

## ARTICLE XXXII.

OFFENSIVE BATTLES, AND DIFFERENT ORDERS OF  
BATTLE.

We understand by offensive battles those which an army delivers which assails another in its position.\* An army reduced to the strategic defensive often takes the offensive in the attack, as the army which receives the attack can, in the course even of the battle, reseize the initiative and retake the superiority which it procures. History is not wanting in a host of examples for each of these different kinds of battles. As we have already spoken of the last in the preceding Article, and as we have presented there the advantage which may be found in awaiting the attack, we will limit ourselves here to speaking of what concerns the assailants.

It cannot be concealed that the latter have, in general, the advantage which the superiority of moral confidence procures, and that they know almost always better what they want and what they are doing.

When it is resolved to assail the enemy, some order of attack should be adopted, and this is what I have thought it my duty to name orders of battle. However, it also frequently happens that we have to begin the battle without a settled plan, for the want of knowing exactly the position of the enemy. In both cases it is always necessary to be well impressed beforehand, that there is in each battle one decisive point which procures the victory better than others, by assuring the application of the principles of war, and it is necessary to place ourselves in condition to carry our efforts upon this point.

The decisive point of a field of battle is determined as we have already said : by the configuration of the ground, by the combination of the localities with the strategic end that any army proposes to itself, finally, by the position of the respective forces.

Let us give an example. When a hostile wing, is supported upon heights whence it could batter our line in its whole prolongation, the occupation

\* In all battles there is an attacking party and the party attacked, each battle will then be offensive for the one and defensive for the other

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# PLATE I.

## ORDERS OF BATTLE, OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE.

FIG. 1.

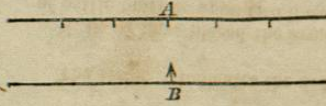


FIG. 2.

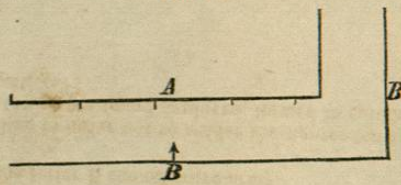


FIG. 3.

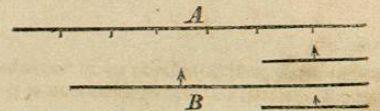


FIG. 4.

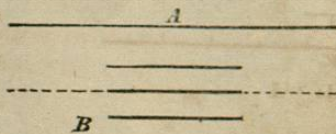


FIG. 5.

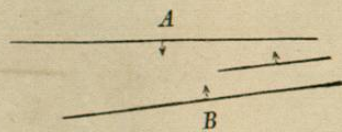


FIG. 6.

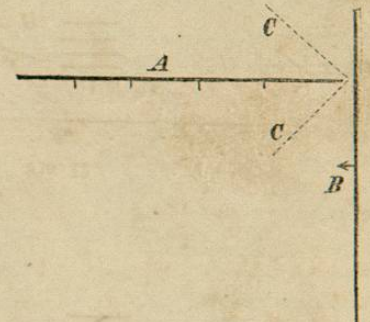


FIG. 7.

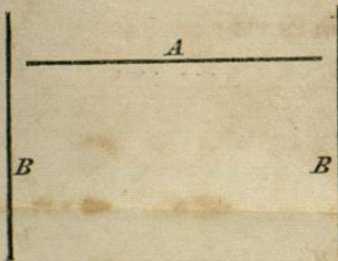


FIG. 8.

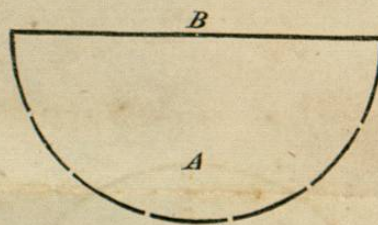


FIG. 9.

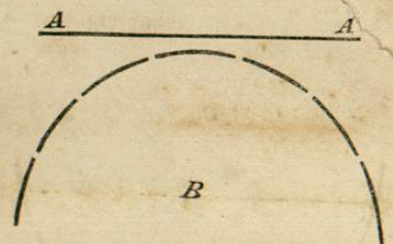


FIG. 8. bis.

