

emotion. We will conclude in his own words, which unite sound common sense with a little playful satire, all the more effective because it is without bitterness:—"We, officers of the army, are taken the greatest care of in some respects; our theoretical education appears to increase every year; we are dressed up in khakee so as to prevent the possibility of an enemy seeing us a mile or two off, and of our own men recognising us when close at hand, but up to the present time we are not provided with good weapons or taught the use of them."—*Broad Arrow*.

Common Sense on Parade, or Drill without Stays.

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THE next thing necessary is that the character of drill shall be changed. Bodies of troops must be formed up at all times so as to be consistent in their formations with the conditions of modern warfare, and that the general character of the detail shall be suitable to these conditions. Movements must be minimised and simplified, everything being rejected that would be out of place in the field. This has for many years been urged, and for many years those who urged it were sneered at. When, exactly twenty years ago, in pleading for a step in this direction, the writer quoted from General Bell's "Rough Notes by an Old Soldier":—"Limit the manœuvres to five or six, and make it less complicated, and so distinct that every sub. may be able to handle a regiment after one year's service. If you attempted one-half of the present manœuvres in the battle-field . . . you would lose your men and your reputation as soldiers" (*General Bell*), a leading military critic in the press held Sir George Bell's views up to the contempt of his readers. Yet the main part of what was then proposed is now embodied in the field exercise; but unfortunately in several instances instead of the simple being substituted for the difficult, it was only inserted permissively, thus adding more manœuvres instead of substituting the convenient for the complicated. For example, "forming" is allowed instead of wheeling, but "wheeling" is retained and may be demanded at inspection, and therefore the simple and sensible substitute is almost never used. Improvements were also done by halves. Thus "front" was abolished as regards unchangeable order of companies but retained as regards the internal order of the company itself. No doubt "change ranks" is allowed and even enjoined, but is practically never practised, so that the arbitrary and artificial front still holds its own, hampering and complicating the exercises. But what a change has come over the views of military men. The deeply engrained view that a number of intricate, though unpractical exercises are essential for the training of troops, and against which far-seeing men long ago protested in such strong terms as these—"Why should troops be practised in what will never be called for" (*Captain Suasso, 1816*)? "Il y a des tacticiens que la pratique n'a point éclairés, qui veulent multiplier les évolutions à l'infini, qui en fatiguent continuellement les troupes, soutenant que toutes les évolutions sont bonnes" (*Guibert*). This absurdity is now dying out. The mode in which our drill system has been elaborated in the past is ridiculed by the adjutant-general himself. On all hands the cry rises up against the unpractical complications of the "Red Book." Who cannot picture to himself what denunciations would have met such declarations as the following if they had been uttered forty years ago? "Our drill should be made as simple as it is possible to make it. There should be only one way of doing each thing, and that should be the shortest and quickest" (*General Sir Daniel Lysons*). "We should simplify the drill book and go the opposite way to work to what we are doing now. . . . Let us decide what form of attack we want, and then simplify the drill as much as possible" (*Major-General the Hon. W. H. A. Fielding*). "There is no doubt that our drill book needs revising, and that it contains a good deal which is of little advantage in the training of our soldiers for active service" (*Lieut.-General Lord Chelmsford*). "With regard to simplification of drill, most people admit that it is advisable" (*Colonel Sir Lumley Graham*). "The easier you can make the drill, unquestionably the better it will be" (*Major-General Bray*). "The two principal books published by authority for infantry contain a good deal which is of no practical use in time of war" (*Major Baker*). "The drill book contains, to my thinking, much useless lumber" (*General Sir Donald Stewart*).

Lastly, the following occurs in the *Journal* of one who was a practical soldier to the backbone, writing of a force he proposed to organise: "All rubbish of goose-step, right face, left face, &c., in which our army drills delight, should be left out" (*The late Maj.-Gen. Gordon*).

Who can doubt that instead of such words being listened to with complacency in the theatre of the united service institution, the general opinion would have been that the very suggestions showed that the service was going to a certain gentleman who shall be nameless?

