

Modern Tactics.

[By Capt. H. R. Gall—From Illustrated Naval and Military Magazine.]

(Continued from Page 213.)

Chapter III.—ADVANCED GUARDS.

CAVALRY acting alone, and in the open formation best adapted for screening duties, is especially vulnerable and liable to be driven in, or out-flanked and cut off; while the appearance of hostile infantry is generally the signal for its withdrawal.

A cautious commander rarely depends upon his cavalry screen only for protection from surprise; but covers the immediate front of each of his columns advancing by parallel roads with its own advanced guard.

1st. To feel for the enemy, clear the front of his light troops, and give notice of his "presence" in any considerable force, in time to enable the main column marching behind to get off the road, and assume a fighting formation before it comes within artillery range of its opponents, or to withdraw, if a retirement is deemed necessary, to a suitable position.

2nd. To engage the enemy aggressively or delay his advance according to circumstances.

The strength of an advance guard depends on the strength of the column it is covering. For a battalion $\frac{1}{8}$, division $\frac{1}{6}$, army corps one-fifth to $\frac{1}{4}$, is the generally accepted proportion. If the country admits of cavalry operating, an advanced guard is composed of the three arms. The distance between an advanced guard and the main body it covers, depends on the nature of the country and the time required by the main body to deploy.

A division usually requires about an hour's warning to advance or retire to suitable ground and deploy; its advanced guard as a rule should, therefore, be about three miles in front.

An army corps numbers about 32,000 men of all arms, and with its trains, baggage, &c., occupies about 23 miles of road, and represents the maximum number of troops that should march on one road at the same time. The advanced guard of an army corps when comprised of the three arms, in order to fulfil its mission is usually pushed forward from 10 to 15 miles, *i.e.* about a day's march.

Distribution of Advanced Guards.

I. Vanguard.

II. Main Body.

The vanguard is usually composed of equal numbers of cavalry and infantry. As every delay of the advanced guard entails a corresponding halt of the main column in rear, when the country admits cavalry should lead the vanguard; first, because they can see further; secondly, cavalry can reconnoitre dangerous places off the road, and rejoin the column without its having to halt, unless they signal for reinforcements. The cavalry of the vanguard should therefore act boldly; but in the event of their being stopped by dangerous or difficult situations, such as defiles, woods, villages or steep heights not easily accessible to mounted troops, or by the presence of hostile infantry, the infantry of the vanguard should be close at hand, and the advanced guard must be halted to admit of such places being satisfactorily reconnoitred and cleared of the enemy. Cavalry in a wood, a village, or defile—such, for instance, as a road with a wall on either side—cannot manoeuvre. In unfavourable localities, if liable to be attacked, the infantry of the vanguard should lead in the formation best adapted to the situation. The interval between the vanguard and the main body of the advanced guard, should be sufficient to admit of the latter deploying or making other suitable arrangements to receive the enemy in the event of the vanguard being surprised or hurriedly driven back.

As a general rule the distance from the leading scouts of the vanguard to the head of the main body of the advanced guard should be about fifteen hundred yards, the extreme range at which effective aimed rifle-fire can be brought to bear on a column of troops on the line of march.

Main Body.

A portion of infantry leads the main body of an advanced guard to cover the guns which follow as near the head of the column as is compatible with their safety (when limbered up and on a road), and behind the guns the remainder of the infantry. Half a company of engineers is often added to an advanced guard, and placed wherever it is most likely to be wanted.

An advanced guard distributed on the above principles offers the smallest possible target to an enemy lying in ambush. Presenting small bodies pushed forward with ever increasing stronger bodies in rear, those in front can be quickly and effectively reinforced, or, if driven back, they can retire on the main body deployed to cover their retreat.

To what extent an advanced-guard commander engages an enemy in superior force must depend on his orders.

1. He can attack without halting, sending his cavalry to reconnoitre widely and boldly on the flanks, and, aided by his artillery fire, advance with his infantry in attack formation.

2. He can take up a defensive position to hold the enemy in check until reinforced from the main column.

3. He can retire, fighting, on the main column.

Under all circumstances constant communication must be kept up between an advanced guard and the main column it is covering, either by signallers, mounted orderlies, or a chain of connecting files.

It sometimes happens, when an important and distant point has to be secured,

such, for instance, as a bridge or a railway junction, that an advanced guard is composed entirely of cavalry. An instance was furnished in the Russian and Turkish War. War was declared by Russia on the 24th April, 1877, and the various corps mobilized and concentrated on the frontier near Kishineff proceeded to cross in three columns. The Russian plan of campaign necessitated the seizure of the railway bridge at the mouth of the River Sereth, in order to secure the Roumanian railway.

(To be Continued.)

Correspondence.

[This paper does not necessarily share the views expressed in correspondence published in its columns, the use of which is freely granted to writers on topics of interest to the militia.]

MISTAKEN IDENTITY.

To the Editor of the Canadian Militia Gazette:

SIR,—With reference to a paragraph that appeared in your issue of the 22nd December last, regarding the 100th Regiment, I beg to state that you are in error in ascribing the scene that occurred in the court house at Ennis to men of that battalion.