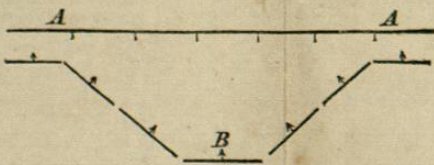


FIG. 10.

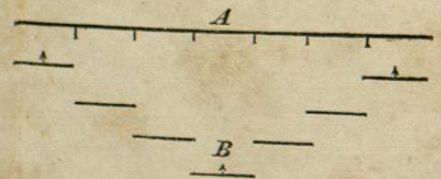


FIG. 11.



FIG. 12.



The letter A indicates the defensive army ; the letter B the offensive army.

N. B. I have placed the armies on a single line in order not to render the figures too complicated ; but it is necessary to observe that every order of battle must be upon two lines ; whether the troops are found deployed, formed in columns of attack, in squares, or *en echequier*, is of little importance, it changes in nothing their tactical disposition.



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of those heights seems the most advantageous tactical point; but it may happen, nevertheless, that these heights are of a very difficult access, and situated precisely at the least important point relatively to strategic views. At the battle of Bautzen, the left of the Allies was supported by the steep mountains of Bohemia, then rather neutral than hostile; it seemed then that, tactically, the side of those mountains would be the decisive point to carry, and it was just the opposite; because that the ground was very favorable there to the defense, that the allied army had only a single line of retreat upon Reichenbach and Gorlitz, and that the French, by forcing the right in the plain, seized upon this line of retreat, and threw the allied army into the mountains, where it would have lost all its *matériel* and a great part of its *personnel*. This last course offered then more facilities of ground, more immense results, and less obstacles to vanquish.

From all that precedes, we can, I believe, deduce the following truths: 1st. The topographical field of battle is not always the tactical key. 2d. The decisive point of a field of battle is unquestionably that which unites the strategic advantage with the most favorable localities. 3d. In the case where there are not too formidable difficulties of ground upon the strategic point of this field of battle, that point is ordinarily the most important. 4th. However, it happens also that the determination of this point depends above all upon the position of the respective forces; thus, in lines of battle too extended and cut up, the centre will be always the most essential to attack; in close lines the centre is on the contrary, the strongest point, since independently of the reserves which are found there, it will be easy to cause it to be sustained by the wings; then the decisive point will be on the contrary, upon one of the extremities. With a great superiority of forces, we may attack the two extremities at the same time, but not with forces equal or inferior. It is seen then that all the combinations of a battle consists in employing our forces in such a manner that they obtain the greatest possible action upon that one of the three points which offers the most advantages, a point which it will be easy to determine, by submitting it to the analysis which we have just explained.

The aim of an offensive battle can only be to dislodge and break the enemy, unless by strategic manœuvres the entire ruin of his army has been prepared; now an enemy is dislodged, either by overthrowing his line upon some point of his front, or by outflanking it, in order to take it in flank or in reverse, or in making the two means concur at the same time, that is to say, by an attack in front at the same time that an acting wing should double and turn the line.

In order to attain these various ends, it is necessary to choose the order of battle most appropriate to the mode which shall be preferred.





There are counted at least twelve kinds of orders of battle, viz: 1st. The simple parallel order; 2d. The parallel order with the defensive or offensive crotchet; 3d. The order reinforced upon one or two wings; 4th. The order reinforced upon the centre; 5th. The oblique order, either simple or reinforced upon the assailing wing; 6th and 7th. The order perpendicular upon one or both wings; 8th. The concave order; 9th. The convex order; 10th. The order in echelon upon one or both wings; 11th. The order in echelon upon the centre; 12th. The order combined of a strong attack upon the centre and upon one of the extremities at the same time. (See plate opposite, figures 1 to 12.)

Each of these orders may be employed simply or be combined, as has been said, with the manœuvre of a strong column destined to turn the hostile line. In order to judge of the merit of each of them, it is necessary to be assured of their relations with the general principles which we have laid down.