All this creates hope that the present system must soon be revised

with a bold and firm hand, particularly as the same views are expressed all over the world. "It is not necessary to practise numerous and complicated formations as valuable manœuvres" (*Prussian Drill Book*). "A few simple forms suffice for all purposes" (*Ibid*). The complicated formations "have outlived themselves as fighting formations, and are impossible of application" (*Timely Changes in the Exercise Regulations of the Prussian Infantry*). "Simplicity is more than ever desirable in our formations" (*Von Scherf*). "It is much better to have a few simple, easy forms, useful and applicable at all times and places, than a variety of complicated ones" (*Field-Marshal the Archduke John of Austria*). "Is it not plain that simplicity and clearness in theory, facility and rapidity in execution, are the absolute law of modern manœuvres and tactics" (*General Trochu*) "Simplicity, celerity and the least fatigue to the men are the grand elements of efficiency and success" (*Gen. Morris, U.S.A.*)

And these latter views of our neighbors bring out how damaging our system is, for they point to the necessity of a much greater speed than was formerly necessary in the execution, being in this in accord with the best authorities. "Movements on the field ought now to be executed more quickly by infantry than formerly" (*Colonel C. B. Brackenbury*). "Success of infantry depends on speed of marches, celerity of movements when going into battle, and physical endurance of the men" (*General Morris, U.S.A.*) "The second object that drill aims at is . . . to get at the enemy with as little loss as possible, and as quickly as it is possible to do so" (*Viscount Wolseley*).

Now nothing is more certain than this, that our mode of manœuvring men, as laid down in our text-books, is not suited for rapid movement. The speed has to be limited by the character of the detail, and needlessly so. The transition from the normal formation to a real fighting formation suitable to the time, is in itself a manœuvre, an abandonment of one principle of form to take up another. This should not be so.

But further, these same authorities press the necessity of greater saving of the soldiers' strength, looking to the strain of the actual fight as compared with former days. "All useless fatigue must be spared to soldiers" (*General Sir Patrick Macdougall*), it being a great object "to get over the ground with the greatest possible saving of the soldier's strength" (*Prussian Drill Book*).

This calls both for freedom from bodily harassment in the formation, and simplicity and directness of manœuvre—for the former an open formation, for the latter an abolition of all unnecessarily complicated and round-about modes, and of artificial fronts attached to mere units of a force as distinguished from the real "action front" of the whole force. "One cannot insist too much on marching easy" (*Kappel*). The demand must be for "total absence of constraint in the position of the soldier, both when halted and on the march, so that he may be able to use his arms and legs to the greatest advantage" (*Colonel Sir Lumley Graham*). And that there may be no harassment there must be no touch; and as no touch is possible in the advance to attack, so there must be no touch in drill, because a man who is always accustomed to touch "is apt to lose confidence in himself" when placed without touch, and "only constant practice in extended (or rather interval) order will ever make him self-reliant" (*Major Barker*).

Last, but by no means least, comes the question how the system of training is to be adapted to modern requirements, in regard to the use of breechloading long-range rifle fire.

Fire-discipline is the most important problem in modern infantry training. Just as in former days the restraint and wall-like immovability of highly trained troops gave them the power to overcome enemies who relied on excitement and *elan* rather than on drill, so now an infantry that is superior to its opponent in fire-discipline will have an enormous advantage. The testimony of a brave enemy shows how useless the noise of shouts was to shake the British line. "The English remained quite silent, with ordered arms, and from their steadiness appeared to be a long red wall. This steadiness invariably produced an effect on the young French soldiers. Very soon we got nearer, shouting 'Vive l'Empereur! En avant! à la baionette!' . . . shots were fired as we advanced. The English line remained still, silent and immovable, with ordered arms, even when we were only 300 paces distant, and it appeared to ignore the storm about to break. The contrast was striking; in our inmost thoughts each felt that the enemy was a long time firing, and that this fire reserved for so long would be very unpleasant when it did come. Our ardour cooled. The moral power of steadiness which nothing shakes (even if it be only in appearance) over disorder which stupefies itself with noise, overcame our minds. At this moment of intense excitement the English wall shouldered arms; an indescribable feeling rooted many of our men to the spot; they began to fire; the enemy's steady volleys swept our ranks; decimated, we turned round, seeking to recover our equilibrium; then three deafening cheers broke the silence of our opponents; at the third they were on us, pushing our disorganised flight" (*Marechal Bugeaud*).—*Colburn's Magazine*.

(*To be continued.*)