history of the campaigns of Alexander, Hannibal, and Julius Cæsar? Not merely a record of marches and manœuvres, of the use of entrenchments, or of the general principles of attack and defence. This is the mechanical part—the elementary part—of the science of command.

No; he found in those campaigns a complete study of human nature under the conditions that exist in war; human nature affected by discipline, by fear, by the need of food, by want of confidence, by over-confidence, by the weight of responsibility, by political interests, by patriotism, by distrust, and many other things. The lessons he learned from the campaigns he studied so carefully were not mechanical movements and stereotyped combinations. He was not merely an imitator. Not one of his campaigns has its exact prototype in history—but he learned from history the immense value of the moral element in war; to utilize it to the utmost became instinctive,

and he played upon the hearts of his enemies and of his own men with a skill which has never been surpassed.

Now, in the long history of war we find a number of Generals who were good soldiers, men who understood the mechanical part of their business, who could maintain discipline, who could organize, who could handle their troops carefully in attack, who had a good eye for country, and who could select and occupy strong defensive positions, and yet, although they escape the reproach of being bad Generals, no one ever calls them "great." Read through their campaigns and you will find it hard to point to occasions where they actually broke the ordinary rules of war; you will certainly never find occasions where they ran unnecessary risks. Now, turn to the campaigns of the great Generals, and you will find the rules of war violated again and again, until you get into a hopeless confusion as to what the real rules of war are; you will find them conducting operations which, if they were not the enterprises of a lunatic, were apparently full of risk, and you find it an easy matter to point out some easy manoeuvre or simple precaution on the enemy's part which would have ruined the whole operation. But the curious fact is this, that the operations very seldom did fail, and that, if they did, it was not because the rules of war were set at defiance, but because of some fault in execution.

The explanation of the brilliant successes that the great Generals gained in spite of rules and against enormous risks is to be found in the fact that they looked not only on the physical side—on the numbers and armament of the enemy—but that they saw his weaknesses; they played upon his susceptibilities and apprehensions; every movement that they made was calculated to destroy the moral and confidence of both General and soldiers; if they made movements which set at defiance the rules of war, it was because they were aware that the moral influence of such movements made them absolutely safe; and if in appearance great risks were run, it was with the full knowledge that the enemy's character or his apprehensions would prevent him from taking those simple precautions by which the critics point out that the whole enterprise might easily have been ruined. "They had penetrated," to use a phrase of the late Colonel Charles Brackenbury, "their adversary's brain."

These considerations are often overlooked by those who know little of war. In order to explain satisfactorily the causes of success which they are unable, from their lack of knowledge, to comprehend, they put the whole thing down to chance, and brand the commander with the epithet of lucky. Now, that there are lucky Generals it is impossible to deny; but the epithet is more appropriately applied to those who commit flagrant mistakes and get off scot-free, because they have to do with an incapable antagonist. To call Generals who are invariably successful "lucky," is as much as to say that there is no such thing as skill in generalship, or no such quality as aptitude for war. You may call them "unlucky," if you will, when their plans are ruined by some incapable subordinate; but when you try to find a reason for their long roll of successful cam-

paigns and cannot do so, consider whether it is not possible that what you call "luck" is the result of profound calculation, of a grasp of the situation far wider than your own, and of a utilization of moral force which even special correspondents do not always understand, and which the official despatches do not reveal.

The ordinary General, on the other hand, even if he takes into account the peculiar characteristics of the enemy, does not, like the great Generals, take into account the character of the hostile commander; and he runs none of those apparent risks which bring about decisive victories, because he neither understands his opponent's weaknesses, nor the art of turning them to his own advantage. He does not set mind against mind; and yet war is more of a struggle between two human intelligences than between two masses of armed men. The great General, whilst raising to the utmost the moral of his own men, reckoning up that of the enemy, and lowering it in every possible way, does not give his first attention to these points, nor to the numbers against him. He looks beyond them, beyond his own troops, and across the enemy's lines, until he comes to the quarters occupied by the enemy's leader, and then he puts himself in that leader's place, and with that leader's eyes and mind he looks at the situation; he realizes his weaknesses, the points for the security of which he is most apprehensive; he considers what his enemy's action will be if he is attacked here or threatened there, and he sees for himself, looking at things with his enemy's eyes, whether or no apparent risks are not absolutely safe. If he knows something of his opponent's personal character he has a powerful weapon put into his hand. "It is to be ignorant and blind," wrote the Grecian biographer of Hannibal, "in the science of commanding armies, to think that a General has anything more important to do than to apply himself to learning the inclinations and character of his adversary," and to Hannibal's observance of this maxim he ascribes the extraordinary victories of the great Carthaginian. Look at Napoleon. When his luggage was captured during the retreat from Moscow, Sir Robert Wilson, the English Commissioner with the Russians, relates that there were found amongst his private papers biographies of all the Russian Generals opposed to him. In the Waterloo Campaign again, his first move, when he found himself in a position to attack the Allies in detail, was to strike at the Prussians, knowing that Blücher, impetuous fighter as he was, would never decline a battle in order to fall back and combine with his more cautious ally. Look at Wellington. It is Napier who tells the story. When the British army was in the Pyrenees, entangled in very difficult country, very skilfully defended by the French, the Duke on one occasion ordered a hazardous movement. As soon as he had done so, he rode up to the outposts to observe the French for himself, and the men cheered him all along the line. The French commander, Marshal Soult, surrounded by his staff, was on the opposite hill, and Wellington observed their uneasiness at hearing the cheers across the valley. "Soult," he said, "is a very cautious commander. He will delay his attack to find out what these

cheers mean; that will give time for the 6th Division to arrive and I shall beat him." It turned out exactly as he anticipated.