We see, for example, that the parallel order (No. 1) is the worst; for there is no skill in causing the two parties to fight with equal chances, battalion against battalion; it is the absence of all tactics. There is, nevertheless, an important case in which this order is suitable; it is when an army having taken the initiative of grand strategic operations, shall have succeeded in carrying itself upon the communications of its adversary, and in cutting him off from his line of retreat while covering its own; then when the definitive shock between the armies has place, he who is found upon the rear may deliver a parallel battle, since having made the decisive manœuvre before the battle, his whole aim consists in repelling the effort of the enemy to open himself a passage; except this case the parallel order is the least advantageous. Nevertheless, that is not saying that a battle cannot be gained by adopting it, for it is necessary that some one should gain it, and the advantage will remain then to him who shall have the best troops, who shall know best how to engage them at the proper time, who shall manœuvre best with his reserves, or finally who shall be favored by fortune. The parallel order with a crotchet upon the flank, (fig. 2) is taken most ordinarily in a defensive position; it may, however, be also the result of an offensive combination, but then it will be found in advance of the line, whilst in the defensive it is in rear. There may be seen in the battle of Prague, one of the most extraordinary examples of the fate which such a crotchet may experience when it is well attacked.

The parallel order (No. 3.) reinforced upon one of the wings, or that (No. 4.) reinforced upon the centre, in order to pierce that of the enemy, are much more favorable than the two preceding, and are also much more conform-

able to the general principle which we have pointed out, although with an equality of forces, the part of the line which should be weakened, in order to reinforce the other, might also be compromised, if it were placed in battle parallelly to the enemy.

The oblique order (No. 5.) is that which suits the best an inferior army, which attacks a superior; for, while offering the advantage of carrying the mass of the forces upon a single point of the enemy's line, it procures two others equally important; in fact, we do not only refuse the weakened wing, by keeping it beyond the blows of the enemy, that wing fulfills still the double destination of holding in respect the part of the line which it is not wished to attack, and in the mean time of being able to serve as reserve at need to the acting wing. This order was employed by the celebrated Epaminondas at the battle of Leuctra and Mantinea; but we shall present the most brilliant example of the advantages of this system, which was given by Frederick the Great at the battle of Leuthen. (See Chapter 7, Treatise of Grand Operations.)

The order perpendicular upon one or both wings, such as is presented in figures 6 and 7, should only be considered a theoretical form to indicate the tactical direction upon which we should direct our efforts. Never would two armies be found in positions relatively perpendicular, such as we see them traced on the plate, for if the army B took in fact its first direction in a perpendicular line upon one or both of the extremities of the army A, the latter would change immediately the front of a part of its line, and even the army B, when it should have attained or passed the extremity, would not fail to change the direction of its columns to the right or to the left, in order to approach the enemy's line, so that the part C would take it in reverse, and there would result two true oblique lines like those pointed out in figure 6. It must be inferred hence, that a single division of the assailing army should be carried perpendicularly upon the enemy's flank, whilst that the remainder of this army should approach the other extremity, in order to disquiet it, which would lead to one of the oblique dispositions indicated by figures 5 and 12.

Besides, the attack upon two wings, whatever form we may give it, may be very advantageous, but it is when the assailant is found very superior in number; for if the fundamental principle consists in carrying the major part of the forces upon the decisive point, an inferior army would violate this principle in forming a double attack against a single superior mass; we shall demonstrate this truth in the course of the work.

The order, concave upon the centre, (No. 8.) has found partisans, since Hannibal owed to it the signal victory of Cannæ. This order may be, in



fact, very good when it is taken in consequence of the events of the battle, that is to say, when the enemy engages in the centre which yields before him, and when he allows himself to be enveloped by the wings. But if this formation is taken before the battle, the enemy, instead of throwing himself upon the centre, would only have to fall upon the wings which would of themselves present their extremities, and would be thus in the same situation as if they were found assailed upon a flank. Therefore, this position is seldom taken, except against an enemy who should himself be formed in convex order to deliver battle, as will be seen hereafter.

