CARL VON CLAUSEWITZ

ON WAR

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INTRODUCTION

The Germans interpret their new national colours—black, red, and white—by the saying, “Durch Nacht und Blut zum Licht.” (“Through night and blood to light”), and no work yet written conveys to the thinker a clearer conception of all that the red streak in their flag stands for than this deep and philosophical analysis of “War” by Clausewitz.

It reveals “War,” stripped of all accessories, as the exercise of force for the attainment of a political object, unrestrained by any law save that of expediency, and thus gives the key to the interpretation of German political aims, past, present, and future, which is unconditionally necessary for every student of the modern conditions of Europe. Step by step, every event since Waterloo follows with logical consistency from the teachings of Napoleon, formulated for the first time, some twenty years afterwards, by this remarkable thinker.

What Darwin accomplished for Biology generally Clausewitz did for the Life-History of Nations nearly half a century before him, for both have proved the existence of the same law in each case, viz., “The survival of the fittest”—the “fittest,” as Huxley long since pointed out, not being necessarily synonymous with the ethically “best.” Neither of these thinkers was concerned with the ethics of the struggle which each studied so exhaustively, but to both men the phase or condition presented itself neither as moral nor immoral, any more than are famine, disease, or other natural phenomena, but as emanating from a force inherent in all living organisms which can only be mastered by understanding its nature. It is in that spirit that, one after the other, all the Nations of the Continent, taught by such drastic lessons as Koniggratz and Sedan, have accepted the lesson, with the result that to-day Europe is an armed camp, and peace is maintained by the equilibrium

of forces, and will continue just as long as this equilibrium exists, and no longer.

Whether this state of equilibrium is in itself a good or desirable thing may be open to argument. I have discussed it at length in my “War and the World’s Life”; but I venture to suggest that to no one would a renewal of the era of warfare be a change for the better, as far as existing humanity is concerned. Meanwhile, however, with every year that elapses the forces at present in equilibrium are changing in magnitude—the pressure of populations which have to be fed is rising, and an explosion along the line of least resistance is, sooner or later, inevitable.

As I read the teaching of the recent Hague Conference, no responsible Government on the Continent is anxious to form in themselves that line of least resistance; they know only too well what War would mean; and we alone, absolutely unconscious of the trend of the dominant thought of Europe, are pulling down the dam which may at any moment let in on us the flood of invasion.

Now no responsible man in Europe, perhaps least of all in Germany, thanks us for this voluntary destruction of our defences, for all who are of any importance would very much rather end their days in peace than incur the burden of responsibility which War would entail. But they realise that the gradual dissemination of the principles taught by Clausewitz has created a condition of molecular tension in the minds of the Nations they govern analogous to the “critical temperature of water heated above boiling-point under pressure,” which may at any moment bring about an explosion which they will be powerless to control.

The case is identical with that of an ordinary steam boiler, delivering so and so many pounds of steam to its engines as long as the envelope can contain the pressure; but let a breach in its continuity arise—relieving the boiling water of all restraint—and in a moment the whole mass flashes into vapour, developing a power no work of man can oppose.

The ultimate consequences of defeat no man can foretell. The only way to avert them is to ensure victory; and, again following out the principles of Clausewitz, victory can only be ensured by the creation in peace of an organisation which will bring every available man, horse, and gun (or ship and gun, if the war be on the sea) in the shortest possible time, and with the utmost possible momentum, upon the decisive field of action—which in turn leads to the final doctrine formulated by Von der Goltz in excuse for the action of the late President Kruger in 1899:

"The Statesman who, knowing his instrument to be ready, and seeing War inevitable, hesitates to strike first is guilty of a crime against his country."

It is because this sequence of cause and effect is absolutely unknown to our Members of Parliament, elected by popular representation, that all our efforts to ensure a lasting peace by securing efficiency with economy in our National Defences have been rendered nugatory.

This estimate of the influence of Clausewitz's sentiments on contemporary thought in Continental Europe may appear exaggerated to those who have not familiarised themselves with M. Gustav de Bon's exposition of the laws governing the formation and conduct of crowds I do not wish for one minute to be understood as asserting that Clausewitz has been conscientiously studied and understood in any Army, not even in the Prussian, but his work has been the ultimate foundation on which every drill regulation in Europe, except our own, has been reared. It is this ceaseless repetition of his fundamental ideas to which one-half of the male population of every Continental Nation has been subjected for two to three years of their lives, which has tuned their minds to vibrate in harmony with his precepts, and those who know and appreciate this fact at its true value have only to strike the necessary chords in order to evoke a response sufficient to overpower any other ethical conception which those who have not organised their forces beforehand can appeal to.

