

THE PLATOON EXERCISE FOR THE SNIDER BREECH-LOADING RIFLE.

The instructions are in the forms of a sub-attention for sections 4 to 10 inclusive, Part III. of the "Field Exercise" of 1862.

Recruits are taught in the first instance to load from the order instead of the shoulder. Squads instructed by numbers, either standing or kneeling, are always to be in single rank. The following are the details for loading by numbers:—

CAUTION.—PLATOON EXERCISE BY NUMBERS, AS A FRONT (OR REAR) RANK STANDING.

Load. Turn on both heels to the right-half face, carrying the rifle round with the body; and, with the long rifle, place the thumb of the right hand behind the barrel to seize it. The right foot to point to the right, the left to the front, eyes to look to the front.

Two. Advance the left foot, moving the body with it, ten inches to the left front, (viz., six to the front, and eight to the left,) toes to point to the front; at the same time, bring the rifle to a horizontal position at the right side, with the small of the butt just in front of the right hip, grasping the stock with the left hand between the lower band and the projection in front of the lock plate, thumb between stock and barrel, and half-cock with the thumb of the right hand, fingers behind the trigger-guard. The left elbow to be kept close to the body as a support for the rifle—the right hand to hold the small of the butt lightly, the elbow to the rear, thumb resting on the comb of the hammer. As a rear rank, the left foot to be advanced six inches, the body moving with it, and the butt to be four inches above the hip.

Three. Open the breech by a sharp turn of the right hand from left to right, then carry the hand to the pouch and take hold of a cartridge at the rim with the forefinger and thumb.

To open the breech, place the thumb on the thumb-piece of the breech-block, and the forefinger along the nipple-lump, the remaining fingers to be closed in the hand.

Four. Put the cartridge into the barrel, pressing it well home with the thumb, and close the breech firmly by canting the breech-block to the left with the fingers; then carry the hand to the small of the butt, and hold it lightly with the fingers behind the trigger-guard, thumb pointing to the muzzle.

When the feet are at right angles, as detailed in the 2nd motion, care must be taken not to increase the angle by turning the toes of the right foot to the rear, which would tend to alter the proper position of the right shoulder in firing.

At—yards Ready. Adjust the back-sight—full-cock with the thumb of the right hand, fingers behind the trigger-guard—and fix the eyes steadfastly on some object in front. Thumb to point to the muzzle after cocking.

The back sight will be adjusted as follows: With the fore-finger and thumb of the right

hand, move the sliding bar until the top is even with the line, or at the place on the flanges showing the distance named; then, if necessary, raise the flap carefully, preventing it from springing up with a jerk, and afterwards carry the hand back to the small of the butt.

Present. Bring the rifle smartly to the shoulder, pointing the muzzle a few inches below the object on which the right eye is fixed, and place the forefinger round the trigger like a hook, but without pressing it, that part between the first and second joint to rest on it.

The centre of the butt to be pressed firmly to the shoulder with the left hand—the top of the butt to be even with the top of the shoulder—the left elbow to be under the rifle as a support—the right elbow to be raised nearly square with (but not too high), and well in front of, the right shoulder; to form a bed for the butt—the right hand to hold the small of the butt lightly, thumb pointing to the muzzle—the left eye to be closed. This motion is to be performed without moving the left hand from its grasp, or bending the body, or raising the heels.

Two. Raise the muzzle steadily, until the top of the fore-sight is brought in a line with the object through the notch of the back-sight, pressing the trigger at the same time without the least motion of the hand, eye or arm, until the hammer falls, still keeping the eye fixed on the object.

Three. Bring the rifle to a horizontal position at the right side,—shut down the flap of the back sight, if raised, without moving the sliding bar,—half-cock,—open the breech, and, holding the breech-block firmly with the forefinger and thumb, by means of the thumb-piece and nipple-lump, draw it back as far as possible by a jerk, raising the muzzle of the rifle slightly in doing so, to remove the empty cartridge-case, at the same time cant the rifle sharply over to the right to allow the case to fall out, bringing it again to the horizontal position: carry the right hand to the pouch, and take hold of a cartridge at the rim with the forefinger and thumb.

Four. Proceed with the 4th motion of the "Load" (No. 1) as before detailed.

It will be observed, (1) That the loading is at once proceeded with after firing, without word of command. (2) That advantage has been taken of the issue of the new regulations to condense the first four motions of the "present" into two.

Shouldering and ordering arms from the position of "load" standing, are to be done as shouldering and ordering are now done from the capping position, except that the whole movement is done at the word "arms" and does not commence at "shoulder" or "order" as at present. The "ready" is also assumed from the "shoulder" or "order" as now. "Firing a volley and shouldering" is thus detailed:

CAUTION.—BY NUMBERS, FIRE A VOLLEY AND SHOULDER.

At—yards. Ready. Present. Two. As before detailed. As before detailed

Three. As before detailed; and after throwing out the empty cartridge-case, shut the breech—case springs—then rest a pause of the slow time, and taking the time from the right, turn on the right heel to the front, and shoulder at the same time, waiting a pause of slow time before quitting the hand.

Loading standing from the shoulder requires no extract. The men at the word "load" come to the first motion of "ready" from the shoulder, and then proceed with the second, third, and fourth motions of "load" as before detailed. The following is of course new:—

To unload when it is not required to fire off the Charge.

Unload— Rifles. When at the position of "Load," open the breech—draw the breech block back as far as possible by a jerk, raising the muzzle of the rifle slightly in doing so to withdraw the cartridge; at the same time cant the rifle sharply over the right to allow the cartridge to fall into the hand; then shut the breech with the fingers bringing the rifle again to the horizontal position—return the cartridge to the pouch—and case springs.

As we said above, there is nothing between loading and firing by numbers, and loading and firing in quick time. The words of command for the latter (standing) are as follows:

CAUTION.—PLATOON EXERCISE AS A FRONT (OR REAR) RANK STANDING.

Load. In four motions. At—yards Ready. In one motion. Present. In four motions. Shoulder— Arms. In two motions. Fire a Volley and Shoulder. In two motions. At—yards Ready. Present. In three motions, and having closed the breech, eased springs, &c., turn to the front and shoulder

The regulations for loading and firing kneeling are as follows:

To Fire and Load kneeling, by Numbers.

The squad having loaded standing, and being at shouldered arms will be instructed as follows:

CAUTION.—BY NUMBERS, AS A FRONT (OR REAR) RANK KNEELING, FIRE A VOLLEY.

At—yards Ready. Two. Proceed as detailed for the first motion of the "Ready" from "The Shoulder."

Bring the rifle to a horizontal position at the right side as in the second motion of the "Load" from the "Order" at the same time, sink on the right knee twelve inches to the rear and six to the right of the left heel, and square with the right foot, bringing the weight of the body at once on the right heel, and place the left forearm six inches behind, and nearly square with, the left knee, the butt to rest against the right side; then adjust the back-sight—full-cock—and fix the eyes on some object in front.

The right knee of the rear rank to be twelve inches to the right when on the ground, the left forearm on, and nearly square with, the left knee.

As the length of the leg in very tall men is greater than the breadth of the body, it will be impossible, in close order, to get the knee