Again, let us go across the Atlantic. The Great Civil War in America was fought out by Generals who were, some of them, in the first rank, for the respect they paid to the moral aspect of war was remarkable. The greatest of all was Lee, and his Military Secretary writes as follows: "He studied his adversary, knew his peculiarities, and adapted himself to them. His own methods no one could foresee; he varied them with every change in the commanders opposed to him. He had one method with McClellan, another with Pope, another with Hooker, and yet another with Grant. But for a knowledge of his own resources, of the field, and of the adversary, some of his movements might have been rash. As it was, they were wisely bold."

The next point I would refer to is stratagem; and on this I think it is hardly necessary to dilate at length. It is not difficult to understand the importance of deceiving and bewildering your opponent; to realize the force of Stonewall Jackson's advice, "Always mystify, mislead, and surprise the enemy." Surprise is the greatest of all foes; by stratagem surprise is made possible, and stratagems have been used since the night when the army of the Midianites, "like a multitude of beasts, with camels innumerable as the sands of the sea-shore," fled before "the trumpets and the empty pitchers, and the lamps within the pitchers," of Gideon's 300 men. Had Lord Wolseley completed his biography of Marlborough, there would be no occasion to remind English officers that the greatest of English soldiers was only equalled as a master of stratagem by Hannibal and Napoleon. If upon this account alone, the story of his campaigns is in the highest degree instructive, and we may trust it will not be long before English soldiers are as familiar with his methods of war as with those of Wellington.

Lastly there is the use of ground. You may perhaps be disinclined to agree with me when I say that instruction as to use of ground may be gathered from books. I do not for a moment wish to assert that any amount of reading will compensate for the study of ground on the ground itself. But I am still of opinion that there is very much to be learnt in this respect from great campaigns, and that the value and scope of the practical study can be very largely enhanced by theoretical knowledge.

On this question of ground the text-books of *Minor Tactics* give us some assistance. For instance, it is one of the most valuable characteristics of Clery that the capabilities and influence of the ground are alluded to in every chapter. But, as the book is little concerned with generalship, there are few allusions as to the manner in which Napoleon or Wellington made use of natural features; there are no illustrations of their methods, and, indeed, if the subject were treated thoroughly from the point of view of *Grand Tactics*, a larger volume than Clery would be the result. On this point Hamley is admirable, and his chapters on topographical obstacles, and the use to which they may be put, form an excellent introduction to the study of this question from a strategical point of view. But he considers it

from this point of view alone, and so, as regards Grand Tactics, we must go to the campaigns of the great captains, follow their manœuvres on the best maps we can procure, learn with them to recognise the weak points of a position, to utilize the cover which the country affords in order to mass unexpectedly against some one of those points, and to derive that advantage from natural features which has so often outweighed the advantages of numbers.

I may here anticipate the objection that increased range of fire-arms has altered everything. This increase, as I have already remarked, must always be taken into consideration, and there can be no doubt that the power of modern fire has made ground which was formerly eminently favourable for attack eminently favourable for defence; and, also, that as regards defensive positions, the necessity of great depth of cover for supports and reserves, and for second and third lines from the far-reaching shrapnel has changed the conditions under which troops are distributed. But, in reply to the objection, I assert that *general principles*, so far as Grand Tactics are concerned, still hold good. For instance, if we select a defensive position Wellington's dispositions under such circumstances are no bad guide. Not only may we notice his use of advanced posts, but the position of his second and third lines are well worth consideration, and how it was they were always at the right place at the right time. If we are inferior in artillery—as he generally was—is it not useful to consider his occupation of a position under the same conditions—the skirmishers half way down the slope, drawing the enemy on, whilst the main line was hidden behind the crest at such distance as prevented the enemy, when his columns reached the height, from bringing up his guns to support his infantry?

Again, in the attack; look at the extraordinary profit to which Napoleon turned those natural obstacles perpendicular to the line of battle at Rivoli, at Friedland, and at Dresden; at the value in a counterstroke of such tactical points of the village and the knoll which formed the centre of the Allied position at Austerlitz. Look at the almost precipitous slopes—as steep as and far higher than the famous Rotheberg at Spicheren, up which he led two army corps during the night which preceded the surprise and victory of Jena! Look at Lee, in the great campaign of 1864, where he allowed an army, double his numbers, to turn his flank, enticing his adversary into the jungle which is called the “Wilderness of Virginia”—a jungle of which his men knew every path, and of which the Federals knew nothing—in order that he might overwhelm their unwieldy masses.

I am tempted here to give a very brief description of Austerlitz. It was the most brilliant, because the most skilful, of Napoleon's victories—and as the result of a combination of the application of moral factors—of stratagem, and the use of ground, affords a most forcible and complete illustration of the art of Grand Tactics.

In November, 1806, Napoleon was encamped with his Army east of Brünn, in Moravia, with his line of communications running southward to Vienna. At Olmütz a Russian and Austrian Army was slowly assembling. Another Austrian Army was in Hungary, and it was

probable that Prussia might declare war. Napoleon pretended to enter into negotiations, and on the Allied Army moving forward from Olmütz, he permitted it to capture an advanced detachment.

His inactivity before Brunn—so different from his usual rapid offensive—his apparent desire for peace, and his permitting his detachment to be captured without an effort to support it, led the Allied Generals to believe that he feared a battle, and would retreat on their approach in the direction of Vienna. As he had anticipated, whilst continuing their forward movement they threw forward their left, with the evident design of cutting him off from his base of operations. On the 1st of December they arrived opposite the French position, and the tendency to turn the enemy's right was still more manifest.

The ground on which the battle was fought is an undulating plain—lying between two parallel chains of mountains, which run east and west at a distance of some 10 or 12 miles. Napoleon had taken up a position behind a brook, where the ground gave some cover, with his left flank almost touching the northern of the two ranges, and with a great gap between his right and the southern range. Through this gap—several miles in width—it seemed easy to penetrate, to turn his flank, and block his communications. The Allies fell into the trap. The very line of their bivouac fires, blazing on the opposite ridge the night before the battle, revealed to their astute antagonist the movement projected for the morrow and, in a proclamation to his soldiers, he not only told them what the enemy would try to do, but explained the manœuvre by which he should win the battle.