The recent set-back experienced by the Socialists in Germany is an illustration of my position. The Socialist leaders of that country are far behind the responsible Governors in their knowledge of the management of crowds. The latter had long before (in 1893, in fact) made their arrangements to prevent the spread of Socialistic propaganda beyond certain useful limits. As long as the Socialists only threatened capital they were not seriously interfered with, for the Government knew quite well that the undisputed sway of the employer was not for the ultimate good of the State. The standard of comfort must not be pitched too low if men are to be ready to die for their country. But the moment the Socialists began to interfere seriously with the discipline of the Army the word went round, and the Socialists lost heavily at the polls.

If this power of predetermined reaction to acquired ideas can be evoked successfully in a matter of internal interest only, in which the “obvious interest” of the vast majority of the population is so clearly on the side of the Socialist, it must be evident how enormously greater it will prove when set in motion against an external enemy, where the “obvious interest” of the people is, from the very nature of things, as manifestly on the side of the Government; and the Statesman who failed to take into account the force of the “resultant thought wave” of a crowd of some seven million men, all trained to respond to their ruler’s call, would be guilty of treachery as grave as one who failed to strike when he knew the Army to be ready for immediate action.

As already pointed out, it is to the spread of Clauswitz’s ideas that the present state of more or less immediate readiness for war of all European Armies is due, and since the organisation of these forces is uniform this “more or less” of readiness exists in precise proportion to the sense of duty which animates the several Armies. Where the spirit of duty and self-sacrifice is low the troops are unready and inefficient; where, as in Prussia, these qualities, by the

training of a whole century, have become instinctive, troops really are ready to the last button, and might be poured down upon any one of her neighbours with such rapidity that the very first collision must suffice to ensure ultimate success—a success by no means certain if the enemy, whoever he may be, is allowed breathing-time in which to set his house in order.

An example will make this clearer. In 1887 Germany was on the very verge of War with France and Russia. At that moment her superior efficiency, the consequence of this inborn sense of duty—surely one of the highest qualities of humanity—was so great that it is more than probable that less than six weeks would have sufficed to bring the French to their knees. Indeed, after the first fortnight it would have been possible to begin transferring troops from the Rhine to the Niemen; and the same case may arise again. But if France and Russia had been allowed even ten days' warning the German plan would have been completely defeated. France alone might then have claimed all the efforts that Germany could have put forth to defeat her.

Yet there are politicians in England so grossly ignorant of the German reading of the Napoleonic lessons that they expect that Nation to sacrifice the enormous advantage they have prepared by a whole century of self-sacrifice and practical patriotism by an appeal to a Court of Arbitration, and the further delays which must arise by going through the mediæval formalities of recalling Ambassadors and exchanging ultimatums.

Most of our present-day politicians have made their money in business—a "form of human competition greatly resembling War," to paraphrase Clausewitz. Did they, when in the throes of such competition, send formal notice to their rivals of their plans to get the better of them in commerce? Did Mr. Carnegie, the archpriest of Peace at any price, when he built up the Steel Trust, notify his competitors when and how he proposed to strike the blows which successively made him master of millions? Surely the

Directors of a Great Nation may consider the interests of their shareholders—i.e., the people they govern—as sufficiently serious not to be endangered by the deliberate sacrifice of the preponderant position of readiness which generations of self-devotion, patriotism and wise forethought have won for them?

As regards the strictly military side of this work, though the recent researches of the French General Staff into the records and documents of the Napoleonic period have shown conclusively that Clausewitz had never grasped the essential point of the Great Emperor's strategic method, yet it is admitted that he has completely fathomed the spirit which gave life to the form; and notwithstanding all the variations in application which have resulted from the progress of invention in every field of national activity (not in the technical improvements in armament alone), this spirit still remains the essential factor in the whole matter. Indeed, if anything, modern appliances have intensified its importance, for though, with equal armaments on both sides, the form of battles must always remain the same, the facility and certainty of combination which better methods of communicating orders and intelligence have conferred upon the Commanders has rendered the control of great masses immeasurably more certain than it was in the past.

