"Drill" and "Manœuvre."

(Volunteer Service Gazette.)

On the radical distinction between the meaning of the above terms depends, as it appears to us, the whole system of infantry training laid down in the Red Book which has just been issued. "These regulations," says the preface, "are based on the principle of demanding great exactitude in the simplified movements still retained for drill, while conceding the utmost latitude to all commanders, of however small a unit, in manœuvre. The first must be carried out literally; the second must be observed in the spirit more than in the letter." Again, in the General Rules, under the head of "Manœuvre," we find that each file, or man in rank entire, is to be allowed 30 inches instead of 24 inches of front; that guides are to give "*Eyes front*" immediately the alignment is attained; and that "markers will not give points unless specially ordered"—in a word, that the "touch," to which so much importance is attributed on the drill ground, is to be given up when it might be supposed to be of some use, and that all the complicated machinery for preventing lines from overlapping and leaving gaps is to be abandoned when its use might perhaps prevent the occurrence of such serious mishaps from false estimation of intervals as occurred, for instance, at the Alma. For the rest, the chapters on Manœuvres, on Skirmishing, the Attack, etc., appear to have been very carefully considered and worked out. And, of course, the close formations which were abolished by the Army Order of last April do not appear in the present book. But otherwise Battalion, Brigade and Divisional Drill remain almost entirely as they were in 1884. The movements and formations that are retained are, it is true, comparatively few in number, as stated in the preface, but their execution is hampered by all the intricate mechanism which the Germans at least, and we believe most other continental nations, have utterly abandoned, and which even the authors of the book before us confess cannot be used in practice.

We are by no means advocates for the adoption of the German or any other foreign system of drill into the British army. The German system, at any rate, as we have tried to show two or three weeks ago, is essentially inapplicable to our service. But the Germans are great masters in the art of war, and although we cannot from the nature of things, adopt the details of their system, we may at least profit by the general principles on which they act. Now we have no hesitation in saying that their principles, as shown in the account we have recently been giving of the German Drill Book, are the exact opposite of those on which our system is founded. It is true that the Germans and the English agree in premising that while the mere "drill" must be carried out with the greatest exactitude, yet some latitude must be allowed in the execution of "manœuvres." But here the resemblance ends; for while the great aim of the Germans is to make the drill of the exercise ground as like that of the field of battle as possible, the English seem to have striven to make the two as different as possible. Almost the very first sentence in the German book is, "All drills must be adapted for war." The English book says, in effect, that the drills of the exercise ground must be conducted on a plan totally different to that which is used in the field. The Germans dispense with the use of "points" almost altogether in the field, but then they do not permit their troops to accustom themselves to the use of them on the drill ground. The Germans are, at least, as much opposed to slackness and looseness as the members of the United Service Club can be, and they expect quite as much accuracy of movement and regularity on the field as they do on the drill ground. Indeed, when the actual crisis of an attack comes, a strictness of step and general formality is enacted, which is not considered necessary on other occasions. A different system appears to be in favor in this country.

There is another point in which we must say our new drill book does not compare favourably with those of most foreign nations. We can quite understand that the British army must adhere to its traditional line formations, and, indeed, we do not see clearly how the Germans can safely dispense with them as completely as they do. We also admit that it is probably quite right to retain for British troops, who often have to fight at terrible numerical odds against savages or fanatical tribes, the habit of forming squares by battalions as well as by companies. But we affirm that the excessive prominence still given in the English drill book to movements of mere parade is much to be deplored. Take, for instance, "marching past." Troops must be accustomed, indeed, to pass in review before their chiefs, and there must be some rules for the method of doing so; but in the German and other continental armies these rules are of the simplest kind, whereas with us they are most complicated. The amount of time that a British battalion expends in rehearsing the various kinds of march past, to say nothing of trooping the colours, is always very considerable, and is to a great extent a loss of time which might be much more profitably employed. We are, indeed, sorry to see so much space still devoted in the new drill book to those parade movements, which, as the present Adjutant-General once said in public, are only useful for the amusement of the nursemaids in the park.

General Lord Alexander Russell, C.B, who left Canada a short time ago after a term as Commander-in-Chief of the Forces here, has been placed upon the retired lis., having attained the age of 67. He has been in the army for nearly half a century, having entered the Rifle Brigade in July, 1830. He obtained his regimental lieutenant-colonelcy in December, 1858, and retired on half-pay in February, 1871. Three years later he became a major-general, then got his lieutenant-generalship in March, 1878, and the full rank of general in April, 1886, on the retirement of Sir Edmund Whitmore. Lord Alexander commanded the South-Eastern District from April, 1877, to April, 1880, and in May, 1883, he was selected for the command of the troops in Canada. He was engaged in the Kaffir war of 1852, being present at the battle of Berea (granted the medal and clasp); and for his services in the Crimean campaign, when he took part in the siege and fall of Sebastopol and in the attack on the Redan, he was mentioned in dispatches (granted a brevet lieutenancy-colonelcy, the medal with clasp, the Sardinian and Turkish medals, and the fifth class Medjidie). Lord Alexander Russell was made a C.B. in June, 1877, and was granted a reward for distinguished and meritorious services in May, 1880.

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