This manœuvre was as follows:—

The Allies were posted on a long bare ridge, of which the culminating point was a commanding hill, with a little village half-way up the slope. Napoleon determined to attack their right vigorously, to permit their left wing to get well away on its great outflanking manœuvre, and then, with 30,000 men—in one huge mass—to attack their weak centre, to seize the village and the hill, and by the occupation of this strong tactical point, the value of which his trained eye for ground had detected, to cut their army in two.

In order, moreover, to draw the turning movement on, he showed only very few troops on the threatened flank, the division with which he designed to hold the outflanking attack being encamped during the night several miles distant from the field of battle.

His anticipations were fulfilled to the letter. The result of his extraordinary combinations was the destruction of nearly half the opposing army, and when the original equality of force is considered, it must be allowed that the genius of a great General has seldom been more effectively displayed.

Time forbids me to quote further illustrations, and it is possible that some few may be still unconvinced. But even if you do not admit that the principles on which Wellington and Napoleon acted are applicable to modern conditions, you will at least allow that an intelligent study of their battles will emphasize the importance of ground, and will induce the student not only to appreciate the im-

portance of topographical features at their true value, but to try and acquire that eye for country which is a distinguishing characteristic of every great General.

These are only some of the elements of Grand Tactics to which I might refer, but I must be content with having brought to your notice the more important. I should not like to conclude, however, without showing you that the study of the art of command need not necessarily entail a great amount of reading. On this point I may quote some remarks made by Lord Wolseley, at a lecture in Dublin, not very long ago.

"A certain amount of reading," he said, "and a certain amount of study is absolutely necessary for any man who ever wishes to command troops in the field; and," he added, "so far as I know of the study of war, the great thing is to read a little and think a great deal—and think of it over and over again." I don't think that this advice can be bettered. A few campaigns thoroughly studied will do more to strengthen the intellect, to develop a capacity for hard thinking and to teach the art of leading troops, than fifty campaigns that have been merely skimmed. General knowledge is often superficial. There is no great benefit, for instance, to be derived from reading the whole of Napier or the history of Napoleon, but it would be great benefit if, in the course of a single winter, an officer were to work out and think out the campaign of 1796 in Italy, or the campaign of 1812 in Spain. When I say "work out and think out," I do not imply that he should be content with reading the narrative and the criticisms, and with following the operations on the map. By far the most useful way of studying military history is to find out from your books, so far as possible, what the situation was at any given time; then to shut the books, take the map, decide for yourself what you would have done had you been in the place of one of the commanding Generals, and write your orders. You are thus dealing with a problem which actually occurred; and in working out the solution you are training your judgment—and remember that war presents a constant series of problems to every officer who may hold an independent command. If an officer has been accustomed to deal with military problems—even on paper—the powers of his mind and his natural ability will have been strengthened in the right direction, and the process of reasoning, which the solution of difficulties involves, will come easier to him than to the man who has to depend in all the excitement of battle on a rusty intellect and the chance of a happy inspiration. I may remind you that if there was one quality more than another in which the great captains excelled, it was their power of reasoning. The despatches of Napoleon, of Wellington, and of Von Moltke prove that they depended for success on their hard thinking and careful calculation. In fact, those magnificent strokes of genius which seemed dictated by the circumstances of the moment were due, as Napoleon himself implies, to a habit of calculation so rapid and so accurate as to seem to the uninitiated like inspiration.

"If," he said, "I always appear prepared, it is because before

entering on an undertaking I have meditated for long and have foreseen what may occur. It is not genius which reveals to me suddenly and secretly what I have to do in circumstances unexpected by other people; it is reflection, it is meditation."

Nor do I think that for the purpose of learning how to handle a small force of the three arms it is necessary to study a whole campaign. Such a study has the advantage of teaching strategy and tactics at one and the same time, and it is certainly a very thorough means of education. But it is by no means a bad thing if education proceeds by successive stages, and it is well to learn how to handle a small force on the field of battle before we aspire to manœuvre an army on the theatre of war.

I would advocate the study of a few famous battles, fought by able leaders. Take, for instance, such a series of English victories as the following:—Vimiera, Roliça, Sabugal, Redinha, Maida, Alexandria, Almaraz, Barossa. Here is a list of actions fought by comparatively small forces, in all of which skilful generalship was displayed. No one can object that they are either dull reading, or would occupy too much time, and all of them will afford many suggestions as to stratagems, manœuvres, the art of concentrating superior force, and the occupation of positions. It does not appear to me too much to ask the British officer of to-day to follow the example of Wellington, Wolfe, Moore, and Napier, and the course of study I suggest is not a very lengthy one. The first thing to do is to learn the tactical sections of the three drill-books thoroughly—if not by heart. There the concentrated essence of modern fighting is to be found, based on the experience of many wars, and I must say that I think it absolutely useless for any officer to study military history until he has the rules, maxims, and principles contained in the official manuals at his fingers' ends. Then, to elucidate points which are necessarily much condensed in the drill-books, read some manual on Minor Tactics. A single battle of the 1870 era will give you an idea of what a modern battlefield is like. Certain chapters in Mayne's "Fire Tactics" are invaluable. When you have done this, set to work at Grand Tactics, study the battles of Napoleon, or of Wellington, or of Marlborough, sleep with "The Soldier's Pocket-Book" under your pillow, and, so far as theory can help you, you will have done your duty.

If I were to put my finger on the most important "Lesson that may be drawn from the Past," I should reply that history teaches us that courage, numbers, armament, and entrenchments are of no avail if the troops are badly led, and that the honour and safety of the Empire depend on the skill and knowledge of British officers.