Men kill each other at greater distances, it is true—but killing is a constant factor in all battles. The difference between "now and then" lies in this, that, thanks to the enormous increase in range (the essential feature in modern armaments), it is possible to concentrate by surprise, on any chosen spot, a man-killing power fully twentyfold greater than was conceivable in the days of Waterloo; and whereas in Napoleon's time this concentration of man-killing power (which in his hands took the form of the great case-shot attack) depended almost entirely on the shape and condition of the ground, which might or might not be favourable, nowadays such

concentration of fire-power is almost independent of the country altogether.

Thus, at Waterloo, Napoleon was compelled to wait till the ground became firm enough for his guns to gallop over; nowadays every gun at his disposal, and five times that number had he possessed them, might have opened on any point in the British position he had selected, as soon as it became light enough to see.

Or, to take a more modern instance, viz., the battle of St. Privat-Gravelotte, August 18, 1870, where the Germans were able to concentrate on both wings batteries of two hundred guns and upwards, it would have been practically impossible, owing to the section of the slopes of the French position, to carry out the old-fashioned case-shot attack at all. Nowadays there would be no difficulty in turning on the fire of two thousand guns on any point of the position, and switching this fire up and down the line like water from a fire-engine hose, if the occasion demanded such concentration.

But these alterations in method make no difference in the truth of the picture of War which Clausewitz presents, with which every soldier, and above all every Leader, should be saturated.

Death, wounds, suffering, and privation remain the same, whatever the weapons employed, and their reaction on the ultimate nature of man is the same now as in the struggle a century ago. It is this reaction that the Great Commander has to understand and prepare himself to control; and the task becomes ever greater as, fortunately for humanity, the opportunities for gathering experience become more rare.

In the end, and with every improvement in science, the result depends more and more on the character of the Leader and his power of resisting “the sensuous impressions of the battlefield.” Finally, for those who would fit themselves in advance for such responsibility, I know of no more inspiring advice than that given by Krishna to Arjuna ages ago, when the latter trembled before the awful

responsibility of launching his Army against the hosts of the Pandav's:

This Life within all living things, my Prince,
Hides beyond harm. Scorn thou to suffer, then,
For that which cannot suffer. Do thy part!
Be mindful of thy name, and tremble not.
Nought better can betide a martial soul
Than lawful war. Happy the warrior
To whom comes joy of battle. . . .
. . . But if thou shunn'st
This honourable field—a Kshittriya—
If, knowing thy duty and thy task, thou bidd'st
Duty and task go by—that shall be sin!
And those to come shall speak thee infamy
From age to age. But infamy is worse
For men of noble blood to bear than death!
. . . . .
Therefore arise, thou Son of Kunti! Brace
Thine arm for conflict; nerve thy heart to meet,
As things alike to thee, pleasure or pain,
Profit or ruin, victory or defeat.
So minded, gird thee to the fight, for so
Thou shalt not sin!
Col. F. N. Maude, C.B., late R.E.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

It will naturally excite surprise that a preface by a female hand should accompany a work on such a subject as the present. For my friends no explanation of the circumstance is required; but I hope by a simple relation of the cause to clear myself of the appearance of presumption in the eyes also of those to whom I am not known.

The work to which these lines serve as a preface occupied almost entirely the last twelve years of the life of my inexpressibly beloved husband, who has unfortunately been torn too soon from myself and his country. To complete it was his most earnest desire; but it was not his intention that it should be published during his life; and if I tried to persuade him to alter that intention, he often answered, half in jest, but also, perhaps, half in a foreboding of early death: “Thou shalt publish it.” These words (which in those happy days often drew tears from me, little as I was inclined to attach a serious meaning to them) make it now, in the opinion of my friends, a duty incumbent on me to introduce the posthumous works of my beloved husband, with a few prefatory lines from myself; and although there may be a difference of opinion on this point, still I am sure there will be no mistake as to the feeling which has prompted me to overcome the timidity which makes any such appearance, even in a subordinate part, so difficult for a woman.