In truth, an army will rarely form a semi-circle, and will rather take a broken line reentrant towards the centre, (like figure 8 bis.) If we believe several writers, it was such a disposition which caused the English to triumph on the celebrated days of Crecy and Agincourt. It is certain that this order is better than a semi-circle, because it does not lend the flank so much, allows the marching in advance by echelon, and preserves with that all the effect of concentration of fire. However, its advantages disappear if the enemy, instead of throwing himself madly in the concave centre, confines himself to observing it from a distance, and throw himself with the mass of his forces upon one wing only. The battle of Essling, in 1809, offers still an example of the advantage of a concave line; but it cannot be inferred that Napoleon did badly in attacking its centre; we cannot judge an army fighting with the Danube at its back, and not having the power to move without uncovering its bridges, as if it had had full liberty of manœuvring.

The convex order salient at the centre, (No. 9,) is taken for fighting immediately after the passage of a river, when we are forced to refuse the wings, in order to rest on the river and cover the bridges, or better still, when we fight defensively, backed against a river, in order to repass it and cover the defile as at Leipsig; finally we can take it naturally, in order to arrest an enemy who forms a concave line. If the enemy directed his effort upon the salient, or upon one of the extremities alone, that order would cause the ruin of the army.\* The French took it at Fleurus in 1794, and succeeded, because the Prince of Coburg, instead of attacking in force the centre, or a single extremity, divided his efforts upon five or six divergent rays, and especially upon the two wings at the

\* An attack upon the two extremities might succeed well also in some circumstances, either when one should have sufficient forces to attempt it, or when the enemy should be unable to uncover his centre in order to sustain his wings. But as a general thing, a false attack, in order to hold the centre and a grand effort upon a single extremity, would be especially the most favorable against such a convex line.

same time. It was nearly in the same convex order that they fought at Essling, as well as on the second and third days of the famous battle of Leipsig; it had, on the last occasions, the infallible results which it ought to have.

The order of echelons upon the two wings (No. 10) is in the same case as the perpendicular order; (No. 7); it must be observed nevertheless that the echelons approaching towards the centre, where would be held the reserve, this order would be better than the perpendicular, since the enemy would have less facility, space and time to throw himself in the interval of the centre and direct there a menacing counter-attack.

The order of echelons upon the centre only (No. 11) might especially be employed with success against an army which should occupy a line broken and too much extended, because his centre being found then isolated from the wings in a manner to be overcome separately, this army, cut thus in two, would probably be destroyed. But by the application of the same fundamental principle this order of attack would be less certain against an army occupying a compact and united position, for the reserves being found ordinarily within reach of the centre and the wings being able to act either by a concentric fire or by taking the offensive against the first echelons, could easily repulse them.

If this formation offers some resemblance to the famous triangular wedge or *caput porci* of the ancients and with the column of Winkelried; it differs from them however essentially, because in place of forming a full mass, which would be impracticable in our days on account of the artillery, it would offer on the contrary a great open space in the middle, which would facilitate the movements. This formation suitable, as has been said, for piercing the centre of a too extended line, could equally succeed against a line which should be condemned to immobility; but if the wings of the line attacked know how to act seasonably against the flanks of the first echelons, it would not be without its inconveniences. A parallel order considerably reinforced upon the centre would perhaps be better, (figures 4 and 12) for the parallel line, in this case would have at least the advantage of deceiving the enemy upon the true point of the projected effort and of preventing the wings from taking in flank the echelons of the centre.

This echelon order was adopted by Laudon for the attack of the intrenched camp of Burzelwitz (Treatise of Grand Operations Chapter 28). In such a case it is really suitable, since we are sure then that the defensive army being forced to remain in its intrenchments, there would be no attack to fear on his part against the flanks of the echelons. However



this formation having the inconvenience of indicating to the enemy the point of the line which he wishes to attack, it would be indispensable to make upon the wings simultaneous attacks strong enough to mislead the enemy upon the real point where the effort should be directed.

