object in splitting his force.

Should the junction by any chance be ef-

main roads. Nearly the whole of these were

constructed for the sole purpose of convey-

It would be a phenomenal achievement to

ender this important section of the German

and very inadequate for a much longer per-

iod, as even German military engineers re-

vely bridge ruined viaducts, repair torn em-

Metz, too, would be completely isolated

Whilst the two columns went on with their

bankments and relay uprooted rails.

house of munitions of war.

ing troops and war material to the frontier.

(Copyright, 1898, by Louis Tracy.) CHAPTER IV. Lebreton's Ride.

When the history of the war of the revenge comes to be written the foremost place in that remarkable work will be assigned to the ride of the 5,000.

To be a descendant of one of the 5,000 was a distinction for a youth and a dowry for a maiden. No similar achievement adorned the annals of their great country. For a proper understanding of the scope and object of this unprecedented military operation it is necessary to quote fully the memorandum drawn up with such care by Vansittart during the meeting of the cab-

It was collectively addressed to Generals Villeneuve, Daubisson and Le Breton (the last-named having attained the rank already) and ran as follows:

"It is my intention that a column shall be formed at Sedan forthwith and dispatched, when fully equipped, for the purpose of cutting into and destroying the German lines of communication.

"The column will consist of 5,000 selected cavalry, soldiers, artillerists and engineers and for the purpose of the expedition they will be supplied with two hores per officer and man engaged. The arms fire-enter. carried will be sabers, revolvers, carbines and a small number of machine guns. The order of priority shows the manner of their use, which must be solely defensive.

"No wheeled vehicles, ambulances, tents or baggage can be taken. The column must, when occasion demands, be able to move at the rate of ten kilometers (seven miles) per hour. Each member of the expedition will carry food and grain for him-Belf and his horses, but squadding arrangements will be made for the conveyance of reserve ammunition, implements, dynamite he vehemently cried. "Those who are be and blasting powder. "Anything approaching an engagement

with the enemy must be absolutely avoided. Fighting will be the last alternative, but if the only way lies through the hostile lines, then that is the way. Those who fall die on behalf of France;

those who live and perform their duties will have rendered their country the maximum of good service.

"The object of the column is destruction. Nothing of value to the enemy must be

WHEN ALL HAD PASSED. THE DYNA-

MITE DID ITS WORK.

"General Villeneuve will provide horses

stores and equipment, a highly important

that at the first halt he should explain to

"My friends-to our next president!"

movement of the expedition.

of two frontier lines of rail.

be wrecked, burned or blown up.

of communication.

of the trust

spared. Railroads, telegraph lines, bridges,

"Out with it, and quickly." hings, may have forgotten one. The Gernans are well served by field telegraph, and

scoffers.

eneral."

"But ves. I and nine chosen comrades. two of whom can speak German and work mixed German force. a telegraph instrument, will, if you approve, pickets at dusk, find the line to Damvilliers the headquarters of General Kreuznach, cut it, connect up again, and tell him that a reconnoisance in force is in progress along

outh rather than west?"

"So, general,"

"Do this, Laronde, and when you nex neet me you receive your epaulets. I like

officers who can think."

exception being hospital appliances, must needed no higher incentive. At 9 o'clock that night a message "The total distance to be covered, taking the line of the frontier from Villerupt to Markirch, and allowing for digressions, is, say, 125 miles. I will regard it as an excellent performance if the column emerges at

> apparently been surprised and killed. A cavalry cadet came gallloping up.

To give color to this statement a General Le Breton will take command of tering of rifle fire broke out and momentarily

"I leave to Le Breton complete discretion as to the particular route to be followed, In fifteen minutes Longuyon was cleared whether in French or German territory. The measure of his success will be the loss and delay inflicted upon the enemy's lines "I would recommend, however, that he divide his force into five small brigades,

hills leading to the frontier. To the Germans confusion seemed to reign unchecked.

