This mass of forces was posted with the centre diagonally across and in front of the forking of the two causeways from Brussels to Charleroy and to Nivelles ; the right centre behind the chateau of Goumont, and the left, considerably refused, passed in rear of La Haye Sainte, along the cross road in the direction of Ohain. Behind the right centre, Lord Hill placed his corps, *en potence,* in columns, prepared to manœuvre to his right, on the small plain of Braine la Leud ; or to his left, to sustain the centre. In and about Braine la Leud was a Netherland division, with the right thrown forward, and covered by the rivulet Hain, and leav­ing the small plain open ; a kind of gorge to tempt the enemy between the two sides of the re-entering angle of the right wing. The Prussians were expected to debouche through the woods of Lasne towards Planchenois, which would form the left into another gorge, or re-entering angle. Thus the position formed a kind of open W (fig. 20, A A A A, B B) with the chateau of Goumont at the summit of the sali­ent angle, covered by a plantation of wood and enclosures, occupied by six or eight battalions ; so that the enemy could not enfilade from behind that plantation, either of the faces of the centre, nor approach on either of the causeways which passed through the centre, without presenting his flank. Besides this point, La Haye Sainte, a stone farm close to the chaussé of Charleroy, and farther on the left the farm of Papelotte and chateau of Frichermont, were occupied. The whole front offered a gentle slope towards the enemy, and in the rear the cavalry was distributed in brigades, each in two lines, covered by the rising ground ; and the artillery, all the field-pieces of which were nine-pounders or twelves, formed a line of almost contiguous batteries along the front, interspersed with howitzers and rockets.

By the returns found after the battle, it appears that the enemy had debouched from Charleroy with 122,000 men,@@1 exclusive of the reinforcements that joined after the 15th of June. Of these he produced on the field of battle about 80,000 men, formed in concentrated masses on both sides of the chaussé of Charleroy, and gradually advancing the right parallel to the British left (CCCC); but as he was jealous of the woods on the right, he formed an angle to the rear, and kept his reserves far back. He had made a de­monstration with a corps of cavalry beyond the British right towards Hal, where he found the corps of General Colville, and Prince Frederick of Orange, with two divisions posted at Tubise, Clabbeck, and Braine le Chateau, to cover that avenue to Brussels. Another corps, 42,000 strong, under Grouchy, was detached to his right upon Wavre, to turn the allies, pursue or arrest the Prussians, and prevent the timely junction of Bulow. Thus the dispositions of both the commanders were combined with consummate ability ; Napoleon operating on the system of throwing two thirds of his masses alternately on either side, and the allies in combining manœuvres to bring a superior mass on the deci­sive point. On the field however the problem was difficult to solve. The communication with France was open only by the roads of Charleroy and Nivelles, hence the enemy could not quit them in the attack ; nor could he gain Brus­sels by any other avenue than that of Waterloo ; therefore, to possess the chateau of Goumont, without which he could not arrive at the position, was the natural object of the at­tack. As this was sustained by the mass of the allied army, and could not be enfiladed, his attacks failed. All those directed on the road of Charleroy to the left centre were necessarily oblique, and exposed to the fire in flank before they could reach their opponents. To have risked a gene­ral onset of all his masses, before the British were thinned and exhausted, he knew, under the circumstances of the moment, to be too hazardous. The plain of Braine la Leud appeared open. He could arrive by it ; but that very cir­cumstance proved that the enemy was prepared on that side. To have turned the force thither would in the first place have caused the loss of the communication by Charleroy, and next facilitated the junction of the Prussians ; and, be­sides, the corps on the other side of the Hain flanked the advance, and could in a short time be sustained by the two divisions in its rear, and which he knew to be at hand. He would therefore have been placed between two fires, and have lost his point of retreat upon Charleroy; and the road by Nivelles might, meantime, be cut off by the troops left behind at Mons. Again, if he threw his masses towards the left, he only went to meet the Prussians, and left the British masters of the road of Nivelles, and possibly, if he advanced far, of that of Charleroy. He entangled himself in woods and defiles, where his superior cavalry could not act. The character of his opponent bespoke immediate of­fensive movements from the moment his right would be at liberty, therefore the chances were again in favour of the enemy ; yet this was the only advantageous side, because it brought him nearer Grouchy, and in case of defeat he could take a new line of retreat by Namur. He however preferred the experiment which the enthusiastic valour of his troops might enable him to make ; and this committed him so deeply, that, when at length the Prussians appeared, a retreat was no longer possible.

These observations disprove the ignorant assertion, that little skill was displayed on either side. The generals and the soldiers equally did their duty : the veteran Blucher behaved with just prudence in keeping so long back from the danger­ous manoeuvre which was assigned him ; and when he saw the hostile cavalry destroyed, he acted with vigour and skill. As for Grouchy, who wasted his time in forcing the position of Wavre across thc Dyle, everywhere fordable, his manoeuvres show that he felt the danger of his movement, and he wisely remained on the banks. Much might be added upon the judgment which posted the corps at Wavre and another at Hal, on the several lines of retreat which the allies could take in case of defeat, on the dispositions of the artillery, the squares and lines formed and reduced repeatedly, the disposition and effect of the charges of cavalry, the counter-offensive of the Prussians, the general charge to the front, and fate of the enemy’s squares ; but enough has been stated to recommend the study of a battle where three of the great­est commanders and the best manoeuvring armies in Europe gloriously struggled for victory ; and, let it be added, not­withstanding the assertions to the contrary, where none committed a positive fault, and where Napoleon, in parti­cular, who has been condemned by some of his own par­tisans, operated with all the skill and vigour which the cir­cumstances of the moment allowed.

This unpleasant operation in war requires as great a dis­play of skill and firmness as any. The Austrians have often conducted theirs with sagacity ; and it is perhaps owing to the persevering spirit of their retreats, that, after twenty unfortunate campaigns, the monarchy was as formidable as in the commencement. Their generals are not then con­trolled by cabinet orders, and therefore always operate with precision. Among the retreats which deserve the study of the soldier, are that of Schulemburg with the Saxons, the duke of York’s out of Belgium, the two retreats of the Archduke Charles, that of Moreau from Bavaria to the Rhine, the Russian retreat upon Moscow and Tula, and, lastly, the fine movement of Prince Eugene Beauhamois in Italy.

In the choice of a position, it is not sufficient to have a

@@@, The return was dated the l3th, according to the assertion of a Prussian officer of the staff. Tbe whole force brought over the frontier must therefore have amounted to nearly 150,000 men.