The order of attack in columns upon the centre and upon one extremity at the same time (No. 12) is more suitable than the preceding, especially when it is applied to a continuous hostile line; it may even be said that of all the orders of battle it is the most rational; in fact the attack upon the centre seconded by a wing that outflanks the enemy, prevents the latter from doing as Hannibal and Marshal Saxe did; that is to say, from rushing upon the assailant taking him in flank; the hostile wing which is formed pressed between the attack of the centre and that of the extremity, having almost the whole of the assailing masses to combat, will be overwhelmed and probably destroyed. This was the manœuvre which caused Napoleon to triumph at Wagram and at Ligny; it was what he wished to attempt at Borodino and which only succeeded imperfectly on account of the heroic defense of the troops of the left wing of the Russians, that of the division Paskevitch in the famous redoubt of the centre, then by the arrival of the corps of Baggavout upon the wing which he hoped to outflank. Finally he employed it also at Bantzen where he would have obtained unexampled success but for an incident which deranged the manœuvre of his left destined to cut off the route of Wurschen, and which had already everything disposed for that purpose.

We should observe that those different orders could not be taken literally as the geometrical figures indicate them. A general who should wish to establish his line of battle with the same regularity as upon paper, or upon a field of exercise, would unquestionably be deceived in his expectations and beaten, especially after the present method of making war. In the times of Louis XIV, and Frederick the Great, when armies encamped under tents, almost always united; when one found himself several days face to face with the enemy, when he had leisure to open marches or symmetrical roads in order to cause his columns to arrive at uniform distances; then a line of battle could be formed almost as regular as the figures traced. But now that armies bivouac, that their organization into several corps renders them more moveable, that they approach each other in consequence of orders given out of the visual ray and often without even having had time to reconnoitre exactly the position of the enemy, finally that the different arms are found mingled in the line of battle: then all orders drawn by compass must necessarily be found at fault. Therefore those kinds of figures have ever served only to indicate an approximate disposition.

If armies were compact masses which could be moved in a single body by the effect of a single will and as rapidly as thought, the art of gaining battles would be reduced to choosing the most favorable order of battle, and we might count upon the success of manœuvres combined previous to the combat. But it is quite otherwise: the greatest difficulty in the tactics of battles will ever be to assure the putting in simultaneous action all those numerous fractions which should concur in the attack upon which the hope of victory is founded, or more properly speaking, the execution of the capital manœuvre which, according to the primitive plan, should bring about success.

The precise transmission of orders, the manner in which the lieutenants of the general-in-chief shall conceive and execute them; the too great energy of some, the laxity or the defective *coup d'ail* of others; all may hinder that simultaneous action, without speaking of fortuitous accidents which may suspend the arrival of a corps.

From thence result two incontestible truths, the first is that the more simple a decisive manœuvre shall be, the more certain will be its success; the second is that the seasonableness of sudden dispositions, taken during the combat, is of more probable success than the effect of manœuvres combined in advance; unless the latter reposing upon interior strategic movements, have led the columns which are to decide the battle, upon points where their effect will be assured. Waterloo and Bautzen attest this last truth; from the moment when Bulow and Blucher had arrived upon the height of Frischermont, nothing could have prevented the loss of the battle by the French, they could struggle only to render the defeat more or less complete. In the same manner at Bautzen as soon as Ney had arrived at Klix, the retreat of the Allies on the night of the 20th of May, would alone have been able to save them, for on the 21st it was no longer time, and if Ney had better executed what he was advised, the victory would have been immense.

With regard to manœuvres for breaking a line, by counting upon the co-operation of columns departing from the same front as the rest of the army, to the end of operating by great circular movements around a hostile wing, their success is always doubtful, for it depends upon a precision, of calculation and of execution which is seldom met with; we shall speak of them in Article 33.