It is true that theory by itself will avail but little. When he was asked the best means of learning the art of war, Lord Seaton, the famous Colonel Colborne of the Peninsula and Waterloo, replied, "Fighting, and a d—d deal of it." But practical experience, at all events of civilised warfare, falls to the lot of few, and practical experience, unless it forms a basis for reflection, and is amplified by comparison with the experience of others, loses half its value.

Frederick the Great, you may remember, in speaking of officers

who relied on their practical experience alone, caustically remarked that there were in the army two commissariat mules which had served through twenty campaigns, "but," he added significantly, "they are mules still." To draw all the good out of practical experience, reflection and comparison are necessary; but reflection and comparison will be impossible unless the brain has been trained to think, and the mind is stored with knowledge of the past. Moreover, as regards Grand Tactics and the art of independent command, our experience as junior and subordinate officers is little to the point. It is rare indeed that an officer progresses gradually from the control of a small independent force to the control of a large one. As a very general rule his first experience of independent command is the charge of important operations. He rises suddenly from the position of a subordinate, obeying orders, and concerned only with the execution of a plan devised by another, to the vast responsibilities which attend the functions of a General-in-Chief, and, under the burden of those responsibilities, in order to bring his operations to a successful issue, he must rely on his natural aptitude for war, on his moral courage, and his theoretical knowledge of the art of command. Theory, applied to the profession of arms, is to some a word of most obnoxious sound. But it is obnoxious only to those who refuse to listen to the advice, or to take warning from the practice of Napoleon, of Wellington, and of many of our own most famous Generals. "It is not pretended," says M'Dougall, "that study will make a dull man brilliant, nor confer resolution and rapid decision on one who is timid and irresolute by nature; but the quick, the resolute, the daring, deciding and acting rapidly, as is their nature, will be all the more likely to decide and act correctly in proportion as they have studied the art they are called upon to practise."

The following advice was written to a young officer by Sir Charles Napier, himself an example of the highest military genius, who not only did not disdain incessant study of his profession, but thought it indispensable to success: "By reading you will be distinguished; without it, abilities are of little use. A man cannot learn his profession without constant study to prepare especially for the higher ranks. When in a post of responsibility, he has no time to read; and if he comes to such a post with an empty skull, it is then too late to fill it. Thus many people fail to distinguish themselves, and say they are unfortunate, which is untrue; their own previous idleness unfitted them to profit by fortune."

In a time of peace like the present, when there is nothing to attract the minds of soldiers from the ordinary routine of their profession, and especially in a time when the chances of England becoming involved in a great war are considered as remote as they were in the era which preceded the Crimea and the Minting, there is a danger that the ordinary routine may be considered as sufficient for every purpose. Our distinguished visitor, Captain Maban, has pointed out that the cordial reception which his books on the Sea Power have met with in England is virtually an admission that the systematic study of "The Conduct of War," has been to some

degree overlooked by English sailors. The real reason of this enthusiasm, I believe, is rather that a most brilliant intellect has thrown new light upon the lessons of the past. But, be this as it may, we soldiers may take warning from our comrades of the Navy. It is true that in some respects we have been more fortunate than they, for we have been long provided with capable teachers. The *Memoirs of Napoleon*, the *Despatches of Wellington*, *Napier's History of the Peninsular War*, to take but a few amongst many, are as instinct with genius as even the works of Captain Mahan. We have only to ask ourselves whether these volumes are studied as they should be, and whether our younger officers realise the importance, and understand the methods, of preparing themselves for the responsibilities of command.

In conclusion, if I were asked to put my finger on the most important lesson that may be drawn from the past, I should reply that history teaches us that courage, numbers, armament, are of no avail if troops are not well led; and that, although our rank and file, when compared with the troops of any nation whatever, still maintain their superiority, the honour and safety of the Empire depend on the skill and knowledge of English officers.

THE CHAIRMAN: I should be glad if any of those gentlemen who are about to take part in the discussion will be good enough to tell us—if they agree, as probably many will substantially agree, with what the lecturer has been advocating, viz., the increase of the conscientious study of military history—whether his definition is likely to help the young officer in giving him one more definition, which he proposes to call “grand tactics.” I hope somebody will be good enough to say whether he thinks that that is a good definition to adopt, because it is something new. I have here before me a book in which tactics are described by Napoleon as “the art of being stronger.” The point I would like some of you to elucidate is whether the adoption of these words “grand tactics,” of which the lecturer himself has told us he has only mentioned some branches, is likely to facilitate the study of our younger comrades.

Brigadier-General GOSSET: I do not feel prepared to state whether the definition given by Colonel Henderson in his excellent lecture is the most suitable to be found. What I would point out is that the lecture is valuable, inasmuch as Colonel Henderson has, as Sir Evelyn Wood says, brought forward a new subject, or rather put before us an old subject in a new light, and very forcibly. I always considered it was a great pity when, some years ago, the study of military history was withdrawn from the course at the Royal Military College, and it is a source of satisfaction to think that it has now been re-introduced. But what I wish to point out is, I think our duty in teaching the young officers of the army lies more in leading them to the knowledge of what to read and how to study. My experience as an instructor at Sandhurst and commanding officer of a battalion has shown me that it is not so much a disinclination to study which exists in the army among our officers as the want of being put on the proper road, and in my attempts to lead officers to study, I found that most of them were, as a rule, ready to back me up. With regard to the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, as you know, minor tactics have very wisely been taught there for some years, and now that the subject of military history in general, which includes what the lecturer calls, for want of a better definition, “grand tactics,” has since been re-introduced. I consider instead of having, as they have now as I understand, each instructor and professor in tactics lecturing upon military history and the higher tactics, it would be far better to revert to the system of a special lecturer for this subject, and in saying this I would recall to the memory of those who sat under them in old days, Colonel Charles Chesney, Adams, and others, and the value of their work as

