

## Modern Tactics.

[By Capt. H. R. Gall—From Illustrated Naval and Military Magazine.]

(Continued from Page 278.)

THE following is the generally accepted method in the British army of posting a battalion of eight companies in the front line of defence. It is open to the objection that companies are needlessly mixed up.

(1.) Firing line three companies in single rank, each man occupying one yard, which gives him room to use his rifle with precision at long ranges. This gives a front to the battalion of 300 yards.

(2.) Two companies in support, posted under cover, not more than 150 yards in rear, to replace casualties in the firing line.

(3.) Three companies, as local reserves, posted not more than three hundred yards back from the supports, to be moved up wherever they are required to expel any intruders immediately they gain a footing, and before they can be reinforced. At this moment the fire of the assailants must have ceased, and it is very favourable to deliver a well-directed counter attack with a compact body of fresh troops. This plan, in addition to mixing up companies in the firing line, divides a battalion into two unequal parts.

The following arrangement is suggested. Three sections of each of the four right or left half-battalion companies in the firing line, and the fourth section of each in support. This would give the same front, viz., 300 yards, and avoid all mixing of companies in the firing line, which would then remain always under their own section commanders.

A section per company in support ought to be ample for the purpose of replacing casualties, and would present a smaller target to the attack. The whole of the rear half-battalion would be in reserve, divided into two double companies if necessary, or kept together, according to the requirements of the position. The amount of fire action developed would be the same as before, the target smaller, and the reserves stronger.

### Fire Action.

The object of the defence is to endeavour to exhaust the attack. This is done by providing cover for everybody, supplementing whatever natural cover exists by entrenchments and redoubts. From this cover the defenders keep up a continuous fire from the moment they have an adequate mark to aim at. Ammunition should never be wasted by firing at an inadequate mark, and its expenditure ought to be controlled by section commanders; but considerable latitude should be given, as the object of the defenders is to prevent the assailants reaching within point-blank range of the position, and diminish their force at a distance, when their return fire can only be random and comparatively harmless.

The field exercise, Part V., under the heading

### Musketry Fire Tactics,

Lays down at considerable length, the limits of employment with the Martini-Henry rifle, and this section requires to be carefully studied.

"In action musketry fire is the main element. It cannot be left to individual initiation without the danger of its degenerating into a useless expenditure of ammunition.

"The duty of 'directing' musketry fire falls on the company commanders in the firing line (both in defence and attack); that of 'regulating' the fire on the section commanders, under the direction of the company commanders.

"The captain points out the objectives to be attacked, and the nature of the fire to be employed. He carefully watches the direction of the fire of the various sections, and endeavours to keep it under control.

"The section commander, having pointed out the position of the object on which the sections should aim, will name the distances for which the elevation is to be used, the number of rounds to be fired, and the description of fire.

"The direction and control of fire requires, on the part of the company and section commanders, calmness and decision, skill in judging distance, a quick perception in estimating the importance of the various objectives, together with a complete knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of the varying formation of the ground, and of the curve of the trajectory of the rifle at the different ranges.

"The general principles for the regulation and direction of musketry fire are as follows:—

"The number of men to be placed in the fighting line in the defence depends on the configuration of the ground. The fire must be slow enough to insure accuracy. Pauses of some length should occasionally be made to allow the smoke to clear away to judge of the effect produced, to give the necessary orders, and to keep the men steady.

"In the defence the pauses in firing should take place when the attacking troops are lying down or partly covered.

"The cessation of fire in one portion of the line of defence may often serve to draw on the enemy to the point which he thinks has been abandoned, and a sudden resumption of fire, from the same spot, will produce a considerable effect on the assailants.

"Volley firing keeps troops in hand, facilitates the employment of converging fire, allows of the correction of elevation and direction, by observing the points where the bullets strike, and affords the best means for regulating the expenditure of ammu-

munition, always a very important consideration, though less so in the defence than in the attack.

"The distances at which fire should be opened depend on the formation of the ground, on the vulnerability of the objectives, and on their tactical importance. Firing on an enemy at a 'long' distance may result in shaking him, and retarding his entry into action: it may render difficult the occupation of an important point, such as a bridge, an intersection of roads, or any particular line of advance imposed on him."