It will be understood, as a matter of course, that I cannot have the most remote intention of considering myself as the real editress of a work which is far above the scope of my capacity: I only stand at its side as an affectionate companion on its entrance into the world. This position I may well claim, as a similar one was allowed me during its

formation and progress. Those who are acquainted with our happy married life, and know how we shared everything with each other—not only joy and sorrow, but also every occupation, every interest of daily life—will understand that my beloved husband could not be occupied on a work of this kind without its being known to me. Therefore, no one can like me bear testimony to the zeal, to the love with which he laboured on it, to the hopes which he bound up with it, as well as the manner and time of its elaboration. His richly gifted mind had from his early youth longed for light and truth, and, varied as were his talents, still he had chiefly directed his reflections to the science of war, to which the duties of his profession called him, and which are of such importance for the benefit of States. Scharnhorst was the first to lead him into the right road, and his subsequent appointment in 1810 as Instructor at the General War School, as well as the honour conferred on him at the same time of giving military instruction to H.R.H. the Crown Prince, tended further to give his investigations and studies that direction, and to lead him to put down in writing whatever conclusions he arrived at. A paper with which he finished the instruction of H.R.H. the Crown Prince contains the germ of his subsequent works. But it was in the year 1816, at Coblentz, that he first devoted himself again to scientific labours, and to collecting the fruits which his rich experience in those four eventful years had brought to maturity. He wrote down his views, in the first place, in short essays, only loosely connected with each other. The following, without date, which has been found amongst his papers, seems to belong to those early days.

“In the principles here committed to paper, in my opinion, the chief things which compose Strategy, as it is called, are touched upon. I looked upon them only as materials, and had just got to such a length towards the moulding them into a whole.

“These materials have been amassed without any regularly preconceived plan. My view was at first, without regard to system and strict connection, to put down the results of my reflections upon the most important points in quite brief, precise, compact propositions. The manner in which Montesquieu has treated his subject floated before me in idea. I thought that concise, sententious chapters, which I proposed at first to call grains, would attract the attention of the intelligent just as much by that which was to be developed from them, as by that which they contained in themselves. I had, therefore, before me in idea, intelligent readers already acquainted with the subject. But my nature, which always impels me to development and systematising, at last worked its way out also in this instance. For some time I was able to confine myself to extracting only the most important results from the essays, which, to attain clearness and conviction in my own mind, I wrote upon different subjects, to concentrating in that manner their spirit in a small compass; but afterwards my peculiarity gained ascendency completely—I have developed what I could, and thus naturally have supposed a reader not yet acquainted with the subject.

“The more I advanced with the work, and the more I yielded to the spirit of investigation, so much the more I was also led to system; and thus, then, chapter after chapter has been inserted.

“My ultimate view has now been to go through the whole once more, to establish by further explanation much of the earlier treatises, and perhaps to condense into results many analyses on the later ones, and thus to make a moderate whole out of it, forming a small octavo volume. But it was my wish also in this to avoid everything common, everything that is plain of itself, that has been said a hundred times, and is generally accepted; for my ambition was to write a book that would not be forgotten in two or three years, and which any one interested in the subject would at all events take up more than once.”

In Coblentz, where he was much occupied with duty, he could only give occasional hours to his private studies. It was not until 1818, after his appointment as Director of the General Academy of War at Berlin, that he had the leisure to expand his work, and enrich it from the history of modern wars. This leisure also reconciled him to his new avocation, which, in other respects, was not satisfactory to him, as, according to the existing organisation of the Academy, the scientific part of the course is not under the Director, but conducted by a Board of Studies. Free as he was from all petty vanity, from every feeling of restless, egotistical ambition, still he felt a desire to be really useful, and not to leave inactive the abilities with which God had endowed him. In active life he was not in a position in which this longing could be satisfied, and he had little hope of attaining to any such position: his whole energies were therefore directed upon the domain of science, and the benefit which he hoped to lay the foundation of by his work was the object of his life. That, notwithstanding this, the resolution not to let the work appear until after his death became more confirmed is the best proof that no vain, paltry longing for praise and distinction, no particle of egotistical views, was mixed up with this noble aspiration for great and lasting usefulness.

Thus he worked diligently on, until, in the spring of 1830, he was appointed to the artillery, and his energies were called into activity in such a different sphere, and to such a high degree, that he was obliged, for the moment at least, to give up all literary work. He then put his papers in order, sealed up the separate packets, labelled them, and took sorrowful leave of this employment which he loved so much. He was sent to Breslau in August of the same year, as Chief of the Second Artillery District, but in December recalled to Berlin, and appointed Chief of the Staff to Field-Marshal Count Gneisenau (for the term of his command). In March 1831, he accompanied his revered Commander to Posen. When he returned from there to Breslau in

November after the melancholy event which had taken place, he hoped to resume his work, and perhaps complete it in the course of the winter. The Almighty has willed it should be otherwise. On the 7th November he returned to Breslau; on the 16th he was no more; and the packets sealed by himself were not opened until after his death.

