

file of the cards this same officer managed to get into his hands the right of contracting for the purchase of old muskets and other fire arms, and having them turned into breech loaders at a cost of eight dollars each, a sum said to be nearly two dollars in excess of what it ought to be. Nearly all the available funds of the organization have been absorbed in this direction, without, as it is asserted, as lucid vouchers as could be desired. But, who would dare to interfere with the Secretary of War? Now, however, it turns out that through some misunderstanding relative to this contract, the parties engaged in altering the guns are to receive, in addition to the sum realized by the eight dollar arrangement, an amount reaching many thousands more.

"As might have been expected, the course of this official has had its effect upon 10 West Fourth street. The Treasurer has resigned in disgust. The Adjutant-General and his assistants have gone, followed by the two principal secretaries and others. The truth is, headquarters is all but deserted, not a single one of the old staff remaining. O'Neil only is to be found at his post, and a new comer who has recently arrived from Ireland. No one, it is averred doubts the honesty and patriotism of the president, and, therefore it is that many are said to sympathize with him in his present unenviable condition. In the pursuit of an *ignis fatuus* he finds, too late, that he has left himself without a dollar in the world; while less deserving men have managed to advance the interests of the cause that has been his ruin. However, in all this the astute observer cannot fail to perceive "the beginning of the end," and that the next Fenian Congress will, possibly, be the last that will ever be held on this continent.

The *Volunteer Service Gazette* of the 22nd of January has, under the title of "The Forthcoming Drill System," given its readers an outline of what the "New Field Exercise" is likely to be, and says it will not be a revision of the manoeuvres now in use, but in most respects radically different therefrom, embodying a simple and easily understood system, involving the abandonment of the greater number of complicated movements excessively ornamental on the parade ground but practically useless in actual warfare.

It is evident from the outline given by the *Gazette* that "the march of improvement" in this direction has only begun, and must be considerably accelerated, especially in the Colonies, where the great mass of the population must receive a military training to a considerable extent, and that must be necessarily the most simple and easily understood which can be devised.

In the present case the "Horse Guards" have moved with a celerity which must amaze those conversant with the conservatism and machinery of the War Office, and the necessary caution required in revolutionizing the system of practical tactics on which the discipline of the regular army was founded. His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief deserves great credit for the energy with which he devoted his attention to the task by receiving suggestions and plans from every quarter, irrespective of the authorities from which they emanated,

and by means of a well constituted committee trying each on its own merits, and finally adopting that best suited to each case. Practical tests being applied in every case—the result is best given in the words of the *Gazette*:

"And now the main principles of the new squad, company, and battalion drill, are, we understand, finally settled, and we are in a position to present our readers with the chief features of the scheme. It is not, of course possible, nor would it be desirable to enter very closely into details which are still susceptible of modification, and what we now give must be considered by no means as a working system, but merely as a general account of the main changes which have been resolved upon.

"The chief features of the new system are, in short, as regards battalion drill, the abandonment of permanent pivot flanks, the release of the captains from their present thralldom, the substitution of movements in fours for all double wheels, and the abolition of all formations by sections and subdivisions, except in forming square.

"The place hitherto held, in column or in line, by the captain, will, in future, be occupied by one of the subalterns, the captain being, in column, probably in front, and in line certainly in rear, of his company. All wheels will be on moveable pivots, and in a few exceptional cases, the French plan of forming up file by file instead of wheeling will be used. There being no absolute pivot flanks, and the order of companies being considered as of no importance, an open column will wheel into line to either hand, or form successively by companies, as may be most convenient. For the same reason all changes of front in column will be made by countermarching the companies independently, the countermarch round the centre and the manoeuvres for 'changing the order of companies' being abolished.

"The little used movement 'along the rear in open column' is abandoned, and a more practical mode of prolonging the line to a flank is substituted.

"For advancing and retreating 'from a flank or central company in open column,' a more comprehensive method is used, by which any company may be named to commence the movement, the companies on its right following it, and those on its left coming afterwards. The double wheels are, as we said, done away with, each company moving to its place in fours. As any company may commence these movements, there will be no use for double columns of subdivisions, which, indeed, would involve a prohibited formation, but double columns of companies are still allowed.

"From line all columns will be formed in rear of the named company.

"Now we come to the formations of line from column, in which important changes are made. These formations, whether from open or closer columns, will all be made in one way—that advocated by the American General Morris—with the improvement that all deployments are made upon the front company. The principle, though very simple, is a little difficult to describe without the aid of a diagram; but it will probably be understood if we say that each company is led in fours by the shortest line to the point where its *own* flank is to rest, and then moves, still in fours, along the alignment till it has taken up its ground, when it is halted and fronted. Any number of companies may, of course, go to one flank, and the remainder to the other, as at present.

"Squares will, as a rule, be two deep, the

four-deep formation being quite exceptional. "Changes of front in line will be done nearly as at present, except that the companies will always wheel on moveable pivots.

"These are the principal alterations in battalion drill. It will be easily seen that squad and company drill will necessarily be greatly simplified. In the latter drill, indeed, subdivisions and sections are allowed, but they are only to be used for route marching, and never, as we have said, in the manoeuvres of a battalion in the field, except for the formation of battalion squares. As for 'the close column of sections,' it is altogether got rid of, companies threatened by cavalry simply forming fours deep, and closing and facing outwards.

"We refrain from any description of light infantry drill, for we believe that the details are not yet fully settled. We believe, however, that the men of each file are in future to work side by side instead of one behind the other, and, of course, supports will move always in fours to a flank directly or diagonally, instead of in echelon of sections.

We must not conclude without adverting to a very important point, that of the rate of march. This, both in quick and double time, will, we believe, be considerably accelerated. Great pains have been taken, we understand, to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion on this subject, every general and commanding officer in the United Kingdom having been consulted and every regiment experimented upon. The time honoured slow time 'often takes leave, but seems loth to depart,' but its final extinction appears at last to be drawing nigh. It is still retained for funerals, of course, and for marching past, but in the latter case shorn of its glories by being performed with the ranks at close instead of open order."

This is indeed a great step in advance, but it is evidently behind the requirements of the day. Many Canadian Volunteer officers will be enabled to make such further requisite improvements on this system as must adapt it to the conditions necessary for developing the capabilities of their own commands. It would appear that, under existing conditions, the actual requirements are: rapidity of movement—thorough knowledge of the use of the rifle—and the capacity to improvise cover. The first involves thorough subordination to command and the power to act mechanically; advancing in line or column, and most simple possible of battalion manoeuvres. The next demands steadiness, care, and that methodical precision which can only be attained by practice, while the last requires an amount of skill which must of necessity be derived from the instructions of the officers immediately in command of the battalion unit. In future, therefore, the necessity for giving the officer in command of troops a more careful training is sufficiently apparent, as they must not only know how to drill soldiers but act as designers and instructors in the complicated duties of a military engineer.

This simplicity of drill and manoeuvre will necessitate a great extension of the duties of military engineers, because it will depend in a great measure on the facilities with which these impromptu entrenchments may be thrown into a formidable line of de-