every officer and man the exact nature of the enterprise and the conditions governing it—that he should start on Wednesday. and that the rapidity of his advance should notice that a vast body of horse, heedless be governed only by the minimum of time village in the direction of Diedenhofen, required to destroy permanent works. The resistance offered by the enemy, when una-

voidable, should never check the forward actively hunted in every direction. "In conclusion, I wish General Le Bretor and his officers and men good fortune. France commits her destinies to their hands, and I am assured they will prove worthy plunged into a ravine at a point where

thoughtfully removed a rail. Such was the extraordinary "order o the day" that Le Breton caused to b read out to every company in his little army when, on the evening of Wednesday it halted for an hour almost within sight of the charming village of Longuyon, situated at the confluence of the Crusne and

> They encountered stragglers from threatened flank, who announced that a French column-a division, an army corps 100,000 men-had occupied Longuyon and as in full pursuit. Thereupon the comnander of the relief thought it his duty halt until daylight. He did so, marched autiously to Longuyon and found only the vidences of the preceding night's disaster. At 10 o'clock a dull explosion, followed by a violent earth tremor, meant that two nonths' hard work would scarce suffice to nake the railway tunnel serviceable again,

ess horses and ride fast after the main

ome the rear guard in their turn. Sixteen miles from Longuyon the head of the expedition reached Audun-fe-Roman, he erstwhile French frontier custom house. Here a small infantry guard was cut up and two customs officers, captured in the

first surprise of the invasion, set at liberty and told to escape as best they might. Half an hour more and the sound of firing in front, instantaneously drowned in a wild outburst of cheering, proclaimed the fact to villagers startled from their sleep that for the first time in a generation an armed force of Frenchmen had set foot upon the soil of Lorraine.

This was Fontoy, or Fentsch, as the Germans have it, and here Le Ereton received an hour every cavalry soldier in Metz would severe check, unpremeditated by either

The leading troopers cantered round : bend into the village street and found themselves in a swarm of soldiers, infantry and artillery, being the nucleus of a division now hastily forming in order to reinforce the main body on the Meuse. The hasty resolve of the Raiser Wilhelm to penetrate into France at all cost was in process of realization at that moment. After the first gasp of amazement the stolid Teutons recovered themselves and a

| rail from Sedan, thus saving horses and stantly in volume as combatants from both sides packed into the narrow street. Here, of course, the well drilled infantry had the advantage. In another minute volley firing would have determined the melee, when Le Breton, whe rode ever close strong column would assuredly be detached

flerce affray at once began, growing in-

to the advance guard, arrived. A single glance revealed the situation to him. He saw that his leading squadron | quire many days, perhaps weeks, to effectmust be sacrificed if he would save the rest. Spurring his horse into a furious gallop he rode back and halted the First brigade.

Reaching a cross road he halted the Sec ond and placed four machine guns here, the great fortress being a veritable storesimultaneously retiring the First brigade southward to the right.

meet you. If you cannot-well-aurevoir!' than half of their own wearled animals, Colonel Montsaloy saluted, mounted and which, by the ruthless law of war, they were cantered off to place his column in motion. compelled to shoot. A few minutes later the diminished main Another desperate effort enabled them, as body followed, but deviated to the left and quickly gained the high road to Metz. Here

evening fell, to gain the shelter of a defile with discretion. in the Vosges mountains. So tired were they fell in with some scouting Uhlans, riding furiously toward Diedenhofen to disrode, and at the earliest possible moment Le over the cause of the complete breakdown Breton halted to enable them to recuperate in the telegraph to that important center, somewhat. None of these gentry escaped, else within Toward midnight the unpleasant luquisi-

tiveness of the enemy's cavalry scouts forced have been in hot chase of the venturesome the French commander to once more arouse his worn-out followers. For two hours they Le Breton's advance now lay across counjogged steadily onward through rocky val- being wrecked upon a colossal scale, retry to Les Etangs, and thence to the renleys, shrouded in gloom by the frowning mained in their houses, furtively peeping dezvous at Dieuze through Courcelles, Foulheights. Then Le Breton decided that, come from their windows at the unwonted specignes and Foulquemont. The reader who what might, his mes and horses should have tacle provided by French soldiers riding follows the course of events on a good map a thorough rest, else they would be ab- through their streets. The last time French-

following day. The Germans, of course, were now on the bishop. fected the two sections would have done alert throughout the whole of their southern enormous damage to no less than thirteen lines of connection. lines of strategic railways and twenty-four

quarry to slip through their hands, and the was discharging an infantry regiment on graded in rank.