The papers thus left are those now made public in the following volumes, exactly in the condition in which they were found, without a word being added or erased. Still, however, there was much to do before publication, in the way of putting them in order and consulting about them; and I am deeply indebted to several sincere friends for the assistance they have afforded me, particularly Major O'Etzel, who kindly undertook the correction of the Press, as well as the preparation of the maps to accompany the historical parts of the work. I must also mention my much-loved brother, who was my support in the hour of my misfortune, and who has also done much for me in respect of these papers; amongst other things, by carefully examining and putting them in order, he found the commencement of the revision which my dear husband wrote in the year 1827, and mentions in the Notice hereafter annexed as a work he had in view. This revision has been inserted in the place intended for it in the first book (for it does not go any further).

There are still many other friends to whom I might offer my thanks for their advice, for the sympathy and friendship which they have shown me; but if I do not name them all, they will, I am sure, not have any doubts of my sincere gratitude. It is all the greater, from my firm conviction that all they have done was not only on my own account, but for the friend whom God has thus called away from them so soon.

If I have been highly blessed as the wife of such a man during one and twenty years, so am I still, notwithstanding my irreparable loss, by the treasure of my recollections and of my hopes, by the rich legacy of sympathy and friendship

which I owe the beloved departed, by the elevating feeling which I experience at seeing his rare worth so generally and honourably acknowledged.

The trust confided to me by a Royal Couple is a fresh benefit for which I have to thank the Almighty, as it opens to me an honourable occupation, to which I cheerfully devote myself. May this occupation be blessed, and may the dear little Prince who is now entrusted to my care, some day read this book, and be animated by it to deeds like those of his glorious ancestors.

Written at the Marble Palace,
Potsdam,
30th June, 1832
.
MARIE VON CLAUSEWITZ,
Born Countess Brühl,
Oberhofmeisterinn to H.R.H. the Princess William.

NOTICE

I look upon the first six books, of which a fair copy has now been made, as only a mass which is still in a manner without form, and which has yet to be again revised. In this revision the two kinds of War will be everywhere kept more distinctly in view, by which all ideas will acquire a clearer meaning, a more precise direction, and a closer application. The two kinds of War are, first, those in which the object is the overthrow of the enemy, whether it be that we aim at his destruction, politically, or merely at disarming him and forcing him to conclude peace on our terms; and next, those in which our object is merely to make some conquests on the frontiers of his country, either for the purpose of retaining them permanently, or of turning them to account as matter of exchange in the settlement of a peace. Transition from one kind to the other must certainly continue to exist, but the completely different nature of the tendencies of the two must everywhere appear, and must separate from each other things which are incompatible.

Besides establishing this real difference in Wars, another practically necessary point of view must at the same time be established, which is, that War is only a continuation of State policy by other means. This point of view being adhered to everywhere, will introduce much more unity into the consideration of the subject, and things will be more easily disentangled from each other. Although the chief application of this point of view does not commence until we get to the eighth book, still it must be completely developed in the first book, and also lend assistance throughout the revision of the first six books. Through such a revision the first six books will get rid of a good deal of dross, many rents and chasms will be closed up, and much

that is of a general nature will be transformed into distinct conceptions and forms.

The seventh book—on attack—for the different chapters of which sketches are already made, is to be considered as a reflection of the sixth, and must be completed at once, according to the above-mentioned more distinct points of view, so that it will require no fresh revision, but rather may serve as a model in the revision of the first six books.

For the eighth book—on the Plan of a War, that is, of the organisation of a whole War in general—several chapters are designed, but they are not at all to be regarded as real materials, they are merely a track, roughly cleared, as it were, through the mass, in order by that means to ascertain the points of most importance. They have answered this object, and I propose, on finishing the seventh book, to proceed at once to the working out of the eighth, where the two points of view above mentioned will be chiefly affirmed, by which everything will be simplified, and at the same time have a spirit breathed into it. I hope in this book to iron out many creases in the heads of strategists and statesmen, and at least to show the object of action, and the real point to be considered in War.

Now, when I have brought my ideas clearly out by finishing this eighth book, and have properly established the leading features of War, it will be easier for me to carry the spirit of these ideas into the first six books, and to make these same features show themselves everywhere. Therefore I shall defer till then the revision of the first six books.

