

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, Phocæus, 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 onions 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, gruit, root and sleep, like
swine.”

Some laughed and some grew mad, and some
grew fed,
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 Com-
mander-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 pro-
fessional soldiers, but, also in that larger
class who, from association or natural taste,
have acquired a knowledge of military mat-
ters that often puts soldiers themselves to
shame. Those who have studied the numer-
ous 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 Head-
quarter 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 neces-
sary to glance at what has been our system
hitherto. We may safely say that for at-
tack, as for defence, we have had one for-
mation, and only one—the line. Column for-
mations for fighting purposes have always
been rightly excluded. Skirmishing has
always been taught, 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 spe-
cial 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 sur-
pass 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 fight-
ing 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 com-
pany 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 be-
hind 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 corol-
laries 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 neces-
sary 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 inde-
pendent action must be given to them, and
to the subordinate commanders—who, in
the same way, are removed from the imme-
diate 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 de-
ploying distance. As the attack develops,
and the first line of skirmishers is checked,
it is successively reinforced from the sup-
ports and the reserve. Finally, the half-bat-
talion columns deploy in line, and advance
to the decisive attack. The distance be-
tween the several lines must necessarily de-
pend 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 ene-
my'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 des-
truction; while, at the same time, to ad-
vance 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, there-
fore, has been adopted as a compromise be-
tween the two. It presents a depth of only
four men, and at the same time is quickly
deployed, is more manageable for long dis-
tances than a line admits of being inclined
to the right or left to take advantage of
cover, and leaves intervals which give free-
dom to cavalry and artillery.

Such is the general principle of the for-
mation; but as we have said, it has been
tried in different forms, and may be sub-
jected to further modifications before being
finally adopted. Sometimes the leading
battalion has deployed four companies in-
stead 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 com-
mander, 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 for-
mation (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 fight-
ing 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 operat-
ing in half battalions gives the majors a
definite command, and places the colonel