Independently of the difficulty of counting upon the exact application of a premeditated order of battle, it often happens that battles commence without determinate objects, even on the part of the assailant, although the shock was anticipated. This uncertainty results either from the pre-



cedents of the battle or from want of knowledge of the position of the enemy and of his projects, or finally from the waiting for a portion of the army which might yet be in rear.

Hence many people have concluded against the possibility of reducing the formations of orders of battle into different systems, and against the influence which the adoption of such or such another of those orders could exercise upon the issue of a combat; a false conclusion, in my opinion, even in the cases before cited. Indeed, in those battles commenced without a decided plan, it is probable that at the commencement of the action the armies are found in line nearly parallel to each other, more or less reinforced upon one or the other point; the defender ignorant upon what side the storm will burst, will hold a good part of his forces in reserve to guard against events; he who is resolved to attack will do the same at first in order to have his masses disposable; but as soon as the assailant shall have determined the point upon which he shall decide to strike, then his masses will be directed, either upon the centre, or upon one of the wings, or upon both at the same time. Now, whatever may happen there will ever result approximately one of the dispositions prescribed in the different figures of the preceding plate. Even in unexpected rencounters the same thing would happen, which will demonstrate, I hope, that this classification of the various systems or orders of battle is neither chimerical nor useless.

Indeed there is nothing even in the battles of Napoleon which does not prove this assertion, although they are less than all others susceptible of being figured by lines traced with the compass; we see, for example, that at Rivoli, Austerlitz, Ratisbon, he concentrated his forces upon the centre in order to watch the moment for falling upon that of the enemy. At the Pyramids he formed an oblique line in echelon squares; at Essling, at Leipsic, at Brienne, he presented a kind of convex order nearly like that in figure 7, at Wagram we see him adopt an order quite like that in figure 12, directing two masses upon his centre and his right, refusing his left, which he wished to repeat at Borodino, as well as at Waterloo before the arrival of the Prussians. At Eylau, although the encounter was almost unforeseen on account of the unlooked for offensive return of the Russian army, he outflanked the left almost perpendicularly, whilst upon another side he sought to break the centre; but there was no simultaneousness in those attacks, that of the centre being already repulsed at eleven o'clock, whilst Davoust was not actively engaged upon the left until towards one o'clock.

At Dresden he attacked by the two wings, for the first time perhaps in

his life, because his center was sheltered by a fort and an intrenched camp; moreover, the attack of his left was combined with that of Vandamme upon the line of retreat of the Allies.

At Marengo, if Napoleon himself is to be trusted, the oblique order which he took in resting his right upon Castel Ceriolo, saved him from an almost inevitable defeat. Ulm and Jena were battles gained strategically, before being delivered even, and tactics had but little part in them; at Ulm there was not even a battle.

I think then I can conclude that, if it be absurd to expect to draw upon the ground rectilinear orders of battle such as are traced upon a plan, a skillful general can nevertheless have recourse to dispositions which would produce a distribution of the acting masses, similar very nearly to what it would have been in one or another of the orders of battle indicated. He should apply himself in those dispositions, whether foreseen or unexpected, to judge soundly of the important point of the field of battle, which he will be able to do by comprehending the relations of the hostile line with the decisive strategic directions; he will then direct his attention and efforts upon that point, by employing a third of his forces to hold in check or to observe the enemy, then by throwing the other two-thirds upon the point the possession of which would be the pledge of victory. Acting thus he will have fulfilled all the conditions that the science of grand tactics can impose upon the most skillful captain; he will have obtained the most perfect application of the principles of the art. We have already indicated in the preceding chapter the means of recognizing easily those decisive points.

Since I have given the definition of the ten orders of battle above mentioned, the thought has occurred to me to reply to some assertions in the memoirs of Napoleon published by General Montholon, which refer to this subject:

The great Captain seems to suppose that the oblique order is a modern conception, an inapplicable utopia, which I equally deny, for the oblique order is as ancient as Thebes and Sparta, and I have seen it applied under my own eyes; those assertions will appear all the more astonishing that Napoleon, as we have just said, has himself boasted of having applied with success, at Marengo, this same order the existence of which he denies.