Should the work be interrupted by my death, then what is found can only be called a mass of conceptions not brought into form; but as these are open to endless misconceptions, they will doubtless give rise to a number of crude criticisms: for in these things, every one thinks, when he takes up his pen, that whatever comes into his head is worth saying and printing, and quite as incontrovertible as that twice two make four. If such a one would take the

pains, as I have done, to think over the subject, for years, and to compare his ideas with military history, he would certainly be a little more guarded in his criticism.

Still, notwithstanding this imperfect form, I believe that an impartial reader thirsting for truth and conviction will rightly appreciate in the first six books the fruits of several years' reflection and a diligent study of War, and that, perhaps, he will find in them some leading ideas which may bring about a revolution in the theory of War.

Berlin, 10th July, 1827

Besides this notice, amongst the papers left the following unfinished memorandum was found, which appears of very recent date:

The manuscript on the conduct of the Grande Guerre, which will be found after my death, in its present state can only be regarded as a collection of materials from which it is intended to construct a theory of War. With the greater part I am not yet satisfied; and the sixth book is to be looked at as a mere essay: I should have completely remodelled it, and have tried a different line.

But the ruling principles which pervade these materials I hold to be the right ones: they are the result of a very varied reflection, keeping always in view the reality, and always bearing in mind what I have learnt by experience and by my intercourse with distinguished soldiers.

The seventh book is to contain the attack, the subjects of which are thrown together in a hasty manner: the eighth, the plan for a War, in which I would have examined War more especially in its political and human aspects.

The first chapter of the first book is the only one which I consider as completed; it will at least serve to show the manner in which I proposed to treat the subject throughout.

The theory of the Grande Guerre, or Strategy, as it is called, is beset with extraordinary difficulties, and we may affirm that very few men have clear conceptions of the separate subjects, that is, conceptions carried up to their

full logical conclusions. In real action most men are guided merely by the tact of judgment which hits the object more or less accurately, according as they possess more or less genius.

This is the way in which all great Generals have acted, and therein partly lay their greatness and their genius, that they always hit upon what was right by this tact. Thus also it will always be in action, and so far this tact is amply sufficient. But when it is a question, not of acting oneself, but of convincing others in a consultation, then all depends on clear conceptions and demonstration of the inherent relations, and so little progress has been made in this respect that most deliberations are merely a contention of words, resting on no firm basis, and ending either in every one retaining his own opinion, or in a compromise from mutual considerations of respect, a middle course really without any value.

Clear ideas on these matters are therefore not wholly useless; besides, the human mind has a general tendency to clearness, and always wants to be consistent with the necessary order of things.

Owing to the great difficulties attending a philosophical construction of the Art of War, and the many attempts at it that have failed, most people have come to the conclusion that such a theory is impossible, because it concerns things which no standing law can embrace. We should also join in this opinion and give up any attempt at a theory, were it not that a great number of propositions make themselves evident without any difficulty, as, for instance, that the defensive form, with a negative object, is the stronger form, the attack, with the positive object, the weaker—that great results carry the little ones with them—that, therefore, strategic effects may be referred to certain centres of gravity—that a demonstration is a weaker application of force than a real attack, that, therefore, there must be some special reason for resorting to the former—that victory consists not merely in the conquest on the field of

battle, but in the destruction of armed forces, physically and morally, which can in general only be effected by a pursuit after the battle is gained—that successes are always greatest at the point where the victory has been gained, that, therefore, the change from one line and object to another can only be regarded as a necessary evil—that a turning movement is only justified by a superiority of numbers generally or by the advantage of our lines of communication and retreat over those of the enemy—that flank positions are only justifiable on similar grounds—that every attack becomes weaker as it progresses.

INTRODUCTION OF THE AUTHOR

That the conception of the scientific does not consist alone, or chiefly, in system, and its finished theoretical constructions, requires nowadays no exposition. System in this treatise is not to be found on the surface, and instead of a finished building of theory, there are only materials.

The scientific form lies here in the endeavour to explore the nature of military phenomena to show their affinity with the nature of the things of which they are composed. Nowhere has the philosophical argument been evaded, but where it runs out into too thin a thread the Author has preferred to cut it short, and fall back upon the corresponding results of experience; for in the same way as many plants only bear fruit when they do not shoot too high, so in the practical arts the theoretical leaves and flowers must not be made to sprout too far, but kept near to experience, which is their proper soil.

