

## ARTICLE XLVII.

## OF THE COMBINED EMPLOYMENT OF THE THREE ARMS.

In order to terminate entirely this summary, it would remain to speak of the combined employment of the three arms: but how many minute variations would not this subject present if one pretended to penetrate into all the details which the application of the general maxims indicated for each of those arms in particular, require?

Several works, and the German particularly, have sounded this bottomless abyss, and have obtained passable results, but by multiplying to infinity examples taken in the small partial combats of the late wars. Those examples in effect supply maxims, when experience demonstrates that it would be impossible to give fixed ones. To say that the commander of a corps composed of the three arms, ought to employ them in such a manner that they naturally support and second each other, would seem a truism; and it is, nevertheless, the only fundamental dogma which it is possible to establish, for to wish to prescribe to that chief the manner in which he ought to go to work in every circumstance, would be to engage in an inextricable labyrinth. Now, as the objects and the limits of this sketch do not allow me to touch such questions, I can do no better than to refer officers to the special works which have treated them with the most success.

To place the different arms according to the ground, according to the object which is proposed, and that which may be supposed of the enemy, to combine their simultaneous action according to the characteristic qualities of each—this is all that the art can advise. It is in the study of wars, and especially in the practice, that a superior officer will be able to acquire these notions, as well as the *coup d'œil* which inspires their seasonable application. I think I have fulfilled the task which I have imposed upon myself, and I am going to pass successively to the narration of the memorable wars, in which my readers will find at each step occasion to be assured that military history, accompanied by sound criticism, is indeed the true school of war.

## CONCLUSION

We have endeavored to retrace the principal points which have appeared to us susceptible of being presented as fundamental maxims of war. War, however, in its ensemble, is not a science, but an art. If strategy, especially, can be subjected to dogmatic maxims which approach the axioms of positive sciences, it is not the same as a whole with the operations of a war, and combats among others will often escape all scientific combinations, to offer us acts essentially dramatic, in which personal qualities, moral inspirations, and a thousand other causes, will play at times the first part. The passions which shall agitate masses, called to hurl themselves against each other—the warlike qualities of those masses—the character, energy and the talents of their chiefs—the greater or less martial spirit, not only of nations, but even of epochs\*—in a word, all that which may be called the poetry and the metaphysics of war, will ever have an influence upon its results.

Is it saying, for all that, that there are no tactical rules, and that no tactical theory could be useful? What reasonable military man would dare pronounce such a blasphemy? Will it be believed that Eugene and Marlborough have triumphed only by inspiration, or by the moral superiority of their battalions? Will there not be found, on the contrary, in the victories of Turin, of Hochstaedt, of Ramillies, manœuvres which resemble those of Talavera, of Waterloo, of Jena, or of Austerlitz, and which were the causes of victory? Now, when the application of a maxim, and the manœuvre which has been its result, have a hundred times given the victory to skillful captains, and offer in their favor all the

\* The famous Spanish proverb, *he was brave on such a day*, may be applied to nations as well as to individuals. One could not compare the French at Rosback with those at Jena nor the Prussians at Prenzlau with those at Dennewitz.

probable chances, will their occasional failure be sufficient for denying their efficacy, and for disputing all influence of the study of the art; will every theory be vain because it will procure but three fourths of the chances of success?

If the *moral* of an army and of its chiefs have also an influence upon these chances, is it not definitively because it will produce a physical action subjected, like the combination of tactics, to laws common to *military statics*? The impetuous attack of twenty thousand electrified brave men upon the extremity of a hostile line, will more surely give the victory than the manœuvre of forty thousand demoralized men against that same extremity, because the first will exercise a real action, and the latter will remain passive, if they do not even fly.

Strategy, as we have said, is the art of conducting the greatest part of the forces of an army upon the most important point of the theatre of war, or of a zone of operations.

Tactics is the art of using those masses upon the point where well combined marches will have brought them; that is to say, the art of putting them in action at the moment and at the decisive point of the field of battle upon which the definitive shock is to have place. When troops think more of flying than of fighting, they are no longer acting masses, in the sense we give to this expression.

A general instructed in theory, but devoid of *coup d'œil*, of *sang froid* and of skill, may make a fine strategic plan, and be at fault in all the laws of tactics, when he finds himself in the presence of the enemy; then his projects will be baffled, and his defeat probable. If he have character, he will be able to diminish the bad consequences of his check; if he lose his wits, he will lose his whole army.