lecturers. There are very few men who can lecture well and clearly, and anyone who has been at the College, or has tried it himself, will know that if you want to impress young men, to really give them an interest in their profession and make them study, you must have somebody who, like our friend Colonel Henderson, can put the subject well and in an interesting way before them. Otherwise, like a bad sermon, instead of rousing the congregation it sends them to sleep. Therefore I hope that a lecturer will be appointed to Sandhurst for this very important subject. Another thing I wish to bring forward, with reference to the study of tactics generally, is, although I may be somewhat advanced in my ideas, that the regiment should be a school for instruction. We have now our Royal Military College, where the young officer learns a certain amount of theoretical tactics. He goes to his regiment, and is put through his drill and field training, and it is carried out well in many regiments, while in others it is worked in rather a perfunctory manner. If he happens to get into a regiment where this perfunctory work is done he learns very little, and any desire he has to learn at the most receptive period of his career is starved for want of encouragement. I maintain that the regiment should be the school for the army. It is one of those subjects which I brought forward in a lecture I had the honour of giving here three years ago, and I think, although my ideas may not be those of many officers, it is rather a slur on the British Army that we should be obliged to go to garrison instructors to enable our officers to pass their examinations for promotion; and I go further, and say that the new orders with reference to the examination of majors for command of regiments will, I am pretty certain, oblige a great many of them to go to the gentlemen who prepare officers for the army, in order to obtain the knowledge which they cannot get apparently in any other way. I was struck last year, at some of the manœuvres held by me in Burnah, by a remark made by a major of over 20 years' service, to whom I gave command of a mixed force. He did very well, but after the manœuvres he came up to me and he said, "I wish to point out to you, sir, that this is the first time in the whole of my service that I have had anything like a scheme given me to do in the field." I said, "How is that?" He replied, "The reason of it is that my regiment is one which has always been in stations where we had no other troops, and I never had any chance of putting my theory into practice." I would say, in defence of the British officer, that this is not altogether an uncommon case. We often lose sight of the fact that our army is scattered all over the world, and that it is often very difficult for the British officer to study the higher branches of his profession practically, in the way we all wish him to do; and you cannot make a comparison between them and the officers of foreign armies for that reason. Of course where there is a will there is a way, and there are many officers who, much to their credit, get out of the difficulty, and who study a good deal: but it is a very hard thing upon officers who are anxious to work and qualify for the higher commands that they should never have a chance, as many of them certainly have not, of putting their theories into practice. If our own regiments become the schools of instruction, we shall then be on the road to prepare our officers from their youth up for the higher commands. The British officers, as a body, are as good, if not superior, to officers of other armies. Their excellent qualities come out in all our small wars: In Burnah, where I have lately been, it is quite remarkable what foresight, pluck, and "nous" has been shown by young officers under very difficult circumstances. If we can only work upon such good material I am certain what the lecturer proposes, whether he calls it "grand tactics" or by any other name, there are plenty of officers who, though they may never become great masters in the art of war, will be led to read and study to their own advantage and that of the Service.

Mr. SPENSER WILKINSON: I should propose to offer a remark or two on the question which you, sir, have raised. It seems to me rather unfortunate that in this paper a new definition and a distinction between minor tactics and grand tactics has been introduced. I imagine that Colonel Henderson's purpose is to advocate the adoption in the British Army of the practice of studying by the solution of problems, and its application to the study of military history. I think the distinction he has drawn between minor tactics and grand tactics is likely to have dangerous consequences, because it leads to the impression that you can learn

how to be a captain, or a major, or a colonel without the study of problems, but that when you are going to be a General you must begin them. It appears to me you cannot learn tactics at all merely out of books such as Clery and Shaw, or any of the text books; they give you a number of rules and analyse the nature of the three arms. All you learn from them is certain forms and elementary principles. But the mark of the tactician at any stage is not simply the knowledge of forms, but that power and judgment which enables him to analyse the situation before him and to decide on the measures he will take accordingly. I take it that the method of problems is the best plan of developing the power of grasping a situation. If you are going to distinguish in Colonel Henderson's way between grand tactics and minor tactics it implies that you must not cultivate this power until you are coming to large bodies of troops or to an independent command. But surely the vital point in the cultivation of tactics is in the formation of the judgment in every officer, even in the lowest rank, and in beginning to form it at the very beginning. So I should like to submit a question which others will be ready to answer, whether if we are to have a distinction at all the true definition would not be between formal tactics and applied tactics; between the study of formations and the study of situations. I think officers who try that method—the analysis of situations—will find it much more likely to develop initiative, and enable a man to make up his mind in a crisis, or under any circumstances, than merely studying formal tactics. If Colonel Henderson would be willing to reconsider the definition which he proposes, and to substitute for it another phrase which he used—"the art of command"—and to make the distinction one not of greater or less importance, but one of kind, going through matters both of great and small importance, I think his suggestions would bear greater fruit.

Captain JAMES: I really think the question of definition is a rather unimportant one, and for this reason. It is impossible to draw a hard and fast line where grand tactics—although I should prefer the translation of the words *grande tactique* as higher tactics—it is impossible to draw a hard and fast line where grand tactics cease and minor tactics commence. In the same way strategy shades off into higher tactics also in an imperceptible degree. In fact, I will go further than Colonel Henderson, and accept the fourth definition of the "art of war," which you find in so many of the old books—logistics, the art of moving troops. But whether you adopt these definitions, all or in part, the practical fact arises that the "art of war" is divisible into two main branches of "strategy" and "tactics," that is to say, "strategy," the movement of troops before collision takes place, and "tactics," the movement of troops when collision is imminent or is actually going on. I am not going to play the part of a captious critic, but I am inclined to differ from Colonel Henderson on what apparently is his view of the value of minor tactics. I would remind you that for one officer that is called upon to solve problems of strategy there are at least a thousand who are concerned with minor tactics; and that for one who is called upon for the higher branch of tactics there are at least 100 called upon for the minor branch. Now, it seems to me it is just this minor branch of tactics that is the most difficult to instruct officers in, and for this reason. The handling of troops under fire is always a difficult problem. It is one in which the moral side is to the physical quite as three to one, if not more. I always remember a remark you made, sir (Sir Evelyn Wood), to me 15 years ago, when you said, "Never judge of the value of a man until you have seen him under fire." That is most just, because you may be a most excellent theoretical tactician in the closet, but you may utterly fail when the bullets are flying about. For the study of minor tactics it seems to me this is just the very thing in which we are most deficient in England. Our regimental histories contain very little record of the actual details of fighting. Numerous books on this subject exist in both German and French, especially German, and I believe, for the regimental officer, the study of these books, which show what actually was done by troops under the strain of battle, is far more valuable and necessary than excursions into the higher walks of the military art. I quite agree with Colonel Henderson that the study of the drill book must come first, but I do not think that would suffice absolutely, and I am inclined to think that anybody who confines his study to the drill books would be occasionally brought up with a round turn. They