Unquestionably it would be a mistake to try to discover from the chemical ingredients of a grain of corn the form of the ear of corn which it bears, as we have only to go to the field to see the ears ripe. Investigation and observation, philosophy and experience, must neither despise nor exclude one another; they mutually afford each other the rights of citizenship. Consequently, the propositions of this book, with their arch of inherent necessity, are supported either by experience or by the conception of War itself as external points, so that they are not without abutments.

It is, perhaps, not impossible to write a systematic theory of War full of spirit and substance, but ours, hitherto, have been very much the reverse. To say nothing of their unscientific spirit, in their striving after coherence and completeness of system, they overflow with commonplaces,

truisms, and twaddle of every kind. If we want a striking picture of them we have only to read Lichtenberg's extract from a code of regulations in case of fire.

If a house takes fire, we must seek, above all things, to protect the right side of the house standing on the left, and, on the other hand, the left side of the house on the right; for if we, for example, should protect the left side of the house on the left, then the right side of the house lies to the right of the left, and consequently as the fire lies to the right of this side, and of the right side (for we have assumed that the house is situated to the left of the fire), therefore the right side is situated nearer to the fire than the left, and the right side of the house might catch fire if it was not protected before it came to the left, which is protected. Consequently, something might be burnt that is not protected, and that sooner than something else would be burnt, even if it was not protected; consequently we must let alone the latter and protect the former. In order to impress the thing on one's mind, we have only to note if the house is situated to the right of the fire, then it is the left side, and if the house is to the left it is the right side.

In order not to frighten the intelligent reader by such commonplaces, and to make the little good that there is distasteful by pouring water upon it, the Author has preferred to give in small ingots of fine metal his impressions and convictions, the result of many years' reflection on War, of his intercourse with men of ability, and of much personal experience. Thus the seemingly weakly bound-together chapters of this book have arisen, but it is hoped they will not be found wanting in logical connection. Perhaps soon a greater head may appear, and instead of these single grains, give the whole in a casting of pure metal without dross.

BRIEF MEMOIR OF GENERAL CLAUSEWITZ

(BY TRANSLATOR)

The Author of the work here translated, General Carl Von Clausewitz, was born at Burg, near Magdeburg, in 1780, and entered the Prussian Army as Fahnenjunker (i.e., ensign) in 1792. He served in the campaigns of 1793-94 on the Rhine, after which he seems to have devoted some time to the study of the scientific branches of his profession. In 1801 he entered the Military School at Berlin, and remained there till 1803. During his residence there he attracted the notice of General Scharnhorst, then at the head of the establishment; and the patronage of this distinguished officer had immense influence on his future career, and we may gather from his writings that he ever afterwards continued to entertain a high esteem for Scharnhorst. In the campaign of 1806 he served as Aide-de-camp to Prince Augustus of Prussia; and being wounded and taken prisoner, he was sent into France until the close of that war. On his return, he was placed on General Scharnhorst's Staff, and employed in the work then going on for the reorganisation of the Army. He was also at this time selected as military instructor to the late King of Prussia, then Crown Prince. In 1812 Clausewitz, with several other Prussian officers, having entered the Russian service his first appointment was as Aide-de-camp to General Phul. Afterwards, while serving with Wittgenstein's army, he assisted in negotiating the famous convention of Tauroggen with York. Of the part he took in that affair he has left an interesting account in his work on the "Russian Campaign." It is there stated that, in order to bring the correspondence which had been carried on with York to a termination in one way or another, the Author was

despatched to York's headquarters with two letters, one was from General d'Auvray, the Chief of the Staff of Wittgenstein's army, to General Diebitsch, showing the arrangements made to cut off York's corps from Macdonald (this was necessary in order to give York a plausible excuse for seceding from the French); the other was an intercepted letter from Macdonald to the Duke of Bassano. With regard to the former of these, the Author says, "it would not have had weight with a man like York, but for a military justification, if the Prussian Court should require one as against the French, it was important."

The second letter was calculated at the least to call up in General York's mind all the feelings of bitterness which perhaps for some days past had been diminished by the consciousness of his own behaviour towards the writer.

