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CONTENTS OF THIS NUMBER

THE ALTERATIONS IN INFANTRY DRILL.

A HISTORY OF THE 62ND FUSILIERS.

MILITIA GENERAL ORDERS.

No. 9 of 9th May, 1888.
No. 10 of 11th May, 1888.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Compliments to armed parties.—
Stabtown Invincible.

THE RIFLE.

Annual meeting 44th Batt.
Ottawa Rifle Club Spoon Competition.

MILITIA NEWS AND NOTES.

The Alterations In Infantry Drill.

SOME weeks ago, says the *Broad Arrow*, "we expressed the hope that the long expected revision of the 'Infantry Drill Book' would not be much longer delayed, so that neither officers or men would be compelled to waste time in acquiring instruction in details which were doomed to extinction. The Army Orders for the current month have at last directed the elimination from the drill book of a number of minor and unimportant movements. We have here a good example of the deliberation with which any progress is made with us, as nearly two years ago we heard rumours of proposed amendments, which turn out to be substantially the same as those which have just been ordered. In squad drill we have the abolition of "Dressing up man by man" and wheeling or forming to the right or left about, either from files or fours. In company drill we have an important change in permanent substitution of "forming" for "wheeling" in the movement from column in to line; and here, perhaps, we may see the first sign of abandonment of the old rigid drill by "touch," "march" and "countermarch" are fine old military expressions, but, for the future "march" will have to stand by itself, as countermarching by ranks is abolished. The ranks will either be faced about, or if it is desired to preserve the original formation of a company, it will be by the formation of files or fours, and wheeling. As we said in our last article on the subject of drill, it is in battalion drill that there is the greatest scope for the scissors. It is quite unnecessary to lay down several ways of doing the same thing, and up to the present time there have been many things laid down as movements which do not require to be laid down at all. If certain rules and rudimentary movements are given, a capable commanding officer will always be able to place his men in the required position. In describing lately the generals of the past, we mentioned a movement that was or might have been required. The battalion was drawn up with its face to the barrack wall, and the general required that it should be drawn diagonally across the barrack square facing in the opposite direction. When a general required such a movement as that to be performed he would expect the companies to stand in the same relation to one and other as before, and the ranks in the same order. And the movement was a sufficient puzzle for a bewildered mind! At the present day, however, the movement would be of the simplest. The ranks would be faced about, and the remainder of the formation would be done by the diagonal march. The old left company would become the new right company, and the former rear rank the front rank. As a movement that requires no preliminary order or instruction, but which, if necessary, may be left to the skill of the commanding officers, the old method of relieving battalions, by the battalion which is to be relieved retiring by fours through the battalion which is to relieve it, has been struck out. In the same way the movement of a column of double companies diminishing

its front by advancing or retiring by fours has been abolished. As countermarching has been struck out of company drill, so it follows with regard to battalion drill. The advance by column of double companies from the centre has also been abolished. The good old-fashioned movement of a battalion in line retiring in column from one flank in the rear of the other, or by double column in rear of centre, has at last disappeared. What a mouthful the word of command was; "Retire in column of double companies in rear of centre!" "Forming" takes place of "wheeling" in battalion as in company drill. The movement of forming line to the reverse flank by the successive wheel of companies has been abolished. When it was no longer considered necessary to retain the original formation of the companies, there was no use in retaining it, the line could be equally well formed to either flank by forming or wheeling the companies to the required flank. As the formation of double companies have been struck out, the formation of line to flank from them has disappeared. And so has also the deployment of double companies. We are glad to see the elimination of oblique echelon as a detailed movement, considering that it is quite unsuited to modern tactics; if it is necessary to take ground to front obliquely, it will be done by fours. Many old officers regret the disappearance from the drill-book of the old movements, involving a change of front from line by the wheel of companies. Commanding officers and adjutants were very fond of it, and it certainly had a very pretty appearance, but it was a purely parade movement, and may well go when so many important things have to be learnt by officers and men. Changes of front from line will for the future be done by fours. The remaining movements which have been erased from the drill book are chiefly those depending on the employment of double companies, both in battalion and brigade drill. The last abolition is one which will bring tears into the eyes of many a veteran. The rear rank is not to "lock up" when marching past. We shall no longer see Tommy Atkins in rear struggling to get as near Tommy Atkins in front as his valise will allow him, or awkwardly straddling along so as to avoid kicking his heels! What was the object of it, or how it looked smart, we never could see. We do not know whether any more changes are in progress, but if there are we hope that the considerations of them will not take as long as those we have enumerated have done. We do not think that the present instructions as to the attack formation are satisfactory. It is high time that they were taken in hand.

MAJOR STURDEE is to be congratulated on his success in his initial effort at authorship. The historical records of his regiment, the 62nd St. John Fusiliers, which have just appeared, would be a credit to one claiming much more experience as a compiler than does the energetic officer whose name appears on the title page and they are equally a credit to the publishers, being well printed on heavy paper, and appropriately bound in scarlet cloth with the arms of the regiment in gold on the cover. The record tells succinctly the inception of the volunteer movement in St John, and the formation of several companies which were afterwards consolidated into the present regiment and goes