The same general may on the contrary be as good a tactician as he has been strategician, and may have prepared victory by every means in his power; in this case when he shall be ever so little seconded by his troops and lieutenants, he will probably gain a signal victory; but if on the contrary he command but an undisciplined rabble, wanting in order and courage, if he be envied and deceived by perfidious lieutenants,\* he will doubtless see vanish all his hopes, and his most splendid

\* It oftener happens than is thought, that a general-in-chief is deceived by his lieutenants, who, listening but to their egotism, forget that they are betraying at the same time the country and the army, through the effect of the basest jealousy and the most contemptible ambition. The unskillfulness of a lieutenant, who should be incapable of conceiving the merit of a prescribed manœuvre, and should commit grave faults of execution, would have the same results in overturning the finest combinations.

combinations will be able but to diminish the disasters of an almost inevitable defeat. This defeat would be all the more sure when with such instruments he should have to combat an adversary, perhaps less skillful than himself, but having troops inured to war, or enthusiasts for their cause.

No tactical system could guarantee the victory when the *moral* of the army is bad, and even when it should be excellent, victory may depend upon an incident like the rupture of the bridges of the Danube at Essling. A systematic general could prohibit columns from adopting the shallow or firing order, or else confine it to purely defensive means, in order to adopt exclusively the semi-profound columns, without being sure, nevertheless of success.

These truths do not prevent the existence of good maxims of war which, with equal chances, will be able to procure victory; and if it be true that these theories could not teach with a mathematical precision what it would be suitable to do in every possible case, it is certain at least that they will always point out the faults that are to be avoided: now this would already be an immense result: for such maxims would thus become, in the hands of generals commanding brave troops, more or less certain pledges of success.

The correctness of this assertion being incontestible, it remains then but to know how to recognize the good maxims from the bad; it is in that, it is true, which consists all genius for war, but there are meanwhile directing principles for arriving at this knowledge. Every maxim of war will be good when it shall have for result, the assuring the employment of the largest sum of means of action at the opportune moment and point. We have presented in chapter III, all the strategic combinations which can lead to this result. As for what concerns the tactical, the principal of those combinations will ever be the choice of the most suitable order of battle, considering the project that shall be had in view. Afterwards, when it comes to the local action of the masses upon the ground, those means of action may be equally well, a charge of cavalry seasonably made, a strong battery posted and unmasked at the proper moment, a column of infantry charging with impetuosity, or a division deployed furnishing, with steadiness and *sang-froid*, a murderous fire, finally tactical movements which should menace the enemy in flank and reverse, as well as every manœuvre which should shake the *moral* of one's adversaries. Each of these acts may, according to circumstances, become the cause of victory; to determine the cases in which it would be necessary to give the preference to either, would be an impossible thing.

In order to play well this great drama of war, the first of duties then will be to become well acquainted with the theatre upon which we are to act, to the end of judging of the advantages of the double *échiquier* upon which the two parties shall move, appreciating the advantages of the enemy as well as those of our own party. This knowledge acquired, we must consider as to the means of preparing a base of operations; afterwards it will be the object to choose the most suitable zone upon which to direct our principal efforts, and to embrace this zone in a manner the most conformed to the principles of war, by choosing well our lines and front of operations. The assailing army should especially attach itself to breaking up seriously the hostile army, by adopting to this end skillful objective points of manœuvre; it will then take for the objective of its enterprises, geographical points proportioned to the successes which it shall have obtained.

The defensive army, on the contrary, should calculate all the means of neutralizing this first impulsion of its adversary, by procrastinating operations, as much as possible without compromising the fate of the country, and by putting off the decisive shock, until the moment when a part of the hostile forces should be found broken down by fatigues, or scattered for occupying the invaded provinces, masking fortifications, covering sieges, protecting the line of operations and the dépôts, &c.

Until then, all that we have just said may be the object of a first plan of operations: but that which no plan could foresee with any certainty, is the nature and issue of the definitive shock which will result from those enterprises. If your lines of operations have been skillfully chosen, your movements well disguised; if the enemy, on the contrary, make false movements which permit you to fall upon the yet dispersed fractions of his army, you will be able to conquer without pitched battles, by the sole ascendancy of your strategic advantages. But if the two parties find themselves in equally good condition at the moment when the encounter shall have place, then there will result one of those great tragedies like Borodino, Wagram, Waterloo, Bautzen, and Dresden, in which the precepts of grand tactics indicated in Chapter IV, will certainly be able to exercise a notable influence.

If certain obstinate military men, after having read this book, after having studied attentively the discussed history of a few campaigns of the great masters, maintain still that there are neither principles nor good maxims of war, then one could only pity them and reply to them by the famous saying of Frederick the Great: "A mule which should

have made twenty campaigns under Prince Eugène, would be none the better tactician therefor."

Good theories founded upon principles, justified by events, and joined to discussed military history, will be, in my opinion, the true school for generals. If these means do not form great men, who are always formed by themselves when circumstances favor them, they will at least make generals sufficiently skillful to hold the second rank among the great captains.