As the Author entered General York's chamber, the latter called out to him, "Keep off from me; I will have nothing more to do with you; your d—d Cossacks have let a letter of Macdonald's pass through them, which brings me an order to march on Piktrepöhnen, in order there to effect our junction. All doubt is now at an end; your troops do not come up; you are too weak; march I must, and I must excuse myself from all further negotiation, which may cost me my head." The Author said that he would make no opposition to all this, but begged for a candle, as he had letters to show the General, and, as the latter seemed still to hesitate, the Author added, "Your Excellency will not surely place me in the embarrassment of departing without having executed my commission." The General ordered candles, and called in Colonel von Roeder, the chief of his staff, from the ante-chamber. The letters were read. After a pause of an instant, the General said, "Clausewitz, you are a Prussian, do you believe that the letter of General d'Auvray is sincere, and that Wittgenstein's troops will really be at the points he mentioned on the 31st?" The Author replied, "I pledge myself for the sincerity of this letter upon the knowledge I have of General d'Auvray and

the other men of Wittgenstein's headquarters; whether the dispositions he announces can be accomplished as he lays down I certainly cannot pledge myself; for your Excellency knows that in war we must often fall short of the line we have drawn for ourselves." The General was silent for a few minutes of earnest reflection; then he held out his hand to the Author, and said, "You have me. Tell General Diebitsch that we must confer early to-morrow at the mill of Poschenen, and that I am now firmly determined to separate myself from the French and their cause." The hour was fixed for 8 a.m. After this was settled, the General added, "But I will not do the thing by halves, I will get you Massenbach also." He called in an officer who was of Massenbach's cavalry, and who had just left them. Much like Schiller's Wallenstein, he asked, walking up and down the room the while, "What say your regiments?" The officer broke out with enthusiasm at the idea of a riddance from the French alliance, and said that every man of the troops in question felt the same.

"You young ones may talk; but my older head is shaking on my shoulders," replied the General.

After the close of the Russian campaign Clausewitz remained in the service of that country, but was attached as a Russian staff officer to Blucher's headquarters till the Armistice in 1813.

In 1814, he became Chief of the Staff of General Walmoden's Russo-German Corps, which formed part of the Army of the North under Bernadotte. His name is frequently mentioned with distinction in that campaign, particularly in connection with the affair of Goehrde.

Clausewitz re-entered the Prussian service in 1815, and served as Chief of the Staff to Thielman's corps, which was engaged with Grouchy at Wavre, on the 18th of June.

After the Peace, he was employed in a command on the Rhine. In 1818, he became Major-General, and Director of the Military School at which he had been previously educated.

In 1830, he was appointed Inspector of Artillery at Breslau, but soon after nominated Chief of the Staff to the Army of Observation, under Marshal Gneisenau on the Polish frontier.

The latest notices of his life and services are probably to be found in the memoirs of General Brandt, who, from being on the staff of Gneisenau's army, was brought into daily intercourse with Clausewitz in matters of duty, and also frequently met him at the table of Marshal Gneisenau, at Posen.

Amongst other anecdotes, General Brandt relates that, upon one occasion, the conversation at the Marshal's table turned upon a sermon preached by a priest, in which some great absurdities were introduced, and a discussion arose as to whether the Bishop should not be made responsible for what the priest had said. This led to the topic of theology in general, when General Brandt, speaking of himself, says, "I expressed an opinion that theology is only to be regarded as an historical process, as a moment in the gradual development of the human race. This brought upon me an attack from all quarters, but more especially from Clausewitz, who ought to have been on my side, he having been an adherent and pupil of Kiesewetter's, who had indoctrinated him in the philosophy of Kant, certainly diluted—I might even say in homœopathic doses." This anecdote is only interesting as the mention of Kiesewetter points to a circumstance in the life of Clausewitz that may have had an influence in forming those habits of thought which distinguish his writings.

"The way," says General Brandt, "in which General Clausewitz judged of things, drew conclusions from movements and marches, calculated the times of the marches, and the points where decisions would take place, was extremely interesting. Fate has unfortunately denied him an opportunity of showing his talents in high command, but I have a firm persuasion that as a strategist he would have greatly distinguished himself. As a leader on the field

of battle, on the other hand, he would not have been so much in his right place, from a manque d'habitude du commandement, he wanted the art d'enlever les troupes."

After the Prussian Army of Observation was dissolved, Clausewitz returned to Breslau, and a few days after his arrival was seized with cholera, the seeds of which he must have brought with him from the army on the Polish frontier. His death took place in November 1831.

His writings are contained in nine volumes, published after his death, but his fame rests most upon the three volumes forming his treatise on "War." In the present attempt to render into English this portion of the works of Clausewitz, the translator is sensible of many deficiencies, but he hopes at all events to succeed in making this celebrated treatise better known in England, believing, as he does, that so far as the work concerns the interests of this country, it has lost none of the importance it possessed at the time of its first publication.

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