

## DRILL REFORM.

To the Editor of the Volunteer Service Gazette.

Sir,—I have trespassed so freely on your patience and that of your readers lately that I would not have done so again had not so able an officer as Colonel Macdonald, of the 1st Surrey Rifles, written you on the subject of drill reform, and commented unfavourably upon Colonel Brunel's little book, which you noticed lately. I agree with Colonel Macdonald in some of his objections to Colonel Brunel's book. Colonel Brunel has made a selection of some points from Lord Elcho's memorandum, in which it differs from my system. Thus he speaks: "No pivot" drill, and gives his book that title. He also, in common with others, uses expressions which imply "No front." This, I think, is a great mistake. To have no fixed front, and to have no front at all are quite different things. I object very strongly to what seems to be implied in Lord Elcho's memorandum, viz., that the word "front" is to be cut out of the drill book altogether. Front is most important in its proper place, and what I and those who think with me object to, is front being made a hindrance to manœuvring, which it need not be. A corps should have a front, but it should be the front fixed by the commanding officer, not an artificial front. I agree with Colonel Macdonald when he says that "we can never do away with front in manœuvring, so long as we have a supposed enemy before us," but I object to that front being arbitrarily fixed so that the commanding officer cannot alter it. It is one thing to say that the front towards the enemy must be preserved, and another to contend that this shall only be done by always placing the two ranks in exactly the same relative position in which they stood when the battalion was formed. Under the present system, the captain of each company fixes the front and rear of his company, and the battalion commander is tied to that inflexibly; under the system I propose the commanding officer of the battalion has the control of the front. I am decidedly in favour of the word front being retained, but I desiderate a change, by which the commanding officer of the battalion shall be able to move his corps on one principle to effect one end, and not be placed, as he now is, in the position of having to take different modes of doing the same thing, according to the relative position of ranks at a particular moment. For example, if a battalion is marching along a road in fours, I desiderate a change by which it shall not matter to its forming up into battalion to the right or left, whether the fours are right in front or left in front, according to the language at present in use. I have seen one of the best regiments in Her Majesty's service, entering a parade ground, compelled by the nature of the ground to perform three separate manœuvres to get into a particular position when it was marching in fours right, while, if it had happened to come on the ground left in front, one movement would have sufficed. Now, in that case, if the commanding officer of the battalion had the power of fixing his own front as he chose, the single movement would have sufficed, no matter how the fours happened to be marching. Colonel Macdonald asks what can be done better or quicker upon a "no front" system than upon the present? Reiterating my objection to being considered an advocate of "no front" drill, and taking him to mean a system by which the front is under the commanding officer's control, and

does not control him, I may say that, among other things, it enables you to get rid of all countermarches; it enables you to form squares without breaking up your companies; it enables you to make changes of position with far greater freedom as regards the nature of the ground you are manœuvring in; and it further enables all generals of division and brigadiers to give their orders without any reference whatever to the existing position of particular corps. I have seen a corps on a field day put into that position so snaking to the votary of the present drill book, of being clubbed, because the result of two orders given by the brigadier at an interval of time was inconsistent with the requirements of that tyrant "Front." If the Battalion commander had the control of the front, he would have been able to carry out the brigadier's orders without becoming clubbed. In a word, it is quite plain that if it is feasible to give the control of the front to the commanding officer of the battalion, he will be much less trammelled in his movements than he is at present, while the drill would not lose one whit in steadiness, nor the position of the enemy be ignored.