communications wholly useless for a time the latest details to hand, that the French stream. marauders would endeavor to regain the The viaduet had been blown up long be shelter of their comrades' entrenched camp fore and the French officer in charge of at Luneville; imperative orders were in the outpost had sent him to give the earlies consequence given for a powerful force to warning of this hostile move. gather in the neighborhood of Avricourt and this in itself was a magnificent result, they appeared.

And cut up they assuredly must have at any time after daybreak on Friday morning. Every hilltop was lined with scouts, portunity of revenging the insults heaped apon their arms, and the frightful havoc done to their commuications by this intrepid body of horse.

Hour after hour the Germans waited. eagerly scouring the eastern horizon for the first signs of their approaching enemies. At last they were roused into frenzied activity. The enemy had indeed arrived, but from a wholly unexpected quarter.

General Daubisson, in person, leading a strong reconnoissance of cavalry and horse artillery from Luneville, was now forcing a passage through the new rear of the German invaders. Of this more anon.

At 9 o'clock on a bright May morning Le Breton and his brigadiers rode along the ranks of their gallant followers, addressing words of encouragement and good cheer to the men.

The general had resolved upon the excution of one last bold coup before the final dash was made for liberty and France. There, five miles away, on the other side of the Shirmeck pass, lay the little town of Mutzig, a great depot and manufactory of small arms and ammunition, but now, he learned from the peasants, denuded of defenders save some hundreds of busily occupied workmen, most of whom were secretly enthusiastic Alsatians.

Fifteen miles further east the Rhine flowed between vine-clad cliffs and in the intervening country were the main lines of railway between Strasburg and Colmar, two branch lines, the Rhine canal and two main oads north and south.

To ruin Mutzig and its stores and destroy the thoroughfares by rail, road and water, would indeed provide a glorious finale to the most remarkable achievement ever carried through by so small a force in a country held by such armies as owned the sway of the kaiser.

Le Breton made no secret of his desper ate enterprise and his men acclaimed him as he told them what he wanted them to do. After all they had already accomplinshed inder his guidance they would have folflicting reports as to their location at any lowed him in an attack upon Metz itself!

The column had crossed the top of the pass when the rear guard saw through their glasses a solitary horseman spurring furiously after them. He was batless, dressed civilian attire and obviously alone They waited in silence until he drow near

When they halted him he explained, with an unmistakable British accent, that he was one of the war correspondents of the Nevertheless, as the day wore, something Times and asked to be brought before the general.

This newcomer was in strange plight His clothes were torn and shot through in several places. Along his right cheek sullet had torn a slight furrow which had nevertheless bled profusely and rendered him a sorry object. His horse, a fine hunter, was in the last stage of exhausion and barely able to support himself by propping out his forelegs when the myste ious rider dismounted. The man, too though strongly built and hard looking. was clearly suffering from hunger and fatigue.

Yet his manner was perfectly calm and the French soldiers marveled whence or how he had reached them, whilst they noted, with silent approbation, that his first thought was for his horse, in whose behalf he obtained a pail of water and some food. The officer he addressed did not know

promptly acceded to his request and took him to the general. "Whom have we here?" was Le Breton's

how to deal with this apparition, so he

first question. The Englishman produced his official pass, signed by Villeneuve and Daubisson,

setting forth that he was Mr. Herbert Fairfax, war correspondent of the Times and fully accredited to accompany the French armies in the field. "But how is this?" cried the astounded general. "Whence come you?"

"From Luneville. I left last night in ad with his saber to the enemy's cavalry and vance of General Daubisson's column. "Column! What column, monsieur?" 'A cavalry reconnaissance in force, which

"There lies our road, my children," and by this time is breaking through the German

front at St. Die." "With what object?" "In order to ascertain your whereabouts and assist you if possible."