do not always agree, which is one thing. I put down two or three little points to-day which I have no doubt are oversights in the compilation of these books, but which really are of importance when you come to definite instruction. I find, for instance, the views of the military and infantry officers put forward in the official book differ with regard to artillery fire. The infantry looks upon 3,000 yds. as the effective distance of artillery fire, and says it is the extreme useful range. The artillery officers, on the other hand, claim effects at greater ranges, for the official artillery text book says that 3,500 yds. is the distance, and that up to the power of vision useful effect may be obtained on many occasions. They differ again on the question of what is the safe range for guns from artillery fire. At 1,200 yds., says the Infantry Drill Book, infantry should make artillery pay very heavily for coming into action. The Artillery Book, on the other hand, says at 1,100 yds. artillery can defend itself against infantry. There is a slight contradiction. Therefore, it seems to me, you must not confine your study either to the drill books or even to the many excellent works on tactics which exist in this language. It seems to me practice alone is the plan by which practical minor tactics can be taught. You must begin by certain principles, no doubt, but you must take care that your practice, your practical teaching of those minor tactics in peace-time, is made as like war as possible, and that the only difference you should have would be that the casualties would not be produced by bullets. Constant practice alone can make a good minor tactician. Would anybody in this room go to a surgeon who said "My system of keeping my knowledge of amputation is to practise it once a year for a month. In the remaining 11 months I do not practise the practical part; I confine myself to making up boluses"? I do not think we should, and if one wanted one's leg cut off we should prefer to go to a man who is doing it every day. If this is necessary in the medical profession I am sure it is quite as necessary in the military profession. I quite admit that there is no book which deals with higher tactics—with what Colonel Henderson has defined as grand tactics; but we must pick out from the records of the past the working of the minds of Commanders-in-Chief on certain occasions. We know what the facts were before them when they had to solve the problem, and we know the solutions they gave to those problems; and by carefully studying these, and bearing in mind actually what was before them when they gave their solutions, we can get a very good idea of what the higher branches of tactics really are. For instance, as the lecturer has stated, we have an excellent example in the battle of Austerlitz; we have a situation very well known of Wellington on the 17th June; we have many good records in the Franco-German War. For instance, take the Le Mans campaign. We have Von der Goltz's account of it, which gives the exact situation, and really what was working in the Commander-in-Chief's mind on many important occasions. Colonel Henderson alluded to our list of disasters. Of course he could have made it much longer, and I venture to say the result is due in many cases to the incompetence of the leaders, and that was largely due to the fact that they were quite uneducated soldiers, and that there was in those days no supervising power whose duty it was to distinguish between capacity and incapacity, and to eliminate the latter from the practical conduct of the operations of the war. As Wellington himself says about his Staff in 1815, everybody knows in that particular year he had foisted upon him a large number of incapable men, and bitterly indignant he was at it. It was not his fault. The belief is certainly not wholly eradicated that these things right themselves when you come to actual fighting, and so they do, but they right themselves at the expense of the lives of the men who are led by these incompetent people. A genius may turn up sometimes at the right moment, and, thank God, he sometimes does, but sometimes he does not, and then disaster follows. We have a great many events in our records which show when the genius did turn up, but we have certainly, even in modern times, had occasions when the genius did not turn up. Anybody who has read the history of the Indian Mutiny knows at the beginning of that the hideous mistakes made by men in high positions of command, to which very largely the extent of the Mutiny was subsequently due. Now, the art of Generalship, of course, can only be acquired by a man who has a natural taste for war, but although by training you cannot make a genius, still it is quite possible to teach mediocrity, and I venture to say the great reason for the

enormous success of the Prussian Army as a military machine has been owing to the fact that they have thoroughly grasped the idea that you can train the average ordinary mediocre individual to do a great deal which he cannot do if he is not trained. It is impossible, of course, to dissect and lay before the student the intellectual workings of the great commander's mind. You cannot say what special mental quality it was that differentiated, for instance, Napoleon from Radetsky, or Wellington from Soult; but this you can do, you can study the methods each employed and deduce from that yourself why Napoleon and Wellington were military geniuses and why Radetsky and Soult were merely painstaking commanders. Strategy, to which the lecturer has briefly alluded, is certainly one of the branches of war which requires to be studied under the changed conditions of modern existence, and it is very little good studying old campaigns unless you do so, for the physical conditions of Europe have been enormously altered during the last 30 years.

