

Now having stated that none but the best troops, not only in point of ability and intelligence, &c., but also in point of discipline, can ever be good light troops, especially outpost troops, it may be said that owing to the peculiar constitution of the Volunteers of England, and the shortness of the time that you are able to devote to your military duties, it would scarcely be worth while to practise so difficult a one as outpost duty; but in my humble opinion such is not the case. So long as the practice is carefully carried out under the superintendence of some one who is competent to teach it, good must accrue therefrom, and if, as I trust will be the case, some of you are going to take part with the Regulars in the autumn manoeuvres, you may find a knowledge of outpost duty necessary. Moreover, I fancy that with some of you occasionally a want of space for drilling in large bodies (that is in regiments) may exist, though ground suitable for the practice of outpost duty could be easily found; and it must be remembered also that a captain can practice his company at picket duty alone as well as a colonel can practice his regiment in outpost duty, and if it is carried out with care and intelligence it will not be lost time; and certainly no men ought to be able to bring to bear on it more intelligence than the Volunteers of England. Outposts, speaking generally, consist primarily of sentries or videttes (the former being infantry, and the latter cavalry) pickets, and supports. It may be worth while here to point out that different writers on outpost duty give slightly different names to these component parts. Colonel Hamley calls them sentries, pickets and main guard, Colonel Sir Garnet Wolseley calls them sentries pickets, and grand guards; Sir C. Staveley calls them sentries, pickets and supports; at Aldershot they are called sentries supports, and reserves; and in the Drill-book you will find that they are called sentries pickets and reserves, when the pickets are distant from the main body. The drill book also mentions inlying pickets. These are pickets who remain in camp accoutred and ready to turn out, and assist the pickets in case of an attack. These pickets, if the reserves were out, would be almost in the place of the Prussian main body of outposts, which I shall allude to presently, and it would seem better that, like it, they should be posted in advance of the camp, instead of in it. No doubt these different terms mean much the same thing, the principle being the usual tactical one of skirmishers, supports, and reserves. If there is no main body of outposts, the skirmishers are represented by sentries, the supports by the pickets, and the reserves by the supports to the pickets. If there is a main body, it would act as reserve, and the pickets become reinforcements to the skirmishers.

As I said before, the principle is the same still, I cannot help wishing to have a more recognized nomenclature system. The former might be as follows: There would be the sentries or videttes, the pickets, and supports to the pickets, and the main body of the outposts. This latter might, or might not, be always necessary. In certain cases, to be explained hereafter, there would be an additional line of parties between the pickets and the sentries, which might be called detached posts.

The part of the Drill book on pickets is very good as far as it goes, but it requires to be supplemented by a more elaborate description.

The Prussian system differs a little from ours, though not so much from our drill-

