

## THE DUTIES OF FIELD ARTILLERY IN ACTION.

BY LIEUT.-COLONEL W. KEMMIS, R.A.

(Continued from Page 92.)

### THE FULL NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS.

We suppose a full N.-C. officer in particular charge of each gun, under the divisional officer; his first business on the command "Action," having previously taken a survey of his surroundings, will be to unlimber his gun and place it as quickly as possible to the best advantage with respect to fire, cover, etc., and to assure himself that each man of the detachment is in his place and everything connected with the working of the gun ready; he should next take account of the force and direction of the wind, the difference of level of the gun wheels, if any, in order to determine the amount of allowance to make in setting the sights for such deflecting causes so soon as he receives the order to "load" and is informed of the objective; at the same time, he should note the position of the commander and the subordinate officer, in order to know from what direction to expect his further orders, and so to hear and grasp them at once. Thus being, with his detachment, completely ready for action, if any time still intervenes before he receives the command to "load," he may usefully employ it in more closely observing the ground all round and the enemy, and possibly, by the use of spade or pick, improve the spot on which the gun rests or the cover for the detachment.

It will be the N.-C. officer's next duty to carry out the order to "load," not only performing to the best of his ability and energy the part which he then has to play, but seeing that each of those under him does so likewise, and thus that the due service of the gun is carried on, come what may, correctly and quickly. The detail which necessarily falls upon the N.-C. officer in this is setting the sights, laying the piece and, if time-fuze is ordered, adjusting it to length, because these points are of first importance and require most care and skill, while they can conveniently be done by him; further, with regard to the fuze, if not adjusted by him, it would probably have to be prepared at the limber, where he could not supervise it, and a mistake might easily arise in passing the order for its length.

His gun being loaded and laid correctly, the N.-C. officer is responsible that it is fired as ordered, when he should note the strike, or burst, of the projectile, that he may amend the deflection if it so requires, and also by his own observation assist the judgment of his officers if called upon to do so<sup>1</sup>; after that he maintains it in action to the best of his power until the command, or circumstances, compel him to cease firing.

Should his gun become disabled so that it cannot be fired, it will be his duty at once to take steps to bring it into action again or, if this is impossible, to place it in a condition for removal; again, should the enemy get amongst the guns, and no order for retiring have been given, having kept up his fire to the last moment possible, he should see to disabling the piece so that the enemy could neither use it nor remove it.

On "cease firing" sounding, the N.-C. officer, if the guns are not limbered up and moved off, should carefully look round his charge, taking note of all damage, etc., amending anything that he may and report to his officer.

The pay sergeant, as he may be one of the full N.-C. officers, here requires special mention; from the nature of his daily duties as accountant and clerk he must be a specially-selected and trained man, and therefore not easily replaced at any time, but particularly so when a successor has to be found on the field and on the instant, to take up the duties without warning, just as his predecessor happens to have left his documents and papers. Be as careful as he will in keeping and checking his accounts and returns, the commander is pretty certain to be brought into difficulties by the sudden loss of his pay sergeant at the time when all his energies are required to maintain his battery effective in personnel and matériel. The conclusion we would draw from this is that the pay sergeant should not be brought under fire if he can reasonably be left out of it, and in this view he should be left with the first or second line of wagons; if he be the junior staff-sergeant the former should be the case, but if not the latter, as being the more secure post and at the same time a suitable one, because some n.-c. officer of responsibility and not an artificer should be in charge of the second line of wagons.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In rapid independent fire at close ranges it is impossible to do much in the way of observation, nor is much needed. The firing will then be in the N.-C. officer's own control, and he can do anything, subject to his officer's instructions, which he thinks will improve the effect.

<sup>2</sup> Uniting the duties of qr.-mr. sergeant and pay sergeant in the person of the former seems to us objectionable, and still more so having a sergeant the No. 1 of a gun acting as pay sergeant: we believe the service would be much benefitted by an additional sergeant as pay clerk being allowed to each battery.

