

THE BATTLE OF THE RIVERS

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The battle of the rivers by Edmund Dane

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EDMUND DANE

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PREFATORY NOTE

ON a scale before unknown in Western Europe, and save for the coincident operations in the Eastern theatre of war, unexampled in history, the succession of events named the "Battle of the Rivers" presents illustrations of strategy and tactics of absorbing interest. Apart even from the spectacular aspects of this lurid and grandiose drama, full as it is of strange and daring episodes, the problems it affords in the science of war must appeal to every intelligent mind.

An endeavour is here made to state these problems in outline. In the light they throw, events and episodes, which might otherwise appear confused, will be found to fit into a clear sequence of causes and consequences. The events and episodes themselves gain in grandeur as their import and relationship are unfolded.

Since the story of the retreat from Mons has been told in another volume of this series, it is only in the following pages dealt with so far as its military bearings elucidate succeeding phases of the campaign.

The Battle of the Rivers

CHAPTER I

THE GERMAN PLANS

"ABOUT September 3," wrote Field Marshal Sir John French in his despatch dated a fortnight later,¹ "the enemy appears to have changed his plans, and to have determined to stop his advance south direct upon Paris, for on September 4 air reconnaissances showed that his main columns were moving in a south-easterly direction generally, east of a line drawn through Nanteuil and Lizy on the Ourcq."

In that passage the British commander summarises an event which changed the whole military aspect of the Great War and changed it not only in the Western, but in the Eastern theatre of hostilities.

What were the German plans and why were they changed?

In part the plans were military, and in part political. These two aspects, however, are so

¹ Despatch from Sir John French to Earl Kitchener of September 17th, 1914. For the text of this see Appendix.