"Diable, 'tis well. Yet how could Daubis son guess my position so accurately?" "It was hardly a guess. Mr. Vansittart

informed from England and Belgium of your saline plain, added to the general discomfort. In a word, everyone expected that the progress, estimated that you would be in this neighborhood today, and probably hard pressed, so he asked the commander in chief to try and help you.

"Monsieur, you bring good news. Nevertheless, I am at a loss to know by what means you have reached me.'

"O, I just started and here I am "By St. Denis, I see you, but my brains do not travel so quickly as my eyes. Here occupation than emptying saddles at 500

you are, indeed! How did you get here? Why did not the Germans stop you' "They tried all they knew," said Fairfax indicating with a smile his scarred face and torn clothes. "But it is difficult to shoot straight at night and I was better mounted

than the uhlans. I regret the necessity that

compelled me to bore holes in three of

"Monsieur," cried Le Breton, "your are an Englishman! Let it suffice! Enough for me that you are a brave man.

the midst of the melee, was the manner in us at a ticklish moment." "I wanted something to

you are providing first rate 'copy.' But before we proceed, general, may I suggest that a few trustworthy men, hiding among these helped myself, left a small guard and the hills, may fall in with General Daubisson and give him definite news of your inten-The hint was acted upon-with excellent

Mutzig was attacked at 11:30 a. m. The

small body of defenders were taken by aurprise, but they were able to close the gates and line the ancient fortification on the threatened side.

A vigorous use of the machine guns and chanced to fall.

soon settled this effort at resistance. The sappers crossed the trench and tore the ironwork of the gate into pieces with dynamite, whereupon the Germans surrendered

Whilst this busy work was in progress many of the troopers that they slept as they Colonel Montsaloy and his brigade again struck off across country on a four miles ride to Obernat, where a railway and a main

road intersected each other. In Mutzig the Frenchmen speedily dismantled the small arms factory. The terri fied townspeople, unable to escape into the country and fearful of the destruction now of Lorraine will quickly see the general's solutely unfitted for the stern work of the men swaggered about Mutzig in uniform the arsenal of today was the palace of a

Le Breton did not forget to station cav alry vedettes on all the approaches to the The emperor sent bitter and scathing tele- town. Nothing of moment occurred until grams to the generals of division at Forbach 2 o'clock. At that hour a chasseur came and Sarrelbourg for having ellowed the riding hard to report that a troop train latter unfortunate officer was summarily de- the further side of a gorge about a mile distant, where the junction line from Stras-The headquarters staff felt certain, from burg and Saverne crossed a turbulent

Another scout, and yet another, arrived and Belmont in order to cut them up when breathless with the news that train after train, obviously sent from Strasburg, was bringing infantry, with horses and guns, been had they tried to force this passage that the German skirmishers had crossed the torrent, driving the French vedettes before them, and that a temporary bridge was every road and possible outlet crowned with in process of construction from the ruins of furious German troops, longing for the op- the viaduct for the passage of guns and horses.

It was possible at this moment for Le Breton to retreat toward the Vosges, with the hope of faling in with Daubisson's relief expedition. But he had promised Montsaloy to wait for him until 4 o'clock. It was now 2:30. In an hour and forty minutes Mutzig would be surrounded by fresh and infurtated opponents. This, then, was the close of the brilliant raid! That night he and his gallant comrades must be killed in battle or shot in squads afterward.

He knew well that quarter would not be given to a solitary officer or man once the Germans had them in their power. It was hard to be caught like a rat in a trap at the precise instant when there did

seem to be some chance of escape. There, toward the west, lay the unoccu pied road across the Vosges to Luneville, but not a sign from the east of Montsaloy's return. Le Breton summarized the maddening

situation in a few words of emphatic colloquial French, and set himself to examining the defenses. Unfortunately his zealous men had already

destroyed every piece of modern ordnance, with all the ammunition, in the town. Soon a German battery, undeterred by a steady long range fire from the walls, was laboriously hauled into position on a cliff barely three-quarters of a mile distant, and the eager gunners hardly gave themselves time to align one 12-pounder before a shell screamed through the air and struck a house in the little market place, sending fragments of brick and mortar in all direc-

