

## A REMINISCENCE OF TROY.

FROM THE SCHOLIAST.

It was the ninth year of the Trojan war—  
A tedious pull at boat;  
A lot of us were sitting by the shore,—  
Tydides, Phœbus, Castor, and the rest,  
Some whittling shingles, and some stringing  
bows.  
And cutting up our friends, and cutting up our  
foes.

Down from the tents above there came a man,  
Who took a camp-stool by Tydides' side,  
He joined our talk, and pointing to the pan  
Upon the embers where our pork was fried,  
Said he would eat the minous and the leeks,  
But that fried pork was food not fit for Greeks

"Look at the men of Thebes," he said, "and  
then  
"Look at those cowards on the plain below:—  
You see how ox-like are the ox-fed men;  
You see how sheepish mutton-eaters grow,  
Stuck to this vegetable food of mine;  
Men who eat pork, grunt, root and sleep, like  
swine."

Some laughed and some grew mad, and some  
grew red.

The pork was hissing, and his point was clear,  
Still no one answered him; till old Nestor said,  
"One inference that I would draw is here:  
You vegetarians who thus educate us,  
Thus far have turned out very small potatoes."

## OUR NEW INFANTRY DRILL.

(From the Daily Telegraph)

The announcement that the Royal Commander-in-Chief, during his recent tour of inspection, has been practising the troops at a new drill, or rather a new formation of Infantry for attack, has naturally aroused a good deal of interest, not only among professional soldiers, but also in that larger class who, from association or natural taste, have acquired a knowledge of military matters that often puts soldiers themselves to shame. Those who have studied the numerous writings which have recently been put forth on Infantry tactics, can hardly have failed to observe that through all there runs the opinion, expressed or implied, that our present formations are not adapted to the changed conditions of warfare. At the recent Manœuvres every General of Division was allowed to devise and practise a formation of his own; but large manœuvres are not suited for the development of changes in drill, which should first be thoroughly practised by regiments on their own parades; and the close of the campaign left us without any more definite system.

The experiences gained during these trials however, were not thrown away. The Headquarters Staff, some as umpires some as actors in the manœuvres, had the opportunity of comparing the various systems tried, and the alterations now being introduced are the fruit of their observations. To explain the nature of these alterations, it is necessary to glance at what has been our system hitherto. We may safely say that for attack, as for defence, we have had one formation, and only one—the line. Column formations for fighting purposes have always been rightly excluded. Skirmishing has always been thought, and looked upon as a most important auxiliary, but still as an auxiliary only. Our drill book contains full instructions of this kind of drill, in which many of our regiments have attained a special proficiency. It has been sometimes said that skirmishing was *par excellence* a French talent, and that the characteristics of the British soldier were not those most required of a light infantry man. To this we would reply, that probably the best light troops produced by any nation during Napoleon's wars was the British Light Division; and the best book on skirmishing, in any language is written by an officer of that division

And we think no one will maintain that the British soldier has less of the qualities of a skirmisher than the heavy German; yet in the last war we have seen the German surpass the Frenchman, especially in that very kind of fighting. The fact is, that the French formerly, and the Germans now have treated skirmishing as a primary part of their tactics for attack, whereas with us it has never been more than auxiliary. Skirmishing was often employed to feel an enemy's position, to search out or traverse broken ground, or to retard an enemy's advance, as in the numerous rearguard actions sustained by the Light Division in the Peninsula; but, whenever the serious fighting began, the skirmishers cleared away. In an attack in earnest, the front would be covered at a distance of 200 yards or so by a thin line of skirmishers—probably one company to a regiment—whose duty it would be to gall the enemy, and thus to distract his attention from advancing line, and preserve his skirmishers from advancing upon and harassing it. Behind the screen comes the real attacking force—the Line—supported usually at an interval of about three hundred yards by a second deployed line; and behind that again, would be the reserves, kept out of fire, and usually massed in battalion columns. Such was the practice which won our battles in the Peninsula, and carried the heights of the Alma.

