

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor of THE VOLUNTEER REVIEW.

SIR,—It is a matter of surprise that none of those who have lately taken to ink on military subjects have advocated the single-rank system. At this time, when all the troops in Europe are provided with arms of precision, a ball from a Chassepot, a Gatling, or a Krupp rifle is quite as likely to hit both front and rear rank men together, as the front rank man only. Therefore, the present formation exposes two men; the single rank would only expose one.* If a rear rank is necessary, why not place the small man in front, where he could have a view of his enemy? He is now obstructed by a large man in his immediate front, who overshadows him and can render him no service. In the same way the front rank man is often incommoded by a man too close in rear. His movement would be much more free if he acted alone, as he does not require a man behind to propel him to the charge. In a single-rank formation, two right or left would require less time to perform than fours at present; and threes could be conveniently reintroduced. One regiment in single rank would take the place of two as at present formed. The time was when three ranks were considered necessary, but there were no Sniders in those days.

It is to be expected our Government will (as France, Prussia, and Russia have already done) expunge from the drill-book the useless, puzzling, and intricate battalion movements, which never were, and never could be, performed in front of an enemy; which, like some of the music played by regimental bands, are supposed to be respectable because they are difficult: and introduce, or, rather, practise, the plain, necessary movements which men and officers will readily comprehend and willingly perform. The Secure, an unnecessary portion of the manual exercise, has been dispensed with lately: the manual would, on the whole, be much improved if the Support and the Advance followed the Secure. No human being would, of his own free will, endeavour to carry such a weight as a rifle, with fixed bayonet, on the fore part of his arm, a place where nature never intended a burden should be placed. The rifleman, when on sentry, is allowed to sling or trail arms; but, on being relieved by a Guard or Lines man, the latter has to fix bayonets and Supports to enable him to do duty on the same post. Why not allow him to slope, being the most rational and not the less showy motion? The motions of the advance are particularly awkward. The corporal with the relief should shoulder and slope with the relief; and as the sergeant covering looks awkward indeed at the advance, sergeants should return to the fusil drill, which was aban-

* Lord Clyde introduced the line for attack or defence, in preference to the column.

doned lest the locks might receive injury, which was proved not to have been the case. There is sufficient display in the bayonet exercise to make up for the paucity of motions in the manual which this suggestion would cause. The bayonet exercise alone has, when performed by British soldiers, the capacity of showing to what perfection a British regiment can be brought by discipline.

In regard to interior economy there seems to be no idea in some men's minds that the service could be rendered much more popular, and the soldier much more comfortable, by a very small amount of expense. In the first place, each man should have one half as much more room in barracks as there is allowed at present. Each man should have at least six pegs for his appointments, and the old system of clean straw (where issued) for bedding should be restored, and more facilities for ablution ought to be provided, and a liberal supply of light and fuel should be allowed in barracks. No women should be allowed in the single men's barracks. Each married family should have a private place. The men's rations ought to be better looked after. The color sergeant should only attend commanding officers' parades and no other duty, but superintend the interior economy of his company, cleaning barracks, &c. No orderly man should be called on to attend parade on the day he is on duty as orderly man, and no man coming off guard should be called on to attend parade. There should be only one parade, of an hour's duration, daily, unless for awkward men; and no man should be called for guard unless he had previously three nights in bed. No man should be charged hospital stoppages unless his disease is caused by his own vice; and there should be no stoppages on board ship. There should be more simplicity in the accounts—so much rations and so much pay daily. There should be no sliding scale in regard of pension according to rank—so much a day to a well-conducted man after so many years, and discharge if desired on that day when his period of service expires. No man should be taken from the ranks to the band or drums, military schools and special enlistment being sufficient to supply the above establishments. Every soldier should be taught to read and write, and arithmetic as far as the rule of three. This could be taught in the regimental school. As no soldier requires a college degree, no specially trained schoolmaster would be required. Cooking should also be taught each man in the regiment: no special training would be required for that purpose. There should be fewer bugle sounds, and the men thoroughly practised to understand them. There should be more ball practice, superintended by regimental officers in their turn. There is no necessity whatever for specially trained officers—a regiment should be able to teach regimental requirements of the above kind.

There should be more attention paid to the men than has been the case hitherto. Many officers were, and, I fear, are, more anxious about the defaulter book than about the soul and body (in all other respects) of the man who appears in it. The first and last word of some of those officers to the color sergeant is, the defaulter book; and the great cause of this is, that the petrified fossil who makes the general inspection is entirely satisfied if the copper-butressed Talmud (with the moveable leaves) is in good order, and if each man has open in his hand the useless and troublesome small book, which, though a monthly annoyance to officers and non-commissioned officers, is of no use, as it is now kept, to the man. The dreadful bore of the knapsack should be done away with as much as possible. Where is the man who can exercise a quarter of his natural strength or activity harnessed as he is within a system of belts and buckles which is admirably contrived for compressing the chest and lungs, and, as has been said a thousand times, is the young soldier's stepping-stone to the hospital? It is a peculiar grievance on the line of march, where, unless on night guards, let the weather be ever so wet, the great coat is not allowed to be worn, though from its spongy nature it absorbs a heavy amount of rain, and the additional weight causes the men's feet to blister, and cripples them before a second day's march is over. In European warfare, thanks to steam power, troops are never further than a day or two from their supplies, which, with very few exceptions, could be forwarded without breaking down the strength which the fighting man wants to enable him to meet his enemy, instead of making a beast of burden of him. The admirer of knapsacks might as well say to the soldier, You are likely to be employed on active service at no distant day, where it is possible you may have to be placed on short rations; I shall, therefore, to enable you to live on a scanty regimen, issue orders that only half rations be served out on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays, until further orders. Certainly as well starve a man in anticipation of possible famine, as kill him by causing him to carry an unnecessary burden.

A soldier should be also taught to respect himself and to speak in private to his officer, and not, as now, have his private affairs known to a regiment through the medium of a non-commissioned officer, who now must know what he requires before the man is allowed to speak to the officer. He should also be more depended on. Where is the necessity for sending a non-commissioned officer as an escort with a man carrying a dinner to another on guard or in hospital, when the same fatigue man may have the safety of the garrison in his charge as sentry on a post on the following day? Do away with pack drill. It is a disgracefully useless punishment. Instruction drill with