



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, SEPTEMBER 25, 1871.

No. 39.

FRENCH NAVAL TACTICS.—NO V.

From the United States Army and Navy Journal.

ORGANIZATION OF THE FLEET.

Squadrons and Divisions.—A naval force, according to its importance, and the designation conferred by the proper authority bears the title of fleet (*armée navale*), squadron or division. But whatever may be its title, it is always known, in a technical sense as a fleet (*armée*.)

The fleet is divided into several squadrons, each squadron being divided into divisions. The division is the tactical unit, and is composed of two, three or four ships.

The light ships constitute the light squadron, the transports, the convoy.

The admiral assigns in general orders, particular duties to the commanders of squadrons and divisions, whether in port or at sea, for the police and the general conduct of their respective commands.

Every ship receives a number which gives her one invariable station in every order of which the fleet is capable of being formed. In numbering the ships the natural order is observed, the flag ship taking No. 1. The partition of the fleet into squadrons, and divisions also follows the natural sequence of numbers. The first squadrons and divisions are composed of ships having the first numbers. In each squadron and division, the senior officer takes the lowest number. Like the ships, each squadron has its own particular number by which it is known and its station assigned. The divisions are also numbered. The first division of the first squadron is that in which the commander-in-chief is placed. The last division of the last squadron takes the number of that squadron multiplied by the number of divisions to each squadron.

Should the admiral have reason to believe that he is superior in number to the enemy, he may in his discretion form a detached squadron, which takes the name of squadron of reserve.

Perhaps no better illustration of the peculiar genius of the French navy could be given than the word *armée*. We have translated it by the word fleet, the nearest English equivalent; but the word really means army, and naval army (*armée navale*) distinguishes the sea force from the army of land forces. The French frequently use the word fleet, for which they give the following definition:

Flotte.—The name given to the naval armies (*aux armées navales*) of the ancients. In modern times the word fleet, has been applied to a large number of vessels (particularly those of commerce) sailing together; but at present the words army (*armée*) squadron (*escadre*) division (*division*) etc., are preferred when speaking of the ships of the navy. Latterly the word fleet (*flotte*) has been adopted for designating the total number of ships which compose the effective naval force of the state.—*Dictionnaire de Marine à Voiles et à Vapeur.*

TRANSLATOR.

The squadron of reserve acts independently. Signals affecting it are addressed to its commanding officer, who alone replies, and who makes to his own squadron such signal as are necessary to carry out the orders of the admiral.

ORDERS OF STEAMING (OR SAILING) OR OF BATTLE.

While under way, a fleet is generally formed in such an order as will keep it well together and at the same time prevent collisions. The orders in which a fleet under steam may be ranged are as follows: Simple orders, special orders, compound orders.

Simple orders are those in which the ships are ranged according to their numbers on a right or a broken line. There are five simple orders: The line ahead, the line abreast, the line of bearing, the order of chase, the order of retreat.

The line ahead is when the ships of the fleet follow in the wake of the leading ship. When ranged on a line perpendicular to the course, they are in the line abreast.

The line of bearing is when the ships are ranged on a line running obliquely to the direction of the course.

In the order of chase the ships are ranged from right to left in the order of their numbers, on two lines of bearing forming a salient angle of eight points (90°).

In the order of retreat the ships are ranged from right to left according to their numbers, on two lines of bearing forming a re-entrant angle of eight points.

A fleet formed in simple order is said to be in the natural order when the ships are placed according to their numbers from right to left, or from the leading ship to the sternmost one. It is in an inverted order when the reverse is the case.

Special orders are those in which the ships are not necessarily formed in the order of their numbers. These orders comprise all the combinations of which a fleet is capable.

The signal book provides for the following special orders: The order by squadrons or by divisions, the triangle, the order *en echelons*, the square, the compact, order, naval square.

Compound orders are those in which the squadrons or divisions, considered as units, and formed in the same order, occupy in regard to each other certain relative positions determined by the admiral.

There are two kinds of compound orders. The order formed by squadrons or divisions abreast; the order formed by squadrons or divisions a line ahead (in columns of squadrons, etc.). These two may be subdivided into as many orders as there are distinct formations for each squadron or division. The signal book gives four compound orders.

1st. The line abreast by squadrons (or divisions), the squadron or division being in the line ahead. This order is also termed the order in column of squadrons or divisions.

2nd. The line ahead by squadrons (or divisions), the squadrons (or divisions) being in line abreast.

3rd. The line abreast by squadrons or (division).

4th. The line ahead by squadrons (or divisions).

A fleet formed in compound order is said to be in the natural order when each squadron or division is in its natural order. It is an inverted order when the reverse is the case. In compound orders the squadrons or divisions are formed according to their numbers from right to left, or from the leading ship to the sternmost one.

The admiral may at any time by signal invert the order of any particular squadron or division.

When ships are formed on two parallel lines, and those of one line correspond or are opposite to the intervals between the ships of the other line, they form an indented line.

The indented line may be adopted in all orders. It is effected by the odd-numbered ships falling out to the right or to the left of the line according to order.

Whatever may be the order adopted, it is necessary to know, that it may be formed and maintained by the normal speed, the distance, the interval, and the spacing.

The distance is the space which separates the ships of the same squadron or division.

The interval is the space which in compound orders separates the squadrons or divisions.

The spacing is the interval which in indented orders separates two parallel lines. The distance and the interval are measured from mainmast to mainmast.

The spacing is measured on the perpendicular to the two lines.

The speed is determined by the number of revolutions made by the screw of the flag-ship. When not otherwise signalled, the normal speed is that which has been established by a standing order of the commander-in-chief. The distance should be two cables length multiplied by the number of ships which compose each squadron or division, if they are equal; otherwise, by those of the most numerous.

A fleet formed in compound order preserves the distance of deployment when the interval which separates the squadrons or divisions is equal to the distance signalled between two ships multiplied by the number of ships in the most numerous squadron or divisions.