If we took the oblique system in the absolute sense which General Ruchel gave to it in the Academy of Berlin, certainly Napoleon would be right in regarding it as an hyperbole: but I repeat, a line of battle was never a perfect geometrical figure; and if we have used such figures in tactical discussions, it was in order to put in force an idea and to explain



it by a symbol. It is certain nevertheless that every line of battle which should neither be parallel nor perpendicular to that of the enemy, would of necessity be oblique. Now if an army attacks an extremity of the enemy, by reinforcing the wing charged with the attack and refusing the enfeebled wing, the direction of its line will be in reality a little oblique, since one extremity will be more removed from the hostile line than the other. The oblique order is so far from a chimera, that every order in echelons upon a wing will always be oblique (pl. 2, fig. 10,) now I have seen more than one combat thus disposed in echelons.

As for the other figures traced upon the same plate, it could not be contested that at Essling, as well as at Fleurus, the general disposition of the Austrians was concave, and that of the French convex. But those two orders may form parallel lines as well as two right lines: now these orders would be systematically parallel if no part of the line were not more reinforced nor brought nearer to the enemy than another.

As for the rest, let us leave geometrical figures, and acknowledge that the true scientific theory of battles will always be limited to the following points:

1. The offensive order of battle should aim to dislodge the enemy from his position by every rational means.
2. The manœuvres which the art indicates are to overwhelm a wing only, or else the centre and a wing at the same time. The enemy may also be dislodged by manœuvres for outflanking and turning him.
3. We shall succeed all the better in these enterprises if we are able to conceal them from the enemy until the moment of assailing him.
4. To attack the centre and the two wings at the same time, without having very superior forces, would be a total absence of the art, unless we should reinforce considerably one of the attacks, taking care not to compromise the others.
5. The oblique order is nothing else but a disposition tending to unite the half at least of one's forces in order to overwhelm a wing, holding the other fraction out of the reach of the enemy, either by echelons, or by the inclined direction of the line (figs. 5 and 12, pl. 2).
6. The divers formations, convex, concave, perpendicular, &c., all present the same combination of attacks parallel or reinforced, upon a portion only of the hostile line.
7. The defense desiring the contrary of the attack, the dispositions of a defensive order should have for their object, to multiply the difficulties

of the approach, then to provide strong reserves well concealed, in order to fall, at the decisive moment, where the enemy should expect to find but a feeble point.

8. The best mode to employ for constraining a hostile line to quit its position is difficult to determine in an absolute manner. Every order of battle or of formation which could combine the advantages of fire with those of the impulsion of attack and the moral effect it produces, would be a perfect order. A skilful mixture of deployed lines and of columns, acting alternately according to circumstances, will ever be a good system. As regards its practical application, the *coup d'œil* of the chief, the *moral* of the officers and soldiers, their instruction in all kinds of manœuvres and fires, the localities or the nature of the ground, will always have a great influence upon the variables which might present themselves.

9. The essential object of an offensive battle being to force the enemy from his position, and especially to cut him up as much as possible, it will be our especial duty ordinarily to count upon the employment of material force as the most efficacious means for succeeding in it.

It happens however that the chances for the employment of force alone, would be so doubtful, that we would succeed more easily by manœuvres tending to outflank and to turn that one of the wings which should be nearest to the line of retreat of the enemy, which would decide him to a retrograde movement for fear of being cut off.

History abounds in examples of the success of like movements, especially against generals of a feeble character: and although victories obtained by this means only are less decisive, and the hostile army is never seriously broken up by them, those half-successes suffice to prove that such manœuvres ought not to be neglected, and that a skilful general should know how to employ them at the proper time, and especially to combine them as much as possible with attacks by main force.

10. The union of these two means, that is to say, the employment of material force upon the front, seconded by a turning manœuvre, will give more surely the victory than if we limited ourselves to employing them separately; but in both cases it is necessary to guard against movements too disconnected, in the face of the least respectable enemy.

