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The Volunteer Review,

AND

MILITARY AND NAVAL GAZETTE.

"Unbribed, unbought, our swords we draw,
To guard the Monarch, fence the Law."

OTTAWA, TUESDAY, DEC. 16, 1873.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.—Letters addressed to either the Editor or Publisher, as well as Communications intended for publication, must, invariably, be *pre-paid*. Correspondents will also bear in mind that one end of the envelope should be left open, and at the corner the words "Printer's copy" written and a two or five cent stamp (according to the weight of the communication) placed thereon will pay the postage.

PUBLISHER'S NOTICE.

The end of the present month closes Volume VII. of the *VOLUNTEER REVIEW*; and during the year we have made out and forwarded accounts to nearly all our Subscribers in arrears for Subscriptions to the *Review*. Some have promptly paid up their indebtedness—who will please accept our thanks—but by far the larger number have paid no attention to it—to those we give notice now, that if their accounts are not settled before the 1st of January next, we will be under the painful necessity of handing them over to a Lawyer for collection.

CAPTAIN H. BRACKENBURG, R. A., in a lecture delivered at the Royal United Service Institution on "The Tactics of the Three Arms as modified to meet the requirements

of the present day," says, "we have now arrived at a period when the necessity for some change in tactics as they have been practised by the British army, is generally, I will not say universally, acknowledged." He then says that the improvement in arms has brought about this desire for change; but we rather incline to the opinion that it is due to the theoretical deductions of a class of able and educated officers who have made the phenomena attending the result of the late Franco Prussian contest, a subject of intense and praiseworthy study, but have failed to see that it was not the system of tactics at all which led to Prussian victory and French defeat, but the simple principles of organization and discipline; and, therefore, at the very outset we are disposed to call in question the truth of the axiom on which the whole theory of the lecture rests, admirably as it is worked out. There are, however, throughout the lecture stores of practical information of the most valuable character—the clear enunciation of correct principles and condensed information generally of the most interesting kind.

It is laid down, with the terseness of a mathematical formulae that "the very root of the whole art of tactics" is *to break down the enemy's moral force and to sustain the moral force of our own troops*. That the means to this end are practically two—*fire and shock*. To break down the moral force of the enemy the chief aim of modern tactics is *to obtain the greatest development of accurate fire and to sustain the moral force of troops*, it is necessary first, that they should have acquired discipline, or implicit faith in and obedience to their officers; and secondly, training suited to war; thirdly, confidence by success at the outset; fourthly, aptitude to appreciate the topographical condition of the ground as to shelter and skill to avoid the destructive shot spheres; and fifthly, capacity to adopt formations to the conditions of the terre-plein over which the troops are operating. Those are undoubtedly valuable and correct principles, their application to actual practice, does not even on the gallant Captain's shewing constitute a revolution in the art of tactics as practised by the British Army, nor even such an attraction as would make it impossible for one of WELLINGTON's old Generals to command British troops in a modern battle notwithstanding the difference in the range and use of weapons so ably illustrated by the gallant lecturer between the periods of the Peninsular war and the present day.

Without attempting to enter into the minute and interesting details of the manner in which divisions, brigades, or battalions should be led into action, we come to what is really the gist of the whole lecture, *the fighting formation*, and the *Prussian drill* book which the gallant lecturer takes as his text—says: When actually under the enemy's fire the employment of battalion columns can only be justified by special cir-

cu instances. *The nominal fighting formation of the first line is therefore to be in company columns*—subsequently this formation is developed as *line four deep*, or the very formations advocated by Lieutenant Colonel MACDONALD of the Edinburgh Volunteers in his admirable pamphlet which we recommended some time ago. Let it be taken as it may we fail to see the necessity for any change whatever in our system of tactics, and we believe the only thing necessary to make British soldiers win as many victories as they did under WELLINGTON, is to train officers, non-commissioned officers and men to the necessity of advancing and skirmishing under cover; the question of supports and the disposition of the attacking force must altogether depend on the judgment of the officers in command and the features of the ground advanced over. In prescribing rules for the action under imagined conditions officers are binding the service with a more *rigid chain* than the *thin red line* ever yet affixed to skilful manipulation. The whole matter resolves itself into the fact that Prussia beat France with a series of encounters in which the latter power was over matched by man and machine power from the outset. That Prussia had not even the best weapons, possessed no faith in her own tactical formations, proved them to be radically visions in practice, and her success due to numbers, organization, and discipline, is set down by theorists to her superior tactical improvisations.

The error is a dangerous one every way, and should be carefully guarded against even though advocated by Field Marshal BARON VON MOLTKE.

Captain BRACKENBURG touches on the question of attack and defence, in order to illustrate the part artillery has got to play under the new condition of warfare, and lays it down as a rule that the defence cannot be impaired as long as the defenders are unshaken by artillery fire while the assailant has the advantage of choosing his position and concentrating his whole strength on a single point in the line of defence; therefore, the latter should be offensive as well as defensive.

For attack it is laid down that batteries should be massed both for effect and facility of command, that each gun detachment should employ a front of about 20 special yards, and that the sooner it could be brought into position and action the greater the effect on the results.

As infantry fire has acquired such range and accuracy, artillery instead of being detached with escorts can operate in rear of the troops with impunity. He shews from carefully prepared table and diagrams that artillery can fire with safety over the heads of troops from a range of 3 000 yards till they are within 73 yards of the enemy; at 2,500 yards till they are within 103 yards of the same point; at 2,000 yards till they are within 153 yards; and at 1,500 yards till