

more in the position which a foreign colonel of a regiment occupies—a sort of subordinate brigadier. When the battalion is skirmishing, it is a fair question whether one major should command the line of skirmishers and one the line of supports, or whether each major should command a portion of the first line and its support. Thus, with four companies extended and four in support, one major might command the front line and one the second, or one might command the right wing—two companies in first line and two in support—and one the left. In the latter division of command, it is urged that the fighting line and its support should be under one officer; that four companies so distributed are more under command than when they are formed in one long line; that the natural place of the major is with the support, whence he can see what is going on and push up help when and where it is needed; and that a mounted officer in the skirmishing line is an absurdity. But, on the other hand, it may fairly be said, that in practice the major would not remain mounted when with the skirmishers, while the presence of a superior officer at a central point in the line, acting as a director, to whose movements the captain would conform as far as possible, might be very valuable; also, that the division into wings becomes inconvenient when only three companies are extended.

Whether the column of grand division will be found manageable with a regiment on war strength, is also open to question. A Prussian company column presents a front of thirty or forty men, our grand divisions in time of peace seldom exceed fifty. But on war strength this would be increased to eighty or a hundred, and the column would lose much of its handiness. Those, however are mere matters of detail; the general principle of the change is, that whereas in former times skirmishing was used merely as an auxiliary to the attack, and generally a very unimportant one, it is now to take an important share in it, and that the formed troops—those whose advance is to be decisive—are not to be brought under the deadly hail of the breech loader until the defence has been seriously shaken, not only by the distant fire of artillery, but by the close and sustained fire of a skirmishing line repeatedly reinforced. There are some who wish to go further—who hold that skirmishing should not merely bear an important part, but should be everything, in attacking, and that the use of formed troops further in rear is only as feeders to the skirmishing line, kept in hand till they are required to meet any occasion that may arise. We shall be better able to judge when the history of a recent battle has been more fully written and thought out; meanwhile we hold it most probable that the recent change in formation will be gladly welcomed by all thoughtful soldiers.

### CAVALRY AT THE MANŒUVRES.

(From the Times.)

The suggestive and valuable comments of our contemporary on the infantry has been followed by equally valuable remarks on the cavalry and artillery at the manœuvres. The writer begins by observing that the action of cavalry in war is easily seen, and nothing is simpler than to determine whether it is well or ill performed. But the case is far otherwise at autumn manœuvres. Half the cavalry work only is manifest—the duty of watching for an army, of concealing its movements, and ascertaining those of the

enemy. There are officers who still maintain that these duties, and only these, remain possible in the face of modern fire-arm; but the writer in the *Times* is by no means of that opinion. There appears, he says, to be room enough left for massive charges of horsemen on the field of battle, only the sacrifice of life and efficiency for further service must be greater, therefore fewer charges are to be expected than occurred in the old wars.