"You had better have remained with Daubisson," said Le Breton grimly to Fairfax. who was recuperating from his fatigue by sitting on an empty packing box and smok-

"Not I." was the cheery reply. "These chaps are afraid of you. Instead of trying to rush the place forthwith they will proceed by set rule. And every minute they hesitate is probably worth a year's life to

"And you also, monsieur." "O, no. I'm safe enough. This is too big thing for the Times to miss it. I must

"I like your spirit, my friend," said the "But pray, make no mistake, general. These Germans will spare no one attached

to this party.' "General," said the other, lighting a fresh cigar. "I mean to leave Mutzig tonight with an escort of French sabers."

Fairfax was undoubtedly sanguine. Mut zig was at that moment undergoing a hailstorm of lead. Bullets swept through the streets from the neighboring heights and a couple of shells from the battery having smashed the defenses of the northern gate the gunners were adding to the fusillade by salvoes of shrapnel.

Le Breton's orders to his men were to seek all possible shelter and confine themselves to strictly defensive tactics, so the casualty list was not large. At last the inadequacy of the reply from the town encouraged the attackers, who and a determined attack was made upon

were momentarily increasing in strength, to attempt a rush at the dismantled gate. But f the Frenchmen were caged their claws tery. vere still sharp. The machine guns, drawn up at an effectve angle, quickly cleared the gate and its

approaches, and the Bavarian regiment that had essayed the charge left sufficient killed caused the hearts of the defending force to and wounded on their path to form two companies when they retired. This sharp repulse showed the Germans

that the assault would not be the easy matter they had assumed. A change of tactics French guns were engaging the nearest was necessary. The town must be com- German battery, dismounted French cavalry pletely surrounded and a plunging fire from all sides would rapidly render it untenable. infantry so unexpectedly taken in flank, and gallop to a point which commanded the preparatory to a superb charge through the south. The guns were unlimbered and their first batch of shells hurtled through the north.

streets before a burst of cheers from the

defenders on that side made known to their comrades the welcome fact that this new was no time to wait for regularity or preenemy had been somehow disconcerted. Whilst the German gunners were busy orrecting the adjustment of their cannon comrade up behind him. Rabble-like, but Colonel Montsaloy's brigade suddenly appeared over the crest of the hill and in a

ew strides the leading squadron was in the nidst of the battery. No cavalry escort had been provided or affair was over with the speed of a summer

were literally ridden down. A German infantry battalion, perceiving the disaster, changed front in order to return the compliment to the French cavalry, but Le Breton, heedless of the northern artillery, ran his machine guns out into the open and gave the deploying infantry other

yards. In five minutes Montsaloy and the survivors of the brigade-they had met with some trouble before they finally blew up a lock in the canal-entered Mutzig.

This temporary success elated the troops, yet the most sanguine amongst them knew full well that there was no chance of being extricated. All they could do was to sell their lives dearly. The German fire became fiercer and more

effective. The wretched inhabitants of you. Yet must I add that you have joined the town suffered even more than the soldiers. Shell after shell burst among the houses and set them on fire, the flames drivlaughed the other, "and if all I hear be true, ing forth those who had escaped from the miles in sixty hours through a hostfle

> creased at such a rate that all Mutzig seemed to be enveloped in amoke and sparks. arms was incalculably severe. The still air became oppressively hot and people fainted from sheer exhaustion and despair. Through this pandemonium dazed brains and his money against the German men and shricking women and children raced about wildly, seeking for some nook secure from the leaden showers, or collapsed,

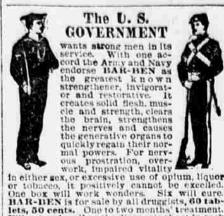
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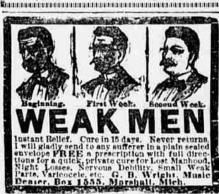
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now reached the locality from Strasburg, the two available gates, whilst fresh artillery took the place of the destroyed bat-

Even Fairfax was beginning to think the Times would miss its most enterprising "special," when a sharp rattle of musketry and the deeper boom of cannon on the west beat with tremulous anticipation.

