

therefore, less liability to get mixed than there was heretofore. Still, we do not think that it would be advisable to adopt such a system, because, in the first place, the organization of our battalions and companies is unsuited to such a system, and in the second, because the old fault of density without solidity still remains; for even in this formation, there would be, on an average, four men to the yard, without reckoning the other regiment in rear, and it would be in the highest degree difficult, at the actual moment of attack, to change from that to any more solid formation.

Now let us turn to England. During the Autumn Manœuvres several systems were given a trial, but in all the same defects were observable, in all the general idea seemed to be the advance of a line covered by successive lines of skirmishers, which at the moment of attack were reinforced by the line itself extended in skirmishing order; the result was, the men of different companies became hopelessly intermixed, and all control over them was lost by the officers. If we are to adopt the "swarm," for Heaven's sake let us have the Prussian organization; with them, even confusion reigns, but with us the "swarm" means absolute chaos.

A system slightly different from the rest was that proposed, if not employed, by Sir Charles Staveley, as suitable for a division of three brigades each of 3 battalions; by this system two brigades were to be in the first line, while the third was in reserve, in column of double companies, either in line at deploying intervals, or in echelon. The first line, when formed for attack, was disposed as follows: The inner battalion of each brigade extended three companies in skirmishing order so as to cover the whole front; then another line of skirmishers, also of three companies, was thrown out, and the two remaining companies were formed as supports in rear; the centre battalions of each brigade then advanced in line, while the outer battalions, also in line, were refused, so as to protect the flanks of the division. This system certainly had marked advantages, but still is far from fulfilling the conditions required. The advantages attending it are:—

1. That a flank being refused, front can be easily and rapidly changed.
2. That the reserve occupying, as it does a central position, and point in the line can be speedily supported.
3. That skirmishers may be easily reinforced. But, on the other hand, every fresh reinforcement of skirmishers would only tend to increase the confusion—at first the companies, and then the battalions would become intermixed; again, advancing such a formation in the face of a heavy fire would be impossible, as the long unwieldy lines, owing to their slow rate of advance, would suffer most terribly from the enemy's fire.

But if we presume to criticize every formation that has been employed or suggested by others, we must ourselves not shrink from the onerous task of supporting some system in the place of those we have condemned, and this task we approach with the utmost reluctance, feeling, as we do, our own incompetence to treat so important a subject with the vigour and penetration which are its due; and knowing only too well the long and brilliant array of military writers, exponents of the Prussian system. It is with feelings of the utmost deference to their opinions that we now venture to suggest a system in opposition to their views. The system of attack that we would advocate is briefly this: That the attack should

as heretofore, be carried out by skirmishers, but that the present method of skirmishing be modified; that the battalions in rear should then advance as long as possible in close column, and, if necessary, by wings, every advantage been taken of all cover that may be afforded by the natural lay of the land, but from the moment of coming under fire the advance to be made in line at open order, either by alternate wings or by alternate companies, according to the nature of the ground; each successive line advancing about a hundred paces at the run and then lying down to regain breath, while the line in rear passes it in like manner; the moving lines to advance as rapidly as possible without firing, the line lying down to cover the advance of the moving line by a sustained and rapid fire. In this manner the whole line would gradually approach the enemy, and that, we believe without excessive loss; on arriving in close proximity, if the enemy had not already given way the wings or companies for the time being in rear should close with those in front so as to occupy their respective original positions in line; thus the final charge would be delivered in a formation somewhat approaching to that grand old order, the traditional British line. The battalions in second line must keep pace with those in front, and be ready at the decisive moment to support them, for in these days of far ranging weapons it is more than ever necessary that an attack when made should be successful; the losses that would be suffered in retiring are too frightful to contemplate. Success is obligatory. Such then is the system of attack that we would suggest as being suitable both to the existing conditions of warfare and to the national character. Now let us consider this system a little in detail. We have said that the present system of skirmishing should be modified; our reason for this assertion is, simply, that the method of skirmishing laid down in the drill-books is incompatible with order, for by it we cannot reinforce skirmishers without hopelessly intermingling the men of different companies. What we propose in its place is this: that the front rank only of the flank companies of the battalion should first be extended, so as to cover the whole front, each company covering its own wing; that this line having advanced about fifty yards, the rear rank of the flank companies should be extended, and then double through the front rank line of skirmishers, going about fifty paces to the front, then lying down, and continuing the firing till passed in like manner by the front rank; if at any moment it became necessary to reinforce the line in front, that in rear would simply double up, and join it; and then, instead of having two companies mingled together, you would find the men to be in almost exactly their original relative positions. When these lines of skirmishers had advanced some two or three hundred yards, the battalions—themselves the actual supports—might be put in motion. If advancing by alternate companies, the advance might be made in what we propose to call the open formation—that is, instead of preserving the touch, extending so that there should be an interval of about a pace between each file; this would most ~~apparently~~ lessen the loss, and would render a rapid advance more easy. Such a formation would not, however, be applicable to anything larger than a company, for the reason that a battalion extended would occupy too much ground, and so interfere with the advance or fire of regiments on either flank, and also because a battalion would take too

long either to extend or close. A company, on the contrary, might extend or close most rapidly. Take for example a company of thirty files; when touch is preserved, such a company occupies twenty yards at "open formation;" with about two feet between each file, the same company would occupy about forty yards; therefore, in extending from the centre, the flank files would at most only have to take ground outwards about ten or a dozen yards; and to do this would not take long. Now, by so extending, the alternate companies would fill the intervals that would have been between them, had they advanced with touch preserved; these two lines would therefore have the appearance of two successive lines of skirmishers, but with this incalculable advantage over ordinary lines of skirmishers, that by closing on their respective centres, each company can quickly reassume a more solid formation, and that by bringing up those companies for the time being in rear, the intervals would be filled, and line reformed. While this manœuvre is taking place, the skirmishing companies might gradually edge away towards their respective flanks, and thus, while making way for the battalion, might occupy the gaps between regiments.

This system, we think, combines the advantages of an advance made in a manner calculated to incur the least possible loss, and an attack delivered in an order sufficiently compact to render such an attack effective. It is probable that the steady but rapid advance of these thin successive lines, the continual fire, the rapid transition from loose, order to line would have a far greater moral effect upon an enemy than the usual haphazard advance of clouds of skirmishers; and of the actual physical effects at close quarters, we think little doubt can exist. Having explained the method of advance for a battalion, it only remains to say that when attacking by brigades, the skirmishers should at the last moment retire, or, rather, take ground towards the flanks of their respective battalions, and one rank, that for the time being in rear, should form a support; thus the intervals between battalions would be filled, and their flanks would in some degree be protected by these supports.

Such a system has the further merit, that little or no change would be required in organization; but we would remark *en passant*, that we consider it disadvantageous for many reasons that a company should exceed forty files, or that there should be more than eight fighting companies in the battalion: this would give a maximum strength of 640 bayonets; but for our part we should prefer seeing battalions of six companies of forty files—that is, 450 in all.

Now let us turn to the question of defensive tactics. An attitude strictly and entirely defensive is naturally deprecated by all writers, and condemned by all soldiers; therefore we may assume that as a rule a defensive action simply consists in allowing the enemy to develop his attack, and then, having discovered his weak point, acting offensively when and where an offensive action would be most likely to meet with happy results; but although this may be the general idea of the defensive, still there must always be some parts of the line which are actually attacked, and it is the manner of meeting these attacks which we now propose to discuss.

It may be argued that there is little need for changing the defensive tactics of the present day, and this we admit to be true in