The present title of the regiment is 1st Batt. Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians), as a glance at the army list will show, and it is at present stationed at Fort William, Bengal.

The 2nd Batt. of the Leinster Regiment is the old 109th Bombay Infantry, at present stationed in Ireland, and to which the detachment on duty at Ennis belonged. HUNDREDTH.

THE INFANTRY SCHOOL CORPS.

To the Editor of the Canadian Militia Gazette:

SIR,—Perhaps you may be able to inform me what is the correct appellation of our permanent Canadian infantry. First, in the General's official reports of 1885-6 I find "C School" mentioned as having advanced in skirmishing order; and where names are mentioned at the end of these reports, I see one officer spoken of as So-and-so, "C School," and a few lines further down another as So-and-so, "C Co. I. S. C!" Again, I have known this many named organization spoken and written of as "B Co. Royal School of Infantry," and also as "B Co. Royal School of Infantry Corps," and again as "Royal Infantry School Corps." But finally I see it written in the militia list as "A, B, C Co's. Infantry School Corps." Why should not the precedent of the batteries be followed and the infantry be called the Regiment of Canadian Infantry, leaving the school, or educational part, as Royal Schools of Infantry. If you can possibly throw some light on this subject you will greatly oblige yours obediently, PERPLEXED.

THE RANK OF THE SURGEON-GENERAL.

To the Editor of the Canadian Militia Gazette:

SIR,—"Linch-pin" recently referred to the appointment of a Surgeon-General of Militia, and the total disregard of the Militia Act and Regulations by the authorities, but he did not half state the absurdities of the case. Let me give them to him. By the Militia Act, 1883, no person except the officer commanding the militia, the Adjutant-General, and the Quartermaster-General shall hold higher rank in the militia than that of Lieut.-Col. Lieut.-Col. Darby Bergin was gazetted on the 24th April, 1885, to the temporary appointment of Surgeon-General in connection with the forces on active service in the North-West, which is quite in accordance with the Militia Act, 46 Vic., chap. 11, sec. 33, which provides for such appointments whenever the militia is called out for active service in the field, but on termination of the service this officer should have reverted to his former rank in the militia, in the same way as Deputy Commissary-General Whitehead and Deputy Surgeon-General Roddick ceased to hold rank as such on vacating their appointments in the North-West forces, on completion of service, or as Major-General Strange, who was gazetted Colonel in the militia, ceased to hold rank altogether on relinquishing command, as also did Purveyor-General Sullivan. Otherwise an officer might be appointed with rank of Colonel or Major-General, and after the occasion requiring this had passed away if he did not revert to former rank we might have a D. A. G. with rank of Lieut.-Col., who by law commands the militia in his district, commanding a Major-General who on his return home after service in the field probably commands a battery of artillery or battalion of infantry. In April 1886 we find Surgeon-General Bergin gazetted antedating to 24th April, 1885. Now, were the militia called out for active service in the field at the date of this appointment, namely April 24, 1886? If so I have not heard of it; if not, where is the authority for the appointment, which is made in direct contravention of a clause of the act already quoted, but here repeated: "In time of peace no person shall hold higher rank in the militia than Lieut.-Col., except the G. O. C., A. G. and Q. M. G." Is this, then a time of war? As the Militia Act was not amended to cover this case, it is quite clear the appointment is illegal. Even any Order in Council made in contravention of the express stipulations of the Act would be *ultra vires* and void. Why not antedate him to the war of 1812 or 1837-8—it seems a pity to make it a year only. Then to make confusion worse confounded Surgeon-General Bergin is gazetted a Colonel in the Militia after having been Surgeon-General for a year. As the relative rank and authority of militia officers is the same as the relative rank and authority of officers in H. M. regular army (Militia Act 46 Vic., chap. 11, sec. 35) the relative rank of Surgeon-General is Major-General. It was rather Irish promotion to gazette him Colonel—a combatant officer—when he already holds the relative rank of Major-General. Supposing the Adjutant-General and Surgeon-General were doing duty together with Imperial troops, say at Halifax, which one would take precedence; or say at Government House? The Surgeon-General of course, by virtue of his higher relative rank; which is rather an anomaly, as the A. G. is supposed to be next to the G. O. C. in seniority. Perhaps it was with a view of making the Surgeon-General junior to the A. G. that the former was gazetted Colonel, but as it omitted to say he was to have the relative rank only of Colonel it would not apply. The Surgeon-General would under like circumstances outrank our next Major-General commanding the militia. Fancy a non-combatant being gazetted as a combatant without ceasing to be the former. Which is he? Can he be both at the same time? It is quite contrary to the English practice to give medical officers combatant rank; it is only in the United States where this is done. Surely the department are not looking to Washington for military ideas. Now Major-General, Surgeon-General, Colonel Bergin, I would like to know exactly what rank you claim to hold. According to my views your legal rank is Lieut.-Colonel, and no other. RAMROD.