book rules as is thought. In fact, if the English outlying pickets were called out, or if as is sometimes the case, the Prussian supports are not posted out, there would be almost the same disposition in both cases. The Prussians have sentries, pickets, supports to the pickets or reserve, and a main body of outposts. They, as well as ourselves, may, owing to the peculiar nature of the ground, have another line, as it were, called non-commissioned officers' posts, or detached posts, as will be explained presently. One peculiar fractional part they have which I think we should do well to adopt. They allow no one to penetrate through the line sentries except by a road, if there should be one running through the front, at a certain spot, if there is no road; on this road or spot there is posted a sentry in line with the other sentries (please to remember that all outpost sentries are double) whose duty it is to stop all comers, and call the corporal in charge of the party furnishing this sentry, the said corporal and his party consisting of four men besides the sentry, being posted a little in rear of and in sight of him. This non-commissioned officer, who is selected for his intelligence, examines and questions all people wishing to pass, and according to his orders in passing or turning them back. Outposts may be posted under two slightly different circumstances—viz., when thrown out to protect an army halting for a night only, and when in front of an army in position for any time, or besieging a fortress; in both cases the objects with which they are thrown out is the same; though, perhaps, when the enemy is very close, as would be the case at a siege, greater precautions, if possible, and greater strength might be required. When outposts are in front of an army halted, they are generally relieved about day-light as that is the time attacks are generally made, and this insures a larger force at what may be the critical moment. The objects with which outposts are thrown out are generally said to be two—viz., first, to prevent the army in war from being surprised; and secondly, to gain information of the enemy's movements. But I hardly think this explanation explicit enough; for instance, to save an army from surprise, means to give it time to form in line of battle, but the outposts may be required to give it time to retire and thus decline battle. Then again, a proper disposition of outposts may not only enable you to gain information of the movements of the enemy, but it ought to prevent him from gaining information of the movements of your own force. Again, another object is gained, inasmuch as the rest of the army is able to obtain repose at night and thereby the necessary strength for the work of the coming day; and for this reason it is so great a necessity that the army in general should have implicit confidence in their outpost troops, as was the case in the Peninsular War. One thing must always be borne in mind by all concerned in outpost duty, that they are not meant to fight if they can help it. They are watch-dogs, but are not to bark or bite unless hard-pressed; above all, sentries must be careful not to fire unnecessarily, as one shot is likely to cause another, and if the alarm is false, the camp will have been awakened for nothing, and have lost their rest, which is worse. If really attacked, sentries and pickets must retire slowly, fighting, and, if necessary, sacrifice themselves to obtain the necessary time for the forces in rear to form. Having stated the objects for which outposts are intended, the next question is, how are these objects to be best obtained. And the answer involves a description of the composition

of the outposts, the distance they should be in advance of the army, their disposition, &c. Now it is really impossible to lay down any fixed rules as to these points, because such different circumstances may have to be considered in deciding them. Speaking in general terms, we may say that their composition should be suitable to the country they are required to act in; thus they would have more or less cavalry, according as the country was open or close; but some infantry would always be used, especially at night or in thick weather. In some cases artillery would be used; for instance, if a defile of water-communication had to be defended, or if the country was very favourable for that arm, and the outposts were expected to make a prolonged defence. As to how outpost duties are furnished: In the Drill-book it is laid down that pickets in the field may be taken by brigades, the different regiments furnishing one or more companies as required, the whole under charge of a field officer of the day, or an entire regiment may be employed under its own officers. Now in my opinion—and I think in that of most military men—the latter system is infinitely to be preferred, and should be always carried out on a larger scale if necessary; that is to say, if the front to be guarded is extended enough, the duty should be done by a brigade under its brigadier, and so on. In fact, the advantage of having this duty performed by men, officers, staff, and generally accustomed to work together, and bound together a strong *esprit de corps*, brigade or division, as the case may be, is so evident that I think there is little doubt but that in future it will be carried out. No body of troops, small or large, ought ever to move on active service without an advanced guard, which is only a moving outpost; and as it is equally *de rigueur* that no body of troops should ever halt without having outposts, it seems natural and convenient that the advanced guard should resolve itself into outposts when a halt takes place. It might so happen that owing to circumstance, it may be considered advisable to place fresh troops on outpost duty, but is still necessary that the advanced guard should take up the ground at once, though it may have to be relieved directly after.

There is rather a remarkable instance in the records of the Peninsular War, where neglect of at once establishing outposts temporarily might have produced a great effect—might, indeed have materially altered the state of Europe. When the Duke of Wellington had determined to make a stand against the French, under Joseph and Victor, near Talavera, during the movements necessary to take up the position, the allied advanced guard, under General MacKenzie, was occupying the ground near the Casa de Selina, which was in the middle of a wood, the infantry being in the middle of a wood, and the cavalry in the plain. The Duke rode up to the Casa, and mounted to the top of the building to observe the enemy. Suddenly the infantry were attacked by Victor's skirmishers so unexpectedly that several of the men were killed lying on the ground. The rest were driven into the plain, where they rallied, and supported by the cavalry retired in good order. Sir Arthur had barely time to descend from the Casa and reach his horse. The top of the Casa commanded to a great extent a view of the country, but the French skirmishers got up to the wood unseen, owing to the smoke from some burning hats. Had an outpost been thrown out, this surprise could not have occurred.

Large armies in the field move in so many columns, and if the several lines or roads on which they move are very far apart,