Colonel Macdonald approves of the present system of deploying, and prefers it to a file by file mode, because he prefers volleys to file-firing. Be it so; but they will be sooner placed for volley firing by a file by file formation than by a mode which makes companies take the longest way to reach their position, and gives the company that forms "last" the longest exposure. He makes the same observation as to a file by file wheel; but the advantages of a file by file wheel are immense—quite independent of the question of firing. I have already noticed them in my system as published by you. Further, on this question firing, file firing with breech loaders will have very little to distinguish it from volley firing, except that the volley will be continuous. It will not be "loose and scattered," as your correspondent says. I do not understand Colonel Macdonald when he says that file-firing could be commenced on the present system before the wheel was half completed, because "the men of the inner subdivision would, of course, be in line before those of the outer." I always thought it was a fundamental principle of the present wheel that no man could complete it before another—that those next the pivot, must "look outwards," and bring the out flank round till the wheel was entirely completed.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

J. H. A. MACDONALD, Lieut.-Colonel,  
Queen's E. R. V. Brigade.  
Edinburgh, Nov. 23, 1868.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

## FROM CHATHAM, O.

(BY OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

The Annual Rifle Tournament of the 24th Kent Battalion, V. M., took place at their Rifle Range Head Quarters, Chatham, on the 20th, 21st, and 22nd October 1868. Present Lieut. Colonel D. Smith, and Major A. B. Baxter, when the following matches were fired viz:

1st MATCH.—Open to the Battalion but confined to 5 men per company.

Distance 200, 300, and 400 yards, long or short Rifle (Snider), 5 shots at each range. If the position.

1st Prize—The Battalion Medal and \$8, added was won by Private Ledster, No. 8 Company,..... 48 pts  
2nd Prize—A Concertina and \$3, won by Lieut. Livingston ..... 46 pts  
3rd Prize—A pair morning Slippers and \$2, won by Captain Martin. 41 pts  
4th Prize—Pair Vases, and \$2, won by Sergt. Nelson, No. 1 Co. .... 14 pts  
5th Prize—\$2, won by Lance Corp'l. Reed. .... 43 pts  
The Medal in this match is to become the property of the Volunteer who wins it 3 years in succession.

2nd MATCH.—A company match. 5 men per company.

The following prizes for the best score company, distance 300 and 400 yards, Snider Rifle, 5 shots per man at each range.

1st Prize—The McKellar Medal (presented by Major McKellar, M.P., of the Battalion), with \$8 added, was won by Capt. Martin's Company or No. 7 Tillbury ..... 132 pts  
2nd Prize—Marseilles Quilt with \$4, won by Capt. Morris' Company or No. 5, Florence. .... 130 pts  
3rd Prize—A Silver Butter Knife and \$2.50 won by Capt Walker's Company, or No. 8, Bothwell. .... 98 pts  
4th Prize—A Carpet Bag, and \$3, was won by Capt. W. Smith's Company Dawn ..... 92 pts  
5th Prize—\$3, was won by Captain Stevenson's Company, or No. 2 Chatham ..... 80 pts.

3rd MATCH.—Open to all comers of the Battalion who had not gained a prize in the two former matches. Distance 200, and 30 yards, 5 shots at each distance. Snider Rifle long or short.

1st Prize—A Gold Ring, and \$3, won by Pvt. Scarlet, No. 5 Company 28  
2nd Prize—A Clock, and \$3, won by Adjutant Reilly ..... 25 pts  
3rd Prize—A Fur Cap, and \$2.50 won by Ensign Jackman ..... 24 pts  
4th Prize—A Cloth Cap, and \$2, won by Capt. Morris ..... 24 pts  
5th \$3, won by Pvt. C. Adman No. 5 company.

There being 3 ties. They shot off, and resulted as above stated.

4th MATCH.—Open to Non-Commissioned Officers of the Battalion. Distance 200 and 300 yards, 5 shot at each distance, Snider Rifle.

1st Prize—A Gold Scarf Pin, and \$4, won by Corporal Greenwood, No. 5 Company. .... 31 pts  
2nd Prize—A Photograph Album and \$2, won by Corporal Reed No. 5 Company. .... 30 pts  
3rd Prize—A Pocket Knife, and \$2, won by Sergeant Nelson, No. 1 Company. .... 23 pts.  
4th Prize—\$3, won by Corp'l. Campbell, No. 6 Company ..... 27 pts.