Lieut.-Colonel E. GUNTER: We are very fortunate in having an officer of the reputation of Colonel Henderson to lecture here to-day, and his lecture has borne out his reputation. I am very glad to hear him recommend the study of military history at the Royal Military College. Until Colonel Gosset spoke I was unaware that this study had actually been re-introduced. As I see the Professor of Tactics at that College is present, perhaps he will kindly give us some definite information on the subject. I think it absolutely necessary that the study of tactics should be preceded by a short course of military history and geography, and I hope the lecturer will use his influence to bring about its introduction, not only for cadets but for officers entering the army through the militia. We who are instructors find the ignorance of officers astonishing. You have doubtless heard the well known story of how, after an instructor had been explaining to a certain number of young officers what Napoleon did on this and that occasion, one of them said gently, "Please, sir, who was Napoleon?" I cannot vouch for the truth of the story, and can hardly believe it, but that it was told is an indication of the prevailing ignorance. As the lecturer said, in the latter part of his lecture, it is not a large amount of knowledge, which may be merely superficial, that is required, but a thorough tactical study of a few campaigns that is required. I hope that he and other officers will try and get such a course introduced and made a subject of examination, or the study of tactics will not much improve, for without it officers do not understand the allusions made in the Tactical Text Book. If a good book giving *short* accounts of certain campaigns were issued by authority, I think it would be of great assistance. Of course the division of tactics into theoretical tactics and applied tactics is well understood. A speaker who addressed you seems to think applied tactics are not practised by our officers. Any one who has seen the papers set at recent examinations knows that this now forms part of every tactical examination, and some excellent studies in applied tactics have appeared lately. That part of the subject is, it will be seen, attracting much attention in England. But I desire to advocate strongly the re-introduction of a short course of military history as well.

The CHAIRMAN: The lecturer has referred to a certain lecture given by Colonel Lonsdale Hale some years ago, in which he spoke about not going further back than 1870 and 1871 for tactical studies. We should be glad to know what he really meant, because I think the opinion has done harm—that is the reason I refer to it now—in that it stops people reading. It stops young officers reading about the Peninsular battles, and I think really for defensive positions there is almost as much to be learnt from them now as there was at the time the history was written. I think it would do good if he could agree with the lecturer that he only meant it in a modified sense.

Colonel LONSDALE HALE<sup>1</sup>: The lecturer and myself both believe that the really

<sup>1</sup> As both the lecturer and chairman referred to my preference for the study of more recent wars to the study of those of older date, and the chairman expressed a wish that I should make some statement on the matter, I may say that inasmuch as there are found in all campaigns the "eternal principles of strategy," they will

good regimental officer will become a still better officer in the field if he only will delve a little into the military history of the past; but we differ in the methods to be adopted, and we differ also as to the standard which you should set before the British officer. Colonel Henderson places before the British officer a very high standard indeed, and he does so on the ground that unless you put before a man a very high standard, his practice will be very low indeed. I put before the British officer a low standard on the ground that, if you put before him a very high standard indeed, he will look at it, turn back, and say, "That is too high for me, I won't try at all." Colonel Henderson says: "It does not appear to me too much to ask the British officer of to-day to follow the example of Wellington, Wolfe, Moore, and Napier." I think it is a great deal too much to ask the British officer to follow the example of Wellington. The average officer will say, "That man is a giant, I am a mere pigmy. How can I learn history as Wellington did?" It is idle to ask the ordinary British officer to learn history in the same way that Wellington and Napoleon did. Colonel Henderson, at the end of his lecture, asks the average officer to embark on a course of study quite beyond his powers and opportunities. The mistake Colonel Henderson makes is his forgetfulness of the enormous labour required to get any value out of military history; for instance, the one lecture we have heard to-day represents the outcome of 9 or 12 years' study on the part of the lecturer. You, Sir Evelyn, have lately put before the army the achievements of cavalry. They are not lengthy, but how much labour did you spend in the simple getting out of that little result? No one who has not studied military history has any idea what a very small residuum comes out after an enormous amount of labour. You cannot expect the British officer to follow advice entailing all this amount of labour. To do so he must have books at his disposal; he must have access to libraries, and he must have time which he cannot possibly obtain. But still, this knowledge must be given, and means for this study must be furnished to the British officer. I agree with Mr. Spenser Wilkinson that the term "grand tactics" was unfortunate. It does not cover what Colonel Henderson puts under it, for it includes strategy. Then, again, I object to the words "grand tactics" because you are bringing in what I may call a stumbling block and rock of offence in the improvement of the British officer, who will mistake it for an addition to the military curriculum instead of a development only as it really is. What Colonel Henderson wants to put forward is the art of leading troops as distinguished from the mechanical leading. What we want to do is to put before officers not merely the mechanism, but the art of war. The English books we have now give merely the mechanism of war. We want some works which will combine with the mechanism the art also. I respectfully submit that we ought to have that work supplied. We have certain books supplied by the Government, and the Government could not do better than take in hand the production of such a book as I have indicated, a book supplying not merely historical facts, but food for thought on the facts; and as to who shall draw it up, I do not know anyone better than my friend the lecturer.

COLONEL HENDERSON said: My attempt at a definition does not evidently meet with favour. "The art of command," however, might include the command of a corporal's guard or of a fire-unit, and it covers more than what I have attempted to define as "Grand Tactics." But, as my friend Captain James has remarked, I think it is a question of small moment. It does not matter what you call the art, so long as officers prepare themselves to practise it. I was much gratified to hear fall from a soldier who has taken such great interest in the higher training of

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be found in recent campaigns, and if a student studies them in these he will pick up at the same time much information of other matters, tactics, transport, supply, &c., which will stand him in good stead in the next campaign he is engaged in; whereas the further back we dive into military history in search of "eternal principles" and grand tactics, the surroundings of obsolete and useless details become more dense and thicker with a corresponding expenditure of labour and time in throwing them out of the way on one side. To study B.C. before A.D. is to put the cart before the horse.—L. A. H.