### THE RANK AND FILE NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS.

These n.-c. officers should fill the posts next in importance to those sustained by the full n.-c. officers, while the senior amongst them should be available to take the place of the latter when required.

The general duties in action next in importance, after the charge of the individual guns, are the charge of the separate limbers and wagons, for of necessity there must be a particular n.-c. officer responsible for each, though a staff n.-c. officer be over each group, as the latter cannot see to the details connected with each carriage nor look after it when temporarily away from the main body.

The senior rank and file n.-c. officer of each sub-division should be the one placed in charge of the limber, that, as the one first to succeed the full n.-c. officer at the gun if he falls, he may be ready at hand to do so: to the next in seniority the care of the wagon should be given.

The first duty of each of these n.-c. officers will be to carry out the orders given them by the officers or by the staff n.-c. officer immediately over them and to look closely after their charges, particularly the drivers and the teams; they should see that every man under them performs his duty correctly, that any casualty or damage is put to rights, as far as it can be, without delay or confusion, so that the carriage and everything with it may be kept serviceable and ready to move on the instant.

When wagons are sent forward with a fresh supply of ammunition for the limbers, the senior of the n.-c. officers with them takes charge of the whole, and on arrival at the limbers should report to the staff n.-c. officer of the latter what supply he has brought and receive from him any directions there may be to give respecting it. In shifting the ammunition, while the n.-c. officer with each limber<sup>1</sup> should see that the limber boxes are carefully and properly packed, he with each wagon should superintend the removal of the ammunition from the latter and, having the spare gunners under his direction, be responsible that the shift is carried out orderly and quickly. On the duty being completed the senior n.-c. officer of the wagons conducts them back to the remainder and on arrival reports to the staff n.-c. officer in charge. When empty wagons are sent to the reserve to be refilled a similar method should be pursued.

Any rank and file n.-c. officers over and above those in charge of the limbers and wagons should be held in reserve with the latter ready to fill the place of those that fall.<sup>2</sup>

(To be continued.)

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### HOW SHOULD A DESERTER BE TREATED?

To the Editor of the Canadian Militia Gazette:

SIR,—There are many points in our Militia system which I should like to see debated in your promising little paper. One is the question, how should a deserter be dealt with so as to be in accordance with our Militia law and the Rules and Regulations of 1883? and in order to draw forth an expression of opinion from the Officers of the force permit me to suppose a case as follows:—A private while on active service with a provisional battalion, composed partly of his own, deserts, and after a while returns home. In the interests of discipline it is essential to punish him. Query, 1st. What is the proper course to pursue? 2nd. By whom or by what tribunal is he to be tried? 3rd. To what penalty is he subject? Correspondents please quote sections and paragraphs of the Act and R.R. These questions at first sight may appear simple, but experience proves the vagueness of our law.

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BARRIE, Aug. 5th, 1885.

## REGIMENTAL NOTES.

### INSPECTION OF THE FUSILIERS.

BELLEVILLE.—The 15th Battalion, A.L.I., were last week inspected by Lieut.-Col. Villiers, D.A.G., accompanied by Adjutant Ponton, of the Midland Battalion and Major King, District Paymaster. The Battalion never were in better shape, having been drilling all through the recent troublous times, and the Inspecting Officer stated that they were entitled to stand in the front rank among City Battalions. And this without a drill shed or even a respectable armory to cover Her Majesty's property or Her Majesty's soldiers.

The reception to three companies of the Midland at Belleville was unsurpassed, save by the receptivity of the returned prodigals; for whom were killed the fattest calves; for whom were aired the finest sheets; for whom were kept the choicest dainties, both gastronomical and osculatory.—*Cm.*

<sup>1</sup> The coverer should never have to hold the No. 1's horse, the centre driver can always do so, thus leaving the coverer more free: the lead driver can always hold the officer's horse, the coverer leading the horse to him on "action" and bringing the horse back on "limber up."

<sup>2</sup> It may sometimes be necessary to place a n.-c. officer in charge of vedettes, if so he should be in direct communication with the commander.