Was it only a development of the German assault, or could it be that Daubisson-Uncertainty soon yielded to conviction. were driving back the wings of the German Another battery arrived and started at a French horsemen were massing in squadrons entire length of the German position on the

> Le Breton's eyes were affame as he roared the necessary orders to his officers. There cision. Every man who could ride caught the nearest horse and slung a wounded methodically enough for their purpose, the troopers poured out of the town toward the relieving force. In five minutes Le Breton was shaking

hands with Daubisson and Fairfax was bitthought necessary by the Germans, so the ing the end off another cigar with the equable serenity of the man who is able to squall. The six guns and their attendants say, "I told you so." Ten minutes later the French reconnais-

sance column was in full retreat toward the Vosges, not forgetting to blow up every bridge they crossed in the march. The last sight of blazing Mutzig enjoyed by Le Breton and his comrades was from a hillside where the road enters the Schirmeck pass, whence they could clourly see that their erstwhile assailants had found fresh ocupation as amateur firemen.

Utterly spent with the labors and excitement of the past sixty hours, too exhausted eat, too weary to even speak, they jogged on through the night, and the strenuous efforts of their comrades were needed to keep more than half of them from lying

down by the roadside. Whenever a halt was necessary it was with difficulty the men were started again. Curiously enough, the worst sufferers were those who retained their vitality to the last, Le Breton and his 5,000-now, alas, little more than three-had ridden nearly 130 projectiles to encounter greater risk from try swarming with foes. They had fought several severe battles; they had worked

> they had slept little and eaten less. But the blow they struck at the German Above all else it gave Vansittart the one great essential he lucked in pitting his

emperor. Time alone, to his view, was what he required, time to recuperate the exhausted speechless and horror-stricken, where they energies of France, to arouse her dormant strength.

the Chiers and noteworthy as the junction

The expedition had gained Montmedy by

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thus providing security on the right flank of the invaders. Vansittart had foreseen such a move-hence his order to mobilize at Sedan. But Le Breton judged rightly that time was more important than risk and he was above all things anxious to get to work before any inkling of his approach could be obtained by the Germans. He instructed his brigadiers to give to

men in a tiresome and useless march of

thirty miles. It was risky, this railway

trip. Longuyon, eleven miles further on,

was in the hands of the Germans and a

from the northern army to attack Montmedy,

every man the opportunity of quitting the expedition before it was too late and to lay particular stress upon the sad necessity there was to abandon all who were so se verely wounded as to be unable to ride. Out of 5,000 troopers only one man, a

Third brigade, stood out from the ranks when his brigadier invited those who had aught to sny to declare themselves. He was a native of Tarascon, a burly and muscular man, who had hitherto been regarded by his comrades as somewhat of a

rivate of the Eighteenth chasseurs in the

His seeming defection was greeted with a oar of indignation by the Eighteenth. "Hola, Tartarin," yelled one. "Thou est a lion, then!" "This is no picnic for a capahooter!" cried

nother, and the laugh at these allusions to is immortal birthplace converted the comion wrath into scorn. Pierre Laronde turned flercely on the

"I fought with the emperor in the desert

and rode with him to meet the president," lowing did neither, I should think." The credentials were excellent; they proured silence. "Well, what of it?" said the officer good

who approached him. "I ask the honor of a word with the genral." "Hum, 'tis contrary to discipline, but this no time for ceremony. Come with me." When the pair stood before Le Breton

humoredly. He saw that it was no recreant

"General," he said, "I see a way of doing ou some service." "When I listened to the orders I said to nyself: 'Pierre, it is well thought of, but perhaps the general, in attending to many

Laronde was in no wise abashed.

making dispositions to stop our advance by on great force?" Such was my reflection,

they must be prevented at the outset from

"The reflection is good, soldier. Hast lan ?"

the right bank of the Meuse from Mont-"Ha! Kreuznach will think we trave

"Thy name, soldier?" "Pierre Laronde."

