

original, and will doubtless require some modification; but it is impossible to doubt that the principle of simplification embodied in his memorandum; is about to create a revolution, the first step towards which I think was involved in the recent changes in Deployments, whether so contemplated or not at the time those changes were made.

Understanding that the new drill was in course of trial at Aldersholt, I had expected to hear something more of probable results by this time, yet I am not altogether surprised when I take into consideration the slow march of toleration of the bugbear in novation. What is it in our national character, which makes us so desperately conservative alike of good and evil? In almost equal proportion to the American proneness to crude experimentalism, is our distrust of reasonable improvement where change is involved. Not till a terrible collision brought it home to the Admiralty, did the word "Larboard" give place to the word "Port." Only recently have the unhappy mariners ceased to toil at washing their white trowsers. The Field Exercise of 1862 contained a platoon for the Westly Richards breech loader, but five years elapsed before breech loaders became the national arm and then only under the startling sense of the results of the Austro-Prussian war. Very late in the day, the authorities awoke to the superior strength and better appearance of steel scabbards for infantry officers generally though the guards had them long ago. Yet it must be admitted that the proposed changes in drill require very mature consideration; but then, on the other hand, what facilities for trial does a well drilled Regiment of Regulars in camp afford; and what a wealth of talent and experience is available to test experiments. Let us then possess our souls in patience, and wait.

Another Query—Are double columns of subdivisions a generally useful or desirable formation?

May not the increased flexibility of single columns under the principles of the proposed drill, obviate much of the necessity for them?

Doubtless they possess, or are supposed to possess, certain merits. Forming to a flank, for instance, they have the advantage of covering the formation of one wing to its reverse flank by the instantaneous wheel into line of the other. But it is desirable that columns should move with as large a front as possible. The front of a double column of subdivisions is but equal to that of a single company. The single column is preferable to the double on the score of greater simplicity and superior facility of reduction without danger of confusion. May not the single column, therefore, with the increased flexibility attendant on the abolition of a fixed pivot flank, be found answerable to all the purposes sought to be attained by the double column of subdivisions? For, what is the advantage of half a batta-

lion wheeling into line, and thereby covering the formation of its reverse flank of the other half, if the single column, working on flanks changeable at a word from right to left (or *vice versa*) can at once wheel into line at the double either way. Indeed even the present formation by companies to a reverse flank seems to contain the advantages of the double column of subdivisions in this respect, as a column desirous of forming line in this manner to engage an enemy, would most likely be moving on a line parallel to the front its seeks to engage.

Under the F. E., 1862, the double column unquestionably afforded facility for quick deployment. But I question whether, even then, the deployment of a single column on a central company (itself an objectionably complex manœuvre) were not a quicker and simpler evolution than that of a double column of subdivisions. At all events the "Deploy outwards" of the F. E. 1867, seems to neutralize any advantage which the double column of subdivisions may have previously possessed in this respect.

It may be urged that it is good for an increase of front by the formation of companies—but, if required, how much easier and simpler to bring the rear wing parallel to the leading wing, or alternate companies parallel to those in front of them by a flank march of fours and a turn to the front.

But the double column of companies must still be unsurpassed for combined simplicity and rapidity of deployment, and would appear to be the formation most in favor for column of attack.

In this connection it might possibly also be worth while to enquire whether, in view of the recently devised rapid formation of two-deep square from a line of *four* companies, battalions in the field and on parade might not with advantage be made to consist generally of *eight* companies. Each wing would then be able to form a separate two-deep square from line, one or both moving into echelon. Or the formation might easily be extended to a four-deep square of the eight companies in this manner. Form an inner square at once of the four centre companies *i. e.* No. 4 stand fast, 3 and 5 wheel inwards and form the side faces, 6 take up the rear face as laid down in the account of the new drill first published in the VOLUNTEER REVIEW. No. 2 form in front of No. 4. No. 1 in front of No. 3—No. 7 in front of No. 5—No. 8 in front of No. 6, completing the rear face. This could be formed almost rapidly as the basis two-deep square.

On the basis of eight companies to a battalion, columns of attack might be formed of *wings* on a front of two companies, giving a depth of four ranks. The French ("Operations of War," chap. 5) seem recently to have favored a depth of six ranks, viz: Battalion columns of six companies on a front of two. But, as it seems to be a question whether, for the future, a single rank formation in line may not be found desirable

(though I doubt it); and as, at all events, a depth of *two* ranks sufficed us when *three* were in vogue with the French, I cannot but think a depth of *four* ranks for columns of attack would be found, of a solidity sufficient to compensate (with our weight and stamina) for the *elan* of a French column *six* ranks deep, and these would be less depth exposed to the enemy's fire. The position of captains in formations for attack under a new organization, would also appear to demand some attention. For parade purposes I think Captains could not be better placed than in rear of the centre of companies, but that position could scarcely be considered a proper one in an advance to attack. I am sure there is a gentleman in my battalion (whose eye I know this will meet, and whom, I hope, at some early day, to see at the head of a company) whose yearnings for the Victoria Cross would be but ill-satisfied by a position in rear. For I entirely discredit some hints of a shameful compact with a brother officer to the effect that when the latter shall have in some mysterious way, procured himself to be slightly wounded, or to appear stunned, the former is to carry him off or attend to him, under a Fenian *feu d' enfer* with such distinguished bravery and humanity that his comrades must perforce acknowledge his superior valor and devotion.

With regard to skirmishing neither the American system as explained by Captain Dartnell, nor the French appear to possess any advantage over ours, unless the French extension in groups of four men be deemed one. "The two files of these groups are five paces apart, and the maximum intervals of groups forty paces, to be diminished at need. The groups, in case of a loose attack of cavalry form squares—a man at each face." But our rallying squares (F. E. p. 365) amount to the same thing. I notice, however, that, "Against more formidable attacks, they form solid circles of sections, subdivisions or companies." Not, be it observed, anything like our close column of sections, which appears to me to be a formation of questionable utility for the actual line of skirmishers, whatever it may be for supports.

Having propounded a number of "queries," I would now make one or two "notes"—Impressed as I am with the admirable arrangement, and the precision of language, of our Field Exercise, there are yet I think some few redundancies which might be cut out—one or two inconsistencies which might be reconciled—and one or two alterations which are supposed to be improvements, but which rather wear the aspect of errors. As an example of a first class, is not the paragraph about the length of leg in tall men at p. 169, superfluous, now that men are allowed three inches more than formerly in the ranks? Volunteers are, happily, debarred from practising the slow march, or one would be tempted to protest against