

## NEW DRILL AND TACTICS.

(Continued from Page 74.)

"A division is to have two of its brigades in front, each formed as above, the third is to be in reserve, behind the centre, 500 or 600 yards in rear in line of battalion or half-battalion double columns. Though the centre is named as the position for the rear brigade, there is often one flank more liable to attack than another, and the divisional commander, free as he now is, will doubtless have his reserve near the flank likely to be attacked."

Our contemporary proceeds:—"A division formed in an open plain is to have a battery of artillery on each flank, with cavalry in echelon outside them. The rest of the cavalry and artillery to be on the flanks of the reserve brigade, behind the centre. When it is possible to bring the reserve artillery and cavalry into action, they can either come upon the flank or they can pass straight through the intervals between the half-battalion columns of the infantry line. While entirely rejoicing at the real progress in infantry tactics this order makes, we cannot but feel some astonishment at the ideas thus expressed on the place and work to be given to cavalry and field artillery, and it may fairly be asked, how did the infantry division get so comfortably established in its plain in order of battle? Did it win a way for itself under such circumstances that the cavalry and artillery are only now becoming up to see whether there is any room for them in the fight? Grateful as we are for so great a boon given to the army as this order is, it is impossible not to say that it fails to meet the usual form of modern battles, which occur by the meeting of two forces, one or both of them being on the march and having to begin the attack with whatever is in front at the time. Then the modern plan is to push on the artillery and let the infantry get into formation under cover of the guns. Indeed it is difficult to conceive any country in which infantry could form up so comfortably while a doubt existed as to the possibility of artillery action. It is common to talk of the great continental plains as so different for fighting purposes from the enclosures of England. But when we study the wars of modern times, we find that battles are not fought on such plains as a rule, but quite the contrary, in hilly districts or the environs of rich towns, where the land is cut up by streams; farms, walls, orchards, and villas with their exclusive gardens. The columns have first to march along the roads. They deploy with a world of difficulty—often, indeed, cannot deploy at all, but lay hold with the front of the columns, trusting to help there or diversions on the flank. The influence of Aldershot and the drill field seem to have hindered a full grasp of these truths, for we find nowhere throughout the whole order directions as to the march and method of engaging in battle from the march. It is doubtful whether any enemy would in these days permit of such quiet and orderly arrangements as those contemplated by the orders, which are applicable rather to the fashions of the past than the present. But perhaps we may yet look for a supplementary order treating that most important of military operations, the march and the attack from the march. Are the batteries to be near the front of the column as is the practice now on the continent, or are the infantry to be halted perpetually while the artillery is sent for? Some decision is wanted on these points before the next manoeuvres, which may be in a country

not so open as Salisbury Plain. The right idea was seized when the order was written, that artillery which has once found a good position should be seldom moved. It might have been well to add 'and when it is moved the pace should be the quickest possible,' for every moment the guns spend in moving is lost to their action against the enemy.

"Certain rules are laid down concerning changes of front, but as it is frankly stated afterwards that such changes of front 'through necessary for purposes of drill, would rarely be required on service,' we may ignore them, and only add that there are so many things to be learnt necessary for war purposes that perhaps for a time the changes of front necessary for drill purposes might be omitted, or at least passed over lightly. The bringing a column rapidly into action from the line of march is one of the things necessary for war purposes, and we earnestly hope it may have precedence over 'changes of front.' A brigade or division once formed up in the prescribed order will advance in war we are told, if there is any chance of a flank attack, keeping a brigade battalion in echelon on the exposed flank. In case of attack, such brigade or battalion will at once face the enemy, throwing out skirmishers and supports as if were alone, while the reserve will be brought up to extend and support the threatened flank. We presume that section seven represented only a parade movement, because it involves just such movements as those previously stated to be unlikely to occur in war, while it adds artillery and cavalry to the troops changing one position and occupying another, clearly only for drill purposes. As such we can only say of it that until we have got good hold of all movements necessary for war, it might be well to rest content without that intensity of labour at parade movements which they receive from persons who consider drill as an end in itself, and not a means towards efficiency in war.

"The section on 'the conduct of the attack of a division in the new formation' is incomplete in itself without the last paragraph in the section on 'the Cavalry and Artillery of a Division,' wherein it is laid down that 'the advance of infantry should always be preceded by a concentrated fire of artillery on the point selected for attack.' This is quite different from the order that guns should be so placed as to be able from a distance to bring a concentrated fire on the point where the attack is being made. The Prussian order issued in the midst of the war, after experience gained, was to the effect that no general was, at his peril, to make an attack with infantry till it had been well prepared by artillery. The impossibility of successful front attack upon an enemy not yet demoralised hardly seem to have taken root yet in the minds of English officers, and it is even proposed to march half-battalions in line over skirmishers who are checked, and thus gain the enemy's position. That the half-battalions will move up in war we firmly believe, but not that they will attack in unbroken line, as seem to be supposed. It may be taken as established that lines cannot go where skirmishers cannot, and that lines pushed closely in must and will have a tendency to dissolve themselves in a very good imitation of the skirmishers they were sent to help. Such is the opinion of all who have actually been present at modern battles, and we strongly recommend those who are still doubtful just to stand for half a minute under fire of a few breech-loaders. We can vouch for it they will find the effect quite as great as they anticipated.

"The attack is to commence with a gen-

eral advance, preceded of course by artillery fire. When the skirmishers are checked they will be reinforced by the supports; if the ground allows, the supports may even fire over the heads of the skirmishers. The effect in real war would be that the enemy, delighted at having so good a target, would inevitably fire with guns and small arms at the supports; but all that will right itself in time. If skirmishers and supports cannot get on, the line itself is to come into action, passing over the skirmishers, and to make a front attack if there appears to be any chance of success. Otherwise the skirmishing line will try to hold its own, while some of the half battalions behind try to gain the enemy's flank, a corresponding number of troops being brought from the reserve to reinforce the weakened part of the line. It is supposed that there will usually be a combination of front and flank attack. Guns may fire if necessary over the head of the infantry, and small bodies of cavalry may be used to make rushes upon the enemy's skirmishers, causing them to run into rallying squares and form a mark for their opponents. Such attacks are not to be followed up, being evidently intended to partake of the nature of feints." Our contemporary justly observes in conclusion:—"This is all, but it is all important. Once allow freedom of initiative to officers, requiring them to give a good account of the trust reposed in them and there must be a steady progress. Everybody will read and think and learn as only those can who read and think. The battles of late wars and the ideas derived from them by the actors will be familiar to Englishmen almost as if they had been present. Their minds will move in the same direction as those of the Germans, French, and other continental nations are moving now, and the few steps yet untaken will be achieved. But we urge once more the absolute necessity of small manoeuvres throughout the year, to practice both junior officers and men. Nothing can be more interesting, or a better variation to the monotony of garrison life. Wherever instituted they become popular; they teach more than any great manoeuvres, at least to those engaged in them, not to Generals and Staff. They cost nothing, and above all, they give a feeling of modesty worth acquiring, for it is only by trial that men find how little they know and how much there is to learn."

The proceedings of the Japanese authorities towards the captain of the Peruvian ship *Maria Leiz* are likely to lead to serious differences between the two countries. The ironclad *Independencia* to be followed by the corvette *Union*, are ordered to proceed to the China seas. Signor Garcia goes in the *Independencia*, armed with full powers to demand an explanation.

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