rolling stock, commissariat trains, equipage and stores of every description, the only The man flushed with pleasure. H the German commander at Longuyon in forming the headquarters staff that all was quiet on the flank was suddenly interrupted. The operator in Longuyon, finding his instrument useless, reported the fact to his chief, who had also just received the un-St. Marie aux Mines (Markirch) within five

pleasant intelligence that two sentries had "Colonel, a strong body of the enemy's horse

item being an abundance of good maps of the frontier. General Daubisson will suis advancing down the hill toward the pervise the selection of officers and men, bridge,"

grew in volume. of uhlans and Bavarians, three bridges were destroyed, two railroad viaducts blown up and a working party was busy planting a batch of dynamite cartridges with detonating fuses in a long tunnel that pierced the

Those who kept their senses and were in touch with the fighting could not fail to of the conflict, poured headlong through the eaten and the whole force composed itself

Meanwhile the defenders of the post were A troop train, with several officers and half a battalion of Hanoverians on board, dashed off toward Spincourt, the nearest point by rail to Damvilliers, and the main line of German communication, but it

Pierre Ladronde and his little band had be anticipated. By midnight an entire division had been put in motion by General Kreuznach and was hastening northward with the utmost speed, as not a word of reply could the staff get to the singular and startling message from Longuyon, which came to hand

and Pierre Laronde and his comrades hought it high time to catch some rider-

Le Breton's method of advance was adpirable. Whenever a bridge had to be deoved or a section of the parallel railway mantled, a small party halted and began heir preparations, while the remainder of the force pressed on through the darkness. When all had passed the dynamite did ts work and the wreckers rode off to be-

IN A FEW STRIDES THE LEADING SQUADRON WAS IN THE MIDST OF THE BATTLE.

pursued by some mounted German gunners with a mass of infantry pressing on behind. But Le Breton's turn had come. The great advantage of the machine gun is army corps, were raging about with antica that its fire is as destructive by night as similar to the struggles of a blue bottle in by day, once the position of the enemy is a spider's web.

to align the guns along a comparatively level road and blaze away, the four pouring an absolute torrent of lead into the Nothing could live against it. The purpidity, owing to the crowding and confusion behind, suffered frightfully. Hun- neither cavalry nor guns could hope to dreds of men fell in that slaughter house

In this case all that was needed was

clearly defined.

and those who sought to escape into the or Montsaloy had passed that way. fields were ruthlessly cut down by French cavalry, posted there to prevent at all haz- akin to definiteness took the place of the ards a flank attack on the new line of ad- frenzied statements of the night and early vance. officers were wholly ignorant of the true position and consequently unable to make better disposition for assaulting this marvelous foe who had sprung from nowhere. And he disappeared as promptly as he had arrived, leaving murderous tokens of

youd the village, while a series of explosions in the distance told the listeners that wherever the road crossed a stream the bridge was destroyed. Two miles from Fontoy Le Breton or-

his visit in the human shambles just be-

dered a much needed halt. It was now 1 o'clock. There was no im nediate fear of pursuit or efficiently or ganized resistance, though the German staff at Damvilliers and Thionville, Metz and Mare la Tour, were frenzied with annoyance at their inability to discover exactly

that was going on. Orderlies raced about on horseback, field elegraphs clicked incessantly, even the emperor at Fresnes was waked out of a sound sleep-but in vain. The incomparable German system of intelligence, which would have discovered a stray horse at any point over their fifty miles of front, was powerless to locate Le Breton and his little host, for the simple reason that he was now many

miles in the rear of the main body and had already much disarranged the whole of the ortherly communications. Until daybreak he was comparatively safe. Horses were picketed, some food hastily

for four hours' sleep. Beyond ascertaining that his total losses so far amounted to sixty-seven men and three officers killed and wounded, with some hundred odd horses lost, he had no fresh anxieties to deal with. His route was cut and dried and every detail settled in consultation with his officers. Events must be

dealt with as they arrived. They could not "So far," growled Le Breton as he posed bimself to rest with his saddle flap for a pillow, "I don't think Vansittart himself could have done better.'