But since that time improvements in our weapons have followed each other with a rapidity unknown in any former period. Within these few years Infantry fire has been trebled in rapidity, in range, and in accuracy. Spaces which formerly could have been traversed by Infantry with little loss but that from an occasional round shot, are now swept by a storm of rifle bullets under which nothing exposed can live. Through the bloody experiences acquired in 1866 and 1870, four principles have forced themselves to the front—the vital importance of cover, the necessity of extension, of increased mobility, and of greater independence of action both for soldiers and for subordinate commanders. These follow almost as corollaries on one another. Down to the time that the soldier comes within range, he must keep under cover as much as possible. To find cover for a continuous compact body, such as our British Line, is in most cases impossible. A formation, therefore, must be adopted which will allow the infantry soldier to close in and cluster where cover offers—to extend and move rapidly and independently where exposed ground has to be crossed. All his movements must be rapid, for every minute spent under that deadly hail counts its victims. He should, then, as has been said, be "always either running or lying down;" and all formation even of the troops beyond these ranges, must lend themselves to rapid changes of position or direction, as it may become necessary at any moment to avoid certain deadly spaces, and to push for points—such as the enemy's flank—where the fire is less severe. And, finally, as more space is covered by a given number of men, they necessarily pass more from under the direct orders of their commander; so that great latitude of independent action must be given to them, and to the subordinate commanders—who, in the same way, are removed from the immediate control of their superiors.

These principles contain most of the spirit of modern tactics; and the recent change in our formation is quite in accordance with them. As the drill is still experimental and has been tried in slightly different forms, it is difficult to describe it accurately; but the usual formation may be taken as follows:

A brigade of three battalions advances one of its component units. This extends three companies in skirmishing order advances three in support moving in open order—with about a yard between the files—and keeps two companies in reserve. Behind follow the remaining two battalions, in half-battalion columns, of grand divisions, at deploying distance. As the attack develops, and the first line of skirmishers is checked, it is successively reinforced from the supports and the reserve. Finally, the half-battalion columns deploy in line, and advance to the decisive attack. The distance between the several lines must necessarily depend upon the nature of the ground; but if we take 200 yards as an average, it will be seen that there are 600 yards between the skirmishers and the nearest body in close formation, as compared with 200 yards under the old system. If to these 600 yards we add the distance of the nearest of the enemy's infantry—probably 400 yards more—it will be seen that the main line is beyond infantry range altogether, and can suffer only from the enemy's artillery. To expose deep columns to artillery is to court destruction; while, at the same time, to advance over long stretches of ground in line is both difficult and distressing to the men. Further, the line is of all formations that for which it is most difficult to find cover, from its continuousness; and also that least suited for changes of direction. The half-battalion column of grand divisions, therefore, has been adopted as a compromise between the two. It presents a depth of only four men, and at the same time is quickly deployed, is more manageable for long distances than a line admits of being inclined to the right or left to take advantage of cover, and leaves intervals which give freedom to cavalry and artillery.

Such is the general principle of the formation; but as we have said, it has been tried in different forms, and may be subjected to further modifications before being finally adopted. Sometimes the leading battalion has deployed four companies instead of three, with four in support and no reserve. We would very much prefer the formation which leaves the battalion with a small reserve. All writers who have had experience in recent wars concur in stating, that the second lines or supports inevitably push forward into the first line as soon as that becomes seriously engaged, and cease to be available for extending the line or reinforcing particular points; in fact, the second line is little more than a feeder for that part of the first line immediately in front of it. But the third line, or reserve, really remains under the hands of the commander, and can be directed to such points as he judges best. The Prussians attach so much importance to this, that in their new drill a company advancing to the attack sends only one sixth of its men into the first line of skirmishers, and the same proportion into the second line or support; while two-thirds are held in reserve under the hand of the commander in that formation (sections in file) which they consider most handy for directing them on any part of the skirmishing line where assistance is most wanted, or for prolonging the flanks. It may be said that reserves can always be taken from the battalions in rear; but this would be both to break up the main fighting line, and to mix the men of different regiments—a step to be avoided as much as possible. Many other questions will suggest themselves for discussion as the drill is worked out. The system of operating in half battalions gives the majors a definite command, and places the colonel