Englishmen are not likely to forget the charges of the Heavy and Light Cavalry Brigades at Balaklava in 1854, the former a grand success against superior numbers of an enemy whom we had learnt to respect, the latter a wild and seemingly purposeless ride because an order was misinterpreted, probably by the messenger who carried it. Yet wild as that charge appeared to be it was not altogether without value, for it raised the name of the English Cavalry, and showed that lapse of time had not quenched the fire nor unsteeled the bridle hands of the riders of England, and this is much, since it is agreed by all that the effect of cavalry charges is chiefly moral, and to be feared before-hand is more than halfway towards victory. The most famous action of cavalry as a mass in modern times occurred at the battle of Mars-la-Tour on the 16th of August, 1870. On that day the 3rd Prussian Corps was engaged with three times its own number of Bazaine's army. Its position was critical, though the French lost a great opportunity of advancing to the attack. The 3rd Corps fought from nine a.m. till one p.m., when its ammunition and strength began to fail, and a disastrous retreat seemed to be imminent. Treble disastrous would have been the retreat because it would have ruined the 3rd Corps, allowed the French to escape, and destroyed the prestige of the German arms. It was one of those supreme moments which appear in all wars to test the heads of the generals and the mettle of the troops. Several brigades of cavalry were ordered to charge the French whose first line was by this time extended in skirmishing order. The cavalry dashed onward, rode through the skirmishers, broke the supports behind, and passed on wards through batteries till they were checked by masses of infantry in rear, and attacked by cavalry, while in disorder from their desperate charge. On their return they suffered much from infantry fire. But their work was done, for time was gained. The brave Brandenburg corps took breath received ammunition, and held its own. A second time some hours later, the undaunted cavalry braved the terrors of the breech-loaders, and the result was that the long hoped for reinforcements came up and saved the day for Germany. The losses were great, but the sacrifice was not in vain. The ground happened to be favourable to the action of cavalry, and its use on the field of battle was established, though no other action of similar magnitude occurred during the campaign. Had such a charge been made during peace manœuvres the cavalry would have been put out of action, and no umpire could have decided what the result would have been upon infantry. Furthermore, it is probable that the French also were somewhat short of cartridges, and their shooting was, not of first-rate quality. In other battles, the German cavalry, all eager as it was, failed to find an opportunity of charging on a large scale. We will not, therefore, attempt to say that the English cavalry could have acted in the same way on any occasion during a manœuvres. Such attempts as were made were not counted as successful. It is impossible

to produce the same moral effect when the troops know that the horsemen will not actually ride among them. All that can be said is that English cavalry can do whatever the Germans can, at least in a grand charge. Though few chances will present themselves for great efforts on the part of cavalry masses, the knowledge that the masses are there, ready to take advantage of any carelessness, has the effect of making the advance of infantry a slower operation than it might otherwise be, and so gaining time. The infantry know that cavalry brigades are swift in motion, that they may be here at one time and there a few minutes afterwards. To know they are on the field is to be always under their influence, and the habit prevailing in most armies of forming squares to resist them has such an effect that their mere appearance a thousand yards off tends to check a swift infantry advance. Laymann, who speaks slightly of the real power of cavalry in masses, quotes one instance of an Austrian battalion laying down its arms to a single squadron of Prussian Hussars, and another where infantry, hearing a cry that cavalry were approaching, actually proceeded to form square in the middle of a wood. If a threat of cavalry can force skirmishers to draw together, or, perhaps, even run to their battalions, the horsemen will be able to save guns from retiring and give them a target worth firing at. Most men will see the value of cavalry masses on the field of battle if they will suppose for one moment that one side has them and the other has not.

No one disputes the immense value of cavalry for veiling the movements of an army while ascertaining and reporting on those of the enemy. A great opportunity of practice in such work appears to have been thrown away at the manœuvres between the two forces were in presence of one another. If both cavalries had been let loose and permitted to scour the country for a couple of days previous to the last marches of the two forces a vast amount of knowledge and practice might have been attained with little difficulty. It was very interesting and suggestive to hear officers of the Northern Army asserting that they knew Colonel Baker to have worked over their side of the river the morning before their own forced march and arrival on the banks of the stream. Though we desire as a rule to avoid mentioning names, we cannot but remark that no account of the manœuvres will be at all complete unless it takes notice of the extraordinary prestige attached to the name of Baker, and the effect which that prestige, together with the real work done by the Southern Light Cavalry, had upon the campaign. As far as was premised by the orders given from headquarters day by day, and by the difference between peace manœuvres and war, Colonel Baker's work was a model, and as such example is wanted at a time when cavalry is going through a process of change and development, it is much to be regretted that the unfortunate peculiarity of the English Service should send so capable an officer far from the shores of Great Britain. Such an unlucky mischance is only one proof out of many how necessary is the institution of a staff corps which could find employment for men of Colonel Baker's calibre.

While the cavalry generally showed well at the manœuvres, it cannot but be admitted that they appear to have, as a rule, much still to learn about outpost and reconnaissance duties. One army, at least, did not seem to be furnished with all the requisite information, otherwise it is improbable that the northern force would have been spread