The first beams of light found the little force making its toilet after a fashion described by the regimental wag of the Eighteenth as a la mode chien. A hearty shake and a vigorous stretch, followed by a breakfast of tinned beef, biscuit and a drink of wine from the stock of a local cabaret, formed the preliminary to an event-

ful day.

the general called to him the second in command, Colonel Montsaloy, a slight, actve cavalry officer, whose cheek bones, chin, shoulders and elbows were all based on a well known proposition of Euclid affecting the properties of a right angle. "Montsaloy," he said, "give me

Whilst all hands were busy saddling up

The other produced his military chart and Le Breton traced a line on it. "I have been thinking out the situation during the last half hour," he said, "and have decided on an important alternative. My original intention was, as you know, to pass southward behind Metz, leaving it on my right That holds good, but if we want to avoid the certainty of being cut to pieces before the evening we must create a diversion They will look for us at first between Metz and the frontier. Well, they must find you and a brigade there."

"I understand you fully, general."

"Good. You will proceed by way of Briey,

Conflans, Mars la Tour and Verny to Dieuze.

The remainder followed, but the move- | work of devastation the entire German host, ment had barely started when the rem- spread over a superficial area of nearly 2,000 nant of the advance guard fell back, closely miles, was in an uproar. The German staff was called upon to deal with, not war, but rampant lunacy. Some-

where in their midst a number of madmen estimated variously from a regiment to an The speed of their movements, the as tounding effect of their passage, the con-

particular time, were well calculated to upset the theorists bred in the school of the last war with France. There had been fighting in many places, different matter. Infantry was useless, and travel rapidly along a road once Le Breton

morning. The object of the raiders was now clear enough. Not lunacy, but superb military genius, had dictated this deadly blow at the German organization. The authorities at Forbach and Sarrebourg hastily concerted measures to defend every important railway junction between those centers, and when General Le Breton halted his troopers at 2 o'clock on the arid, salt-laden plain between Chateau Salins and Dieuze, the presence of numerous vedettes on the horizon warned him that his next forward step would be

severely contested. He was not mistaken. The salt mines a the latter town were crammed with German infantry. But they opened fire at a long range. This helped him a little, as he took ground to the right-only to find the railway line to Nancy swarming with men. At the range his machine guns were useess, and to give the necessary dramatic touch to the situation, three regiments of cavalry with six guns trotted into view right ahead, the artillery promptly trying his

With tired men and exhausted horses L Breton knew that he was in a tight fix. In fact, he afterward admitted that he was quite certain his enterprise had there and then come to an untimely end. But if he despaired he did not hesitate Riding to the head of his column, he pointed

metal with shrapuel.

apiece in the rear.

their turn.

shouted:

his wearied troopers made a brave effort follow him. For the purpose of a charge they did no number 2,000, as the led horses, otherwise o useful, were now an embarrassment, and half of his men were guiding three animals

The frightful dust, too, rising from th

foray had collapsed. The German guns were on the enemy' left, which rested on some broken ground. By rare good luck for the French the arillerists, reserve men hurrying to the front, were new to their work and their practice was bad.

Just as the German cavalry was breaking

into a gallop to meet the onset, a fearful

ommotion broke out on their left. Montsaloy had turned up in the nick o ime and was now sabering the gunners and taking the horse in flank. The unequal odds of the combat swung round with a vengeance. In place of Germans carving Frenchmen It was a case of

precipitate flight to avoid being carved in

What puzzled Le Breton most, even in

which Montsaloy's brigade rode from out the defile. Their chargers lay to as though taking part in a field day at Versailles. But Montsaloy soon explained: ipon six trainloads of remounts on the between here and Vie," he shouted. "I boxed them in between two broken culverts

remainder are waiting for you."

Success is a wonderful tonic for fatigue This wholly unexpected escape from threatened annihilation raised the spirits and dispelled the weariness of every man in the

How the Second Day Ended.

CHAPTER V.

expedition Montsaloy's lucky find of German cavalry

If you can get there by 5 o'clock I will horses enabled the troops to replace more the carbines of the dismounted troopers

the bullets that flew in all directions. Wounded horses screamed with pain and like navvies in their task of destruction; fright. The number of burning houses in-

Many thousands of German infantry had