A remarkable instance of this was furnished during Suleiman Pasha's attack on the Shipka Pass. The Turks from the woody mountain position commanded the only line of retreat and of communication the Russians possessed, and at long ranges inflicted frightful losses on them.

"In the defence opportunities will be generally found for firing with effect at 'long' distances, and at 'medium' distances the practice of the defence should always be very destructive.

"Long range firing on the part of the defence may often have the effect of inducing the attacking force to break into extended order too soon, and to expend more ammunition at 'long' distances than they can afford."

### Artillery Fire Tactics in Defence.

If decidedly inferior to the artillery of the assailants the guns should be carefully masked, so as not to draw the concentrated fire of the attack upon them until the enemy's infantry shows. If not very inferior (taking into consideration the advantage of being able to throw up epaulments and procure cover by either natural or artificial means for gunners and teams) the defenders' artillery replies to that of the attack.

When the assailants' infantry appear, all the artillery fire of the defence should be directed on it, as, until the attacking infantry gets within rifle range of the position the defender's artillery can shell it with impunity, and every advantage should be taken of these precious moments.

At all times during the progress of an engagement, the defenders' artillery should look out for opportunities for firing on the enemy's guns when limbering up, in movement, or when forming for action; at such times they are silenced and very vulnerable.

The defenders should have the exact ranges of all the artillery positions capable of being occupied by the enemy carefully marked.

### Artillery with the Outposts.

The Field Exercise says:—

"The employment of artillery, except under special circumstances, might result in bringing on a general action in advance of the selected position, or in the capture of the guns.

"If, however, the outpost line commands, within range, defiles or bridges over which the enemy must pass, it may be advantageous to place guns to harass the enemy crossing; skirmishers in this case should be thrown forward to protect the guns from the enemy's sharpshooters, who might have crossed the fords by other means."

The increased accuracy and range of modern rifles is continually diminishing the effect of artillery fire, which, after all, on the field of battle, is limited to the range of human vision. The margin between the two arms in this respect is being continually reduced.

In 1877 the Russian artillery was very inferior; but Gen. Todleben appears to have attributed the feeble role that it played more to the use of artificial cover adopted by the Turks than any other cause. General Todleben is credited with having said that it took a Russian battery a whole day's firing to kill one Turk. The data on which this rough calculation was formed is not given; but such was the opinion of the first military engineer during the most recent European war.

Again, the Russians suffered more severely during the same campaign (1877) from the long range rifle fire of the Turks, directed from behind the cover of their entrenchments, than from their artillery, which was of the latest construction.

(To be continued.)

The 1st battalion of the King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry) under the command of Lieut.-Col. C. K. Chatfield, arrived at Mandalay from the Upper Burmah frontier on the 31st October, in the Indian Marine steamer *Sir William Peel*, en route to England. A short time after their arrival a lance-corp. of the bn., named Upton, fell overboard; the Colonel, who was standing with his officers on deck at the time, seeing the man fall over, ran to the bridge and jumped overboard in his uniform after him. Upton, who was unable to swim, rose only once to the surface, and sank just before the Colonel could reach him; he was never seen again. The Irrawaddy runs with dangerous force past Mandalay, and has proved fatal to many of our gallant soldiers. Col. Chatfield's right hand was partly disabled and bandaged at the time he jumped overboard. He swam some distance down the river in the hope of the unfortunate corporal coming to the surface again, but no trace of him was seen though hundreds of eager eyes were watching from the decks of the steamer. Two men of a company of the bn. which had disembarked, Privates Mills and Staton, both fine swimmers, seeing the excitement on board and someone in the water, pluckily went into the stream and swam out towards the steamer, and afterwards followed their colonel down the river. All three succeeded afterwards in reaching the shore without much difficulty. On the 2nd November, Maj.-Gen. Sir George White, K. C. B., V. C., commanding the Upper Burmah Field Force, accompanied by the whole of the headquarter staff, inspected this fine bn., which had disembarked on the occasion, and at the conclusion of the parade Sir George White referred to the above occurrence in a stirring address to the regiment. He said that while sympathising with them deeply on the sad fate of their comrade, he could not but congratulate them on having at their head an officer who had shown such gallantry, and who had not hesitated to risk his life in the hope of saving one of his own men with desperate odds against him.