

OBSERVATIONS ON AND DIRECTIONS

FOR THE PRACTICE OF

BROAD SWORD EXERCISE,

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INTRODUCTORY.

The Infantry Regulation Sword Exercise has seldom been taught in the service to render it of practical use; this may in a great measure have arisen from the deficiency of proper instructors, as it almost invariably happens that those appointed to superintend are non-commissioned officers, who merely know the routine of drill as laid down in the Book of Regulation, and consequently are unable to explain correctly the meaning and use of each movement; their whole attention being given to the "Squads" going through the *form* of the exercise; keeping time in their movements; and attending to it merely as a Set up Drill.

The "Broad Sword" as a science, is composed of but few complicated movements, founded on the most natural principles, which require little attention to master, and which, when once acquired, give confidence to the possessor, who can with either sword or stick defend himself with ease, and assault his adversary with success.

The skill our cavalry obtained in the last European war was from the practice of the "Loose Stick Play;" the necessity of which was taught them by the fact that the best sword drills of a cavalry regiment were completely worsted by some Irish peasants with the stick. It is scarcely necessary to add, that if this manly exercise was more frequently practised, it would be found an agreeable and healthful amusement.

Although an officer may seldom have occasion to use his sword, still there are times in which his knowledge of the exercise may be serviceable, as in an assault, or boarding an enemy's vessel, where single combat frequently takes place, and it surely ought to be the pride of all entitled to wear swords, to make themselves masters of their proper use.

The present Regulation Infantry and Naval Sword is a light sabre, and is by far the best adapted and most efficient one that could be introduced into the services; from its lightness and facility in cutting and thrusting, it can be used in single combat with as much effect as the small sword, when wielded by the hands of a scientific and active player; and for general purposes is infinitely superior, being stronger to parry the thrust of pike or bayonet. The hand is also protected by the half basket guard, which in a mêlée will often ward off a blow and prevent the fingers being disabled.

The perfection to which the Regulation pattern has been brought by Mr. Henry Wilkinson, of Pall Mall, London, whose proof blades, combining strength with temper and lightness, have been now so fully tested, and are so widely known, that no comment is required.

In his observations on swords will be found useful hints as to their manufacture, &c.

Being an old pupil of Angelo's, and for many years practising on his system of the Broad Sword, it was long before I could bring myself to think fit could be improved upon, but the result of practical experience with eminent players of 'Bushman' school has proved to me many errors in the existing theory of the use of the sword. Not only every error, but everything not reducible to practice in actual conflict, ought to be expunged, which, after all, is the only legitimate end to be kept in view.

The following remarks are intended to point out the objections of "Bushman" to many parts of the Regulation Sword Exercise of Angelo; and the system can be easily acquired by any one conversant with the present regulation code.

BROAD SWORD EXERCISE.

The Cuts.

By regulation there are seven Cuts, as are fully explained in "ANGELO'S SWORD EXERCISE;" the preparatory part of which is very good; but the cut "Seven" may be advantageously dispensed with, because the

cuts "One" and "Two" will always be found to reach the head, and are by far the strongest cuts; for, in the event of the attacking party delivering these cuts, and not meeting the opposition, or guard of his opponent, the sword will in all probability clear itself, and not subject the party to a disarm; a consequence which the cut "Seven," or *vertical cut*, when given with force, and not met by opponent's weapon, would certainly entail. There are many other objections to this cut, such as the battle-axe style for the preparation, by raising the hand over the head, the sword hanging down in a line with the back, &c.; there being no other position by which the *vertical cut* could be delivered, with the exception of placing the sword on the right shoulder, and the arm raised as described in the book of regulation; thus leaving the whole body exposed to a sudden attack.

The other cuts can be given from an engaging guard, and without drawing back the arm, which the cut "Seven" cannot be given without. Many other remarks on the inefficiency of the cut seven might be added, such as frequently seeing Dragoons and others at "Loose," or Independent Practice, lose the sticks out of their hands; but whether from the manner in which they are taught to shift the leg, or change the grasp of the sword, by placing the thumb along the back of the handle, it is difficult to say, but it is certain that it frequently occurs with sticks. With the sword nothing of the kind could be attempted.

THE GUARDS.