regimental officers, as General Gosset, the idea that the regiment is the school of instruction. I am by no means desirous of borrowing everything from Germany. In most respects we have very little to learn from our comrades of the Imperial army, and in many respects they have something to learn from us. But there is no doubt that the chief strength of the German Army lies in the thorough efficiency of the officers, and the reason of this high standard of efficiency is because they are instructed regimentally, not only in minor tactics, but in the art of independent command. I have before me a very interesting document, the Report of the Director-General of Military Education in India. As you are aware, of late years, the whole system of military education in India has taken a very practical form; and, with your permission, I will quote a few extracts from Colonel Hart's report. In speaking of the instruction received by the officers before joining their garrison classes, he says:—"In many corps the instruction is most thorough, but there are still some corps in which instruction in 'C and D' is almost entirely neglected or prepared in a most perfunctory manner. . . . Garrison classes are for two months only, consequently it is absolutely essential for the principal military education of officers to be conducted regimentally. The inefficiency of a junior officer may produce the most serious consequence on service." Referring to the practical exercises, he adds:—"In order that exercises may approach as nearly as possible actual war, it is necessary that officers should acquire a knowledge of modern war by persistent study of military history." Nothing, in my humble opinion, and I am sure in General Gosset's also, could be sounder than those ideas. Colonel Hale seemed to imply that because Wellington and Napoleon were giants, and we are pigmies, that it is perfectly useless for us to study military history like them. I should have thought the fact of our being pigmies would make such study the more necessary.

Colonel HALE: To adopt their methods of studying military history.

Colonel HENDERSON: Because Wellington studied every day I cannot see is any reason why any other soldier, giant or pigmy, should not do exactly the same thing. Colonel Hale has hinted that time is wanting. I thought that argument was "scotched." I scarcely believed that Colonel Hale would be the man to declare that the British regimental officer has not got the time to study like Wellington, Napier, Moore, and many other fighting soldiers. Officers devote time to studying foreign languages or to passing the Staff College, and surely officers who do not go in for these severe tests can spare a little leisure for the study of military history. Besides, it is after all a simple question of duty, if a certain degree of knowledge is necessary for a man to lead his men efficiently and to avoid useless sacrifice of life, it is most assuredly an officer's duty, both to the State and to his men, to acquire that knowledge. We should think very little of a naval officer who said he had no time to spare to learn how to handle his ship in action. Nor does study imply that officers are to become bookworms. I don't advise any one to swallow all the campaigns of Napoleon at one gulp. Military history should be taken in small doses; and one campaign every winter would take very little time, and would broaden the mind in most useful fashion. Two or three pages a day is scarcely too much to ask of anyone; and even a good deal larger dose than this would interfere but little with sport. I don't find the officers at the Staff College are any the worse men across country or in the cricket field because they study, and physically as well as intellectually the good Staff College officers are bad to beat. I have nothing more to add but to thank you, Sir Evelyn, and the audience, for the patience with which you have listened to my lecture.

The CHAIRMAN (Sir Evelyn Wood): I can only touch on perhaps one or two points, because time is going on. Our lecturer said chaffingly in his paper that some people were so clever, so well read, that they provokingly assumed that all who were listening to them were at their own level, but he has put up a very high standard by the list which he gave, and which Colonel Hale criticised, because really if an officer did only a portion of that curriculum he would do very well. We cannot expect a very young officer to look at it from the same point of view that we do, who, I may almost say, are going out of the army. If the officers understood that they were to get something for it, it would be different. Officers read for the Staff College because they think they are going to be employed on the

Staff. In bygone years, no doubt, our Generals, our colonels were not selected for their military knowledge, but for the last few years there has been a greater pressure of selection, and there are now a very large number of officers, more than might be assumed by anyone who did not know the army, who do read. If I want any reference, I see a number of men who will find the reference for me much more quickly, in many cases, than I can myself. I think the lecturer made a little mistake in attributing so much to the General and so little to the troops; that is not the result of my reading. The result of my reading is that the General's skill is mainly shown in giving the first impulse and perhaps the last, but the battle generally is fought out by subordinates, whether there is a Von Moltke directing it or whether there is some one who might have been a failure even 100 years ago. I am glad Mr. Spenser Wilkinson and, I think, Colonel Hale, preferred the "art of command," although the lecturer does not like it. I think it is a better word than "grand tactics." I am in the position almost of appearing to disagree with everything he said, but I do so practically on only one or two very minor points. I ought to explain that, because I am in full accordance with him. I profited, I hope, by going closely through the battle of Spiecheren, which he showed was won really in spite of the Generals; and that was also the case in one other of the four great battles of the war, so that I have not quite followed why he put so much on the General and so little on the troops. If I were asked what we ought to try and get the young officer to do, I should say, first of all, to induce him to read. Adam and Chesney were both kind enough to write out for me a statement of how to study a campaign, and they took a great deal of trouble about it. That, I think, we ought to do with our young officers in our regiments. It is Utopian to believe that we can get good instructors in every battalion; indeed, General Gosset, who advocates the battalion being the school of instruction, dwells on the importance of having more good instructors at Sandhurst. But unfortunately they are very difficult to find. We cannot hope to find many good, patient, well-read instructors, and who, knowing the subject, have the power of putting it pleasantly and in a way to attract hearers. Having induced the young officer to read, if you object to the words "art of command," let him study, say, "self-command." When Marlborough was in Council and was invited to attack, and said he would not attack the next day, nothing could induce him, and he was called in the Council Chamber a coward. He said, "Yes, I may be, but I won't attack." He knew that he had somebody alongside of him who meant to pass the news on, and when he did attack the next morning he challenged this officer to lead with him. This is a great instance of self-command. But that is only one quality, and the self-command which I want to impress as my view of what the young officer should aim at is to be a better man than any one under him. I do not mean physically, I mean in work and morally. You may not be superior physically—that is not given to all of us. But I have seen man after man who is not at all clever rise above those around him by force of character. Look at Blücher, look at Lord Clyde: these two men were certainly not clever, they were certainly not well read, but they had force of character. The night before last I was talking to Captain Mahan, and he agreed with me that force of character was a much more valuable possession for the leader of an army or fleet than any amount of technical or naval or military knowledge, and there is no doubt you cannot have that force of character unless you are determined to be, both in work and in character, rather better than all the people underneath you. That is the keynote of your success, and that, I think, we ought to try and impress on our young officers that they should try and be better soldiers all round than those with whom they serve.