



The Volunteer Review

AND MILITARY AND NAVAL GAZETTE.

A Journal Devoted to the Interests of the Military and Naval Forces of the Dominion of Canada

VOL. V.

OTTAWA, CANADA, MONDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1871.

No. 41.

FRENCH NAVAL TACTICS.—CONCLUSION.

From the United States Army and Navy Journal.

GETTING UNDER WAY AND COMING TO

A FLEET should as much as possible get under way and come to anchor in order. If the flag-ship does not occupy an outside berth at the time of getting under way, the admiral designates some other vessel to lead the fleet out. The ship indicated will steer such a course, and regulate her speed in such a manner, that the order of steaming or sailing signalled may be easily and promptly formed. If no particular order be signalled then the order in which the fleet was anchored will be continued after getting under way.

Approaching an anchorage in the absence of signals, the fleet is to anchor in the order in which it then is.

The signal "to anchor together," is always accompanied by the flag of execution at the moment of hauling down this flag every ship should let go her anchor.

Ships not in their stations when signal is made do not anchor till in the proper bearing and distance required by their position in the prescribed order.

UNDER WAY.

The flag ship always takes No. 1, so that in the line ahead, natural order, it is the leading ship, and at the extremity of one of the wings in the line abreast or on a line of bearing, whether in the natural or inverted order.

The object of this arrangement is to permit the admiral to lead the fleet without constantly resorting to signals whenever the fleet is formed in line ahead, natural order, or when in other words it has to turn to the side on which the flag-ship is placed.

Should the admiral place himself outside the line or change his station the vessel which replaces him takes his number and with it the duty of leading the fleet, conformably to instructions.

The flag-ship takes the number assigned and the station it occupies for the time being.

Whenever the course of the fleet carries it in the vicinity of land, the admiral should as much as possible place himself inside (nearest the land).

Unless the admiral makes his manoeuvres independently, or has taken a position outside the line, every ship should closely follow his motion, either in changing course or performing a particular manoeuvre.

In whatever order the fleet may be formed a compass signal hoisted by itself will indicate the course to be steered.

According to the order in which the fleet may be formed, it will change to the course signalled either by a countermarch or a conversion so as to preserve the same order on the new course.

Should the fleet become dispersed through any cause whatever, it will reform in the last order signalled, unless the admiral prescribe some other.

While the fleet is under way ships are bound to keep their stations only within the limits necessary to prevent collisions, and to permit if need be a sudden change of course.

Every time the rectification flag is hoisted by the admiral the order should be rectified. The regulator hoists the same flag, and the other ships hoist it at half mast, only running it up when in position. As soon as the order is rectified the flag is hauled down.

When under way every ship should make known any changes affecting her engines. The balls bent to the halliards leading from the main top-gallant yard are for this purpose.

When the fleet stops there are five different conditions under which the fires are to be kept.

1st. Pushed back to the bottom of the furnaces, in which case the fleet cannot start ahead again under an hour.

2nd. If the fires have been allowed to fall, the fleet should be able to start ahead again in half an hour after the signal is made to raise fires.

3rd. When the fires are kept up under one boiler, the rest being pushed back, each ship should at the expiration of fifteen minutes be able to execute an evolution, or to separate herself from a ship in dangerous proximity.

4th. When the signal to stop is followed by the signal to keep fires lighted, each ship should be able to start ahead again in fifteen minutes from the time of giving the order.

5th. When the signal is made to stop simply, without being followed by another signal the engines must be kept in condition to obey the first order, and each ship must maintain her position.

Position lights are the lights which at night every ship hoists forward and aft, to indicate her movements and her position.

Generally the position light consists of two lights at the peak and one on the bowsprit.

Position lights may be made to indicate the ships' numbers, by each ship raising a distinct combination, varying the number and position of the lights at the peak.

At night whatever may be the order, in

which the fleet is formed, the admiral may by means of his stern lights and showing his position lights, execute any change of course without further signal, provided he be at the head of the line, or on the side towards which the fleet should turn.

The other ships should be attentive to the movements of the admiral, and execute the necessary manoeuvre for restoring the fleet to the order in which it was before the position lights were hoisted.

BATTLE.

A fleet to be prepared for action should have all the fires lighted.

No captain should engage the enemy except by signal from the commander-in-chief or in accordance with previous instructions. Should the darkness of the night, a fog, or the peculiar position of the fleet not permit the use of signals, every commanding officer, must act according to circumstances.

The admiral should make known to the captains the plan of attack, as well as the manoeuvres by which he purposes to execute it.

After the action once begins he abstains as much as possible from further signalling.*

Unless there be orders to the contrary, every captain finding himself in position to run down an enemy's ship should not hesitate to do so, that mode of fighting being one of the principal offensive elements of an iron-clad fleet. The fleet which can assume the character of pursuer has a marked advantage over the one forced into the position of being pursued.

When two fleets steer for each other for the purpose of ramming, the ships which miss the shock and pass through the enemy's line should immediately turn to renew the attack, going to starboard or port as previously directed by the admiral.

The action having become general, almost everything must be left to the courage and skill of the captains.

In no case will the previous orders of the admiral excuse the inaction of any part of fleet during the fight.†

The defence of the flag-ship is confided to the fleet—that of ships carrying the flag of a flag officer, or the broad pennant of a com-

*Lord Collingwood, in a letter describing the battle of Trafalgar, remarks: "As the mode of our attack had been previously determined on, and communicated to the flag officers and captains, few signals were necessary, and none were made, except in direct close order as the lines bore down."

†This cannot fail to remind the professional reader of the well known clause in Nelson's celebrated order, published to his fleet shortly before the battle just referred to. "In case signals cannot be seen or clearly understood, no captain can do very wrong if he places his ship alongside that of an enemy."