

**THE MILITARY  
INSTITUTIONS  
OF FRANCE**

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The Military Institutions of France by Duc D'aumale & Ashe

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**DUC D'AUMALE & ASHE**

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THE  
MILITARY INSTITUTIONS  
OF  
FRANCE.

BY HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS  
THE DUC D'AUMALE.

Translated and Annotated  
(WITH THE AUTHOR'S CONSENT)

BY  
CAPTAIN ASHE,  
KING'S DRAGON GUARDS.



LONDON:  
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1869.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE following pages were written at Aldershot nearly two years ago; various causes have delayed their publication.

To the kindness of Lieutenant-General the Honourable Sir James Yorke Scarlett, K.C.B., the Translator is greatly indebted for access to some rare and useful military works of reference in French and German, contained in the Prince Consort's Library.

The problem of army administration promises to open as wide a field for discussion in our own

country as it has done in France; and it is to be hoped that this English version of the Duc d'Aumale's work, published by permission of His Royal Highness, may not be unacceptable to those who have not read it in its original form.

CAMBRIDGE HOUSE, PICCADILLY,

March 20, 1869.



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MILITARY INSTITUTIONS OF FRANCE.

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INTRODUCTION.

LOUVOIS—CARNOT—SAINT CYR.

ABOUT a hundred years ago Europe was somewhat surprised to learn that she possessed an additional military power, and that this power had crept into the front rank. It was not, as in the days of Gustavus Adolphus, a dazzling meteor flashing across an universal chaos only to disappear, after having filled the world with its brilliancy ; it was the smallest, poorest, youngest of monarchies, fighting in succession the most celebrated armies. Not only did she gain victories, and know how to profit by them, but she was able, without entirely succumbing, to lose occasionally several points in the terrible game of war : she could bear up against reverses,

renew the struggle after defeat, and finally call back victory to her colours.

In the eighteenth century, when the solution of the most difficult problems was freely sought after, a phenomenon so remarkable could not appear without giving rise to the most diverse commentaries. In addition to those who simply paid homage to the genius and tenacity of Frederick, or who recognized in him a crowned philosopher, there were advocates for all the details of Prussian organisation and tactics; some praised the "oblique formation," others the iron ramrod; while some profound minds decided, that if we used the cane to our soldiers, we need never again fear the humiliation of Rosbach. All these were, to a certain extent, right and wrong; severe discipline, scientific evolutions, improved arms—all had their share in the success of the Prussian armies; but these were merely the elements, the component parts of a great whole; and it was this whole which it was necessary to grasp and study. The truth

was, that the large intellect of Frederick had found a powerful instrument, in the system of military institutions, merely sketched out by his predecessors, and which he developed, completed, and adapted to his age and country.

And when, in 1866, we saw the same power suddenly rise from a repose of fifty years, bring into play springs of action of which certain superficial observers doubted the elasticity and force, and finally obtain the most brilliant triumph that history had for years recorded, we began to exaggerate, after the victory, what, before it, we had undervalued; and appreciatory opinions were expressed, analogous to those called forth by the Seven Years' War. Many changes, of course, have taken place; that painful contortion which, but lately, was the despair of recruit and instructor, "the oblique step," is no longer in use; the "iron ramrod" is suited only for an antiquarian museum; and who now would venture to talk of using the cane? But still, in the present day, according to some