

CORRESPONDENCE.

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FROM BRITISH COLUMBIA.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

Victoria, B.C., Nov, 27, 1872.

The weather still continues fine, and not cold for the time of the year.

Her Majesty's Steamship *Arrowhawk*, was sold by public auction yesterday, realizing, including some things sold separately, about \$30,000. She would have made an excellent Dominion Gunboat, could the government have purchased her, and employed her in the conveyance of mails to San Francisco. But the contract with the owners of the barge *Prince Alfred*, is I believe, for three years. The Imperial Government, were it not of the Manchester School, might well present to the Dominion Government, one or two such vessels, when they desire to get them off their hands.

There is an excellent leading article in to-day's *Standard* on the San Juan decision. It would be very advisable, that there should be a Dominion Battery or Company of artillery here, which might, I think, be incorporated with the military school.

I observe in the Vol. Rev. of 11th inst. which I have just received, an order from the Horse Guards, for a trial of a new mode of attack. It is pretty much what would occur to any commander in the field, and is not very clearly worded, tho' the intent is plain enough. I think the word "open order" which occurs as applied to the supports and reserves of the skirmishers, should read "extended" or "loose" order.

It is curious to notice how, if these things are much in one's mind, one's thoughts anticipate changes. It will be in your remembrance, that, when in the Drill Book for 1867, a change in deployments was ordered, I asserted, in an article, which you did me the honor to publish that the authorities had struck the key note of non-pivot drill, altho' they had not followed out the principles. In 1870 my anticipations were verified by the publication of the admirable manual of that year.

You will also probably recollect, that in a private letter some months ago, I dwelt on the expediency of half battalion columns. I now see them directed.

My ideas were turned in that direction from the anxiety we had to learn what formation had been, during the late war, favored by the Prussians. When, through a series of articles in the Vol. Rev., we became aware of them, it appeared abundantly evident, that their "company columns" were in no way desirable to imitate. Four companies, 250 strong each, with a mounted captain, were evidently nothing but small battalions. The Battalion, as constituted,

was a small brigade, the Major commanding, a small Brigadier; the Regiment of three such Battalions, was a small Division, and the Colonel, a little general of Division. That this was so, was proved by the fact that practically, from their extreme independence in action, the "company" became the unit.

The French have, of late years, favored the "six company to a Battalion in the field" organization, and that mode was specially adopted in reference to the expediency of a medium in the depth of ranks of attacking columns, which, in a front of double companies, would be six.

It seems almost a settled thing, that no close formation can now live within musketry range, but the advisable formation for second lines and reserves, may yet be a question.

I will venture to hazard the assertion that no foreign organization is likely to be found of more practical worth than that of our Battalion, but I think, it might take a more definite shape, and would be little, if any thing the worse, for a little more rigidity of definition, as to what, in point of numbers, should be understood by a Battalion. At present, it means anything from 600 or 700 to 1,200.

Now, the F. E. 1870, like its predecessor, contains hints for the future. One of them is the "short echelon," another is the "Half Battalion Column." It appears that in the Swiss service, the half battalion is the unit. It might approach to that position in ours. I would make a battalion in the field—and indeed at all times, and in all positions—to consist of eight companies. If possible, they should be 125 strong, making 1000 men to the Battalion. Give them four company officers if you like, tho' I think three is sufficient. Then, let the half battalion be accustomed to be under the immediate command of its Major. If necessary, do away with double battalions to Regiments to make the strength of other Regiments up. A regime. and a battalion, should be synonymous. The rank of Lt. Col. is almost an absurdity. Why don't they make Admiral's the first Captains of ships afloat? It would be quite as sensible as having generals for colonels of regiments. A colonel should be the actual commander of a regiment, his majors are his lieutenants.

Take your battalion of eight companies, and let it work by half battalions in the field, and you will get a body which can stand (or lie), in second line, or reserve, in column of double companies, requiring only the deployment of two companies to bring it into line. A body which, as a column will only stand four deep, which would be handy to form in an oval, handy to work as a skirmishing force (skirmishers and supports) on the principle prescribed by the gallant Adjutant General of Militia, that of skirmishing by half battalions, easily sup-

ported and reinforced by other half battalions, and altogether, just the sized body that can be conveniently handled by a single officer. And I cannot but think that General Lysons must have had some such idea in his mind, when he devised Sec. 23, No. 5, of Battalion drill.

It may also be noted, how much the half battalion idea coincides with the whole existing subdivisions of responsibility. The half battalions are at present, supervised by their respective majors, as the half Companies are by Subalterns, the sections by Sergeants, &c., and by the way, the responsibility of Section Commanders in the field should be particularly kept in view.

If it were not so utterly useless for obscure people ever to trouble themselves to make suggestions, I should strongly recommend, in especial reference to the loose formations which will, undoubtedly, be those of the future, a simplification of squad drill to the extent of teaching the turnings on the American plan. I do not quite remember the details, but the principle is that, to turn, say to the right, the left foot is lifted from the ground, and the turn made on the right heel, the ball of the left foot assisting the movement by a momentary pressure on the ground. It is quite possible that this also will come to pass. With a lesser general order will vanish our overstrained veneration for immobility in the ranks, the touch will be disregarded, and if men have, in such loose order, to execute a wheel, they will have to use their eyes on either side of them as they do now in the wheel of a skirmish line.

A good deal of parade nonsense remains to be done away with too. Notably the ceremony of trooping the colors, which is altogether unnecessarily complicated. It might be half cut away with advantage, and totally revised.

How easily these things may be done, is to be seen by reference to the formation of rear guards by the F. E., 1870, as compared with previous Drill Books. In the 1870 book all the nonsense of right or left in front is done away with.

But I am allowing myself to glide into a dissertation on drill which I by no means intended when I began, and the mail is now on the point of closing. However, as there is no militia news, or indeed any other to talk about here, it is perhaps not of much consequence.

G. W. G.

Victoria, B. C. Dec. 2, 1872.

How widely spread and how intense must be the snobbery which can lend force to such a paragraph as this:

"It would make some of our fine ladies stare to see Lady Dufferin promenading the streets, doing her shopping. She dresses plainly and sensibly, wears thick soled boots, and does not fear a walk from one