By Regulation, there are *Seven*, three of which, viz: the Third, Fifth and Sixth, can be safely dispensed with. The third has never been found to be of any use, and has not been attempted except in the Parade Movements of the sword exercise. The Fifth and Sixth guards, formed by regulation, "perpendicularly," are useless, as no return can be given from either of them.—All the guards required are "four"; and, as in fencing, called Prime (first guard,) same as the Regulation Seventh, or engaging (hanging) Guard. *Seconde* (second guard) is the Regulation Fourth Guard.—This guard can be formed from the Prime (or first guard,) by lowering the hand and carrying the blade to the right. *Tierce* (third guard,) is the Regulation Outside, or Second guard, and can be formed from *Seconde* by raising the point and turning the edge to the right, without altering position of the wrist. *Carte* (fourth guard,) is Regulation First, or Inside Guard.

Each of these can be used as "Engaging guards," and the cut, or thrust, delivered from them without drawing back the arm, as laid down by regulation, by which much time is lost, in making the cuts a complicated motion.

THE POINTS.

By regulation *Three*.—The objection to the regulation instructions is, the drawing back of the arm to prepare for each point, the shifting of the grasp of the sword for each, the thumb on the left of the handle in one case, and on the right for the other.—This must be abandoned, as it could never be attempted in the Loose, or Independent Practice.

THE PARRY.

The Parry, as laid down by regulation, is perfectly useless. The only effective parries that can be made with the Broad Sword are from Prime to *Seconde*, or *Seconde* to Prime, or from *Seconde* to *Tierce*, and *Tierce* to *Seconde*, or *Carte*, these being the natural parries, and by far the quick-

est and most sure in case of leints. The practice, called in the regulations "Point" "Parry," is of no use whatever, and never could be put in practice. Any one at all acquainted with the use of the sword, will see the absurdity of this practice, where the parties engaged are delivering the point, and the others parrying, each by word of command, it being well known they cannot reach each other, as they remain in the second position: one pointing and immediately raising his sword perpendicularly, with the arm in a cramped position, and the body leaning forward on the right leg, the other party with the weight of the body entirely on the left leg, leaning as far back as he possibly can, and the sword-arm drawn even farther back than by Regulation, preparing for the Third Point, and this by word of command, "Point," &c., &c., and thus they see-saw backwards and forwards until the order, "Slope Swords," is given.

ATTACK AND DEFENCE.

The First Practice, or *Attack and Defence*, with the seven cuts at particular places, and the seven corresponding guards, with the additional shifting of the leg to first position each time of defence, whether the cut is delivered at head or leg, is quite in the *Theatrical style*, by which every and any mode of handling the sword, or working the body should be designated, that would appear to have mere show for its object, and which experience in actual conflict proves could not be attempted.

The Second practice has been already explained in the remarks on the Point and Parry.

The Third, or *Leg Practice*, is still worse than the First Practice, as it does away with all science, and the swordsman, by being so taught, will, as soon as he once knows the shifting of the leg, never think of forming any other defence, for, the instant he is attacked, whether the cut or point be directed at his head, arm, ribs or leg, will immediately spring to the first position, at the same time delivering cut seven at the head. The Dragoon, when mounted, cannot do so: he is there compelled to guard himself, and cannot shift his leg. The practical swordsman will at once see the utility, or rather defect, of such a practice, as it teaches the swordsman to make the evasion and return his only means of defence, to the utter abandonment of all science, and of every chance of acquiring it by such a mode of teaching.

The Fourth and Fifth Practices are all in the same style, but could be greatly improved by the parties when defending themselves, trusting more to their guards, than by trying to recover to the first position, which is scarcely possible if the party attacking cuts with intent to hit. The return is so quickly given by the defending party at head or leg, either inside or outside, it matters not, that it is impossible to evade the return by any other way than that of guarding it.

THE ASSAULT.

The *Assault* should consist of six cuts, as laid down by regulation; with the exception that the pupil should at first be placed in front of the target, standing square to his front, the legs apart: in this position let him make such cuts as are required by the Instructor, until he is well acquainted with the true direction of the edge; each cut to be directed the full height of the target.

The Guards, as already explained, are four, which will defend any cut, high or low, given in any of the directions, as laid down in the Assault. The Prime Guard will defend the cuts, One, Three, and Five,