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**CHANGES IN DRILL, AND A REVIEW
 OF THE NEW AMERICAN SYSTEM
 OF INFANTRY TACTICS.**

BY CAPTAIN DARTNELL, 34TH BATT. V. M.

For some time past there have been rumors prevalent in military circles of sweeping changes in the drill, and extensive alterations in the "Red Coat." There is no doubt that the wonderful change in the arming of infantry soldiers, as well as the equally great change in the armament of artillery, must force upon those skilled in the science of war the conviction that a great change must take place in the system of handling troops in the face of an enemy. Movements must be simplified, and more reliance must be placed upon the individual intelligence of the soldier. This will be greatly aided by the spread of education among the masses. The ranks of the British army for various reasons, unnecessary here to enter into, have been recruited from the lower classes of the nation; and while our generals could always rely upon the bull dog courage and patience of the material of the army, still precision of drill, and attention to routine were of greater necessity than in the case of men drawn from more highly educated classes. Better pay will produce a better class of men; and, with a higher intelligence to work upon, a looser drill will be found sufficient for the proper handling of troops in the field.

As to the direction of these changes, but few hints have transpired. It was stated some short time ago in English periodicals, supposed to speak with authority, that the supernumerary rank was to be abolished, the sergeants, &c., becoming pivot men of sections. The Field Exercise of 1867 however introduced little more than changes of detail, and simplification, and the new platoon exercise applicable to the breech loading Snider.

Some recent experiments have been made towards a further change, which, if found successful, will be incorporated into the drill. I extract from an English paper a statement of this system—

"The word 'front' is altogether abolished, and the way in which the men are faced, or the direction in which they are moving, will be the front, 'except in the case of a temporary retirement, with the supernumerary rank leading.' There will be no reference to 'proper rear or front rank,' and under the system there can be no 'inversion' or clubbing possible. In telling off a battalion the commanding officer will only name the 'right wing' and 'left' and companies will, without reference to any subsequent changes of position, always retain the figure or letter they received, on the formation of the parade. The captain or officer in command of a company will, in marching past in open column, when on the saluting base, be three paces in front of the centre of his company. When marching past in quarter distance or close column, or when in column or in line, the position of the captain will be in rear of his company in the centre of the supernumerary rank. The lieutenant will be on the

right and the ensign on the left of his company. These officers will never change their flank; but will lead, cover, and dress according to the word of command from the captain or commanding officer 'by the right,' or 'by the left.' When no flank is named dressing will be by the right. There being no special pivot flank, 'dressing' and 'covering' will be by the right or left, as ordered. When there is not on parade a sufficient number of subaltern officers for both flanks of companies vacancies will be temporarily filled by sergeants. The covering sergeant will in future occupy the same relative position to the lieutenant as he does now to the captain, and another sergeant will occupy the same relative position to the ensign. When firing the lieutenant and ensign will step to the rear and their places will be filled by their respective sergeants, who will also fire. A change of front to rear when in column will be made by simply facing or turning to the right about, followed by the word of command "Supernumeraries take post," on which the supernumeraries of the then right subdivision and the supernumeraries of the then left subdivision will double round the right and left flanks of their respective subdivisions and form up order in their rear. A change of front to the rear when in line will be made in like manner, the supernumeraries of companies forming the then right and left wings doubling around the right and left flanks of their respective companies. To enable this to be done the officers and sergeants on the flanks of companies will, when necessary, step two paces to the rear, and one to the side towards their companies to enable the supernumerary rank to pass through. In all changes of front to the rear the officers and sergeants on the flanks of companies will relatively change places—that is, the officer will always be in the leading rank for the time being. When marching, or halted, in fours, on the word of command "Right," or "Left, form," companies will be formed two deep to the right or left, as directed, regardless of front or rear rank. In all movements done on the march the leading company will move at a shortened pace. The leading fours of companies will also move at a shortened pace. In deployments on the march the officers commanding companies will move their companies diagonally as soon as the company immediately preceding gets the word to "Right, form" or "Left, form."

The advantages of these changes are obvious, but none more so than the ready way in which line can be formed to the reverse flank. All changes tending towards simplicity are doubly advantageous among volunteers, or in any system to be applied for the ready instruction of a population liable to a sudden call to arms. In such case every day saved to the recruit is of the highest importance. That system is the best which will train raw levies in the shortest time, and enable them with effect to enter upon campaigning in the field. Discipline, obedience, endurance and other soldierly qualities will soon follow.

The experience of the American war affords us a lesson in this direction, and the able generals who earned their dear bought experience in many bloody campaigns, have, since the termination of the struggle, devoted much attention to such modification and changes in tactics and evolutions as they deemed suitable to the

genius of a citizen soldierly, and rendered necessary by the altered conditions of warfare. The War Department confided this task to Major General Emory Upton, and the result of his labours was referred to a Board of Officers, consisting of Generals Grant, Meade, Canby, Barry and Grier, and Colonel Black. This Board of Officers, having taken the new system of infantry tactics into consideration, recommended its adoption, which was accordingly done on the 1st August of last year (1867).

The general advantages claimed for the new system are—(1.) Its easy application to all arms of the service, leaving nothing additional to any special branch, except the manual of the arm with which it fights, the adaptation of the words of command, the training of animals, and the management and care of the material with which it is equipped. (2.) The readiness with which the principles may be acquired by new troops abbreviating materially the time required to fit them for the field, and practically lengthening the soldier's effective terms of service, a matter of great importance in its relation to a volunteer force, which, in event of war, will form one of the principal means of defence.

The special advantages are stated to be (1.) That manœuvring by the rear rank, by inversion, and the countermarch, are dispensed with, substituting therefor rapid and simple conversions of front, and changes from column into line. (2.) An increase of the number of modes of changing from column to line, facing in any direction, diminishing the time required for these changes, and preserving always the front rank in front—advantages of vital importance in the presence and under the fire of an enemy. (3.) Provision is made for all column movements required in an open country; and, by the column of fours, for the movements necessary in narrow roads, wooded or obstructed country, without the extension incident to ordinary movements by a flank. (4.) Provision is also made for a single rank formation specially adapted to the use of breech loaders; and also (5.) for a system of skirmishing, from double or single rank, alleged to be superior, for offence or defence, to any existing system.

I purpose giving a brief synopsis of this new system of tactics with the object, in the first place, of showing the changes which the experience of the late war on this continent has dictated, and, in the next, to give the officers of the volunteer force some idea of the method of handling troops in use in the army of the only nation against whom they will ever likely to be arrayed.

I may premise that in the following pages I have, for greater clearness, made use of the words of command and technical expressions familiar to and practised by ourselves.

The whole system, both as to single as well as double rank, is based upon a front of four men as a unit.