11. The various means of carrying a hostile position, that is to say of breaking its line and compelling it to retreat by the use of material force are, to shake it at first by the effect of a superior artillery fire, to introduce into it some confusion by a well directed and timely cavalry charge,



then to approach finally this line thus shaken, with masses of infantry preceded by skirmishers and flanked by a few squadrons.\*

In the meanwhile admitting the success of an attack so well combined against the first line, it will remain yet to conquer the second, and even the reserve: now it is here that the embarrassment of the attack would be more serious, if the moral effect of the defeat of the first line did not often carry with it the defeat of the second, and did not cause the general attacked to lose his presence of mind.

In fact, in spite of their first success, the assailing troops would also be a little disunited on their side; it will often be very difficult to replace them by those of the second line, not only because the latter do not always follow the march of the acting masses under the fire of musketry, but above all because it is ever embarrassing to replace one division by another in midst of a combat, and at the instant when the enemy might combine his greatest efforts to repel the attack.

Everything then induces the belief that, if the troops and the general of the defensive army did equally well their duty and displayed equal presence of mind, if they were not menaced on their flanks and their line of retreat, the advantage of the second shock would almost always be on their side: but for that purpose it is necessary to seize, with a sure and rapid *coup d'ail* the instant when it is proper to throw the second line and the cavalry upon the victorious battalions of the adversary, for a few minutes lost may become irreparable, to such a degree that the troops of the second line would be carried away with those of the first.

12. From what precedes, there results for the attacking party the following truth: "it is that the most difficult as well as the most sure of all the means of success, is to cause the line already engaged to be well sustained by the troops of the second line, and the latter by the reserve; then to calculate accurately the employment of masses of cavalry and that of batteries, to facilitate and to second the decisive effort against the second hostile line, for here is presented the greatest of all the problems of the tactics of battles."

It is in this important act that theory becomes difficult and uncertain, because it is found then insufficient and will never be equal to natural genius for war, nor the instructive *coup d'ail* which experience in combats will give to a general brave and of a tried *sang-froid*.

\* At the moment when I decide to republish this article, I receive a pamphlet from General Okounieff, upon the employment of artillery for breaking a line. I shall say a few words upon it in Art. 46.

The simultaneous employment of the greatest possible number of forces, of all the arms combined, except a small reserve of each of them, which it is proper always to have on hand,\* will be then, at the decisive moment of the battle, the problem which every skilful general will apply himself to resolve, and which should make his rule of conduct. Now this decisive moment is very generally that when the first line of one of the parties should be broken, and when the efforts of the two adversaries should tend, either to complete the victory or to wrest it from the enemy. There is no need of saying that in order to render the decisive blow more sure and more efficacious a simultaneous attack upon a flank of the enemy would have the most powerful effect.

13. In the defensive the fire of musketry will always play a greater part than in the offensive where the object is to march if we wish to carry a position; now to march and to fire are two things which skirmishers alone can do at the same time: it is necessary to renounce it for the principal masses. The object of the defender not being to carry positions, but to break and put in disorder the troops which advance against him, artillery and musketry will be the natural arms for his first line; then when the enemy shall press the latter too closely, it will be necessary to launch against him the columns of the second with a part of the cavalry; every thing leads to the belief that he will be repulsed.

I could not, without entering into vague theories, which would besides pass the limits of this treatise, say any thing more upon battles, unless it be to offer a sketch of the combination of the formation and the employment of the three arms, which will make the subject of Chapter 7.

With regard to details of application and execution of the various orders of battle, nothing more complete could be recommended than the work of the Marquis de Tiernay; it is the remarkable part of his book. Without believing that all which he indicates can be practiced in presence of an enemy, yet it is just to acknowledge that it is the best tactical work that has been published in France up to this day.

\* The grand reserves should naturally also be engaged when it is necessary, but it is well always to keep two or three battalions and five or six squadrons in hand. General Moreau decided the battle of Engen with four companies of the 58th regiment, and it is known what the 9th Light and the cavalry of Kellerman did at Marengo.