

year based upon some of the matches in your paper." To all our friends we would say that they can aid us materially by getting up lists of subscribers and sending them in promptly.

Col. Knollys' remarks on tactics show, if they show nothing else, the confusion into which a vigorous advance to the attack will throw even the best drilled troops, and the difficulty that often occurs in exercising command over them and separating bodies into their integral parts after a fight; all of which lends strength to our argument that good shooting is more important than precision in drill. We have passed through a long era in which excellence in the manual exercise and in marching past seemed to be the only ambition of our volunteer commanders. Let us hope we have entered on a new and more practical one. It seems useless, too, to spend too much time on the field exercises at an epoch when everything points to further and radical changes being made in the mode of attack, where the superiority of weapons calls for the least possible exposure of the fighting line and a ready means of quickly reinforcing it at the critical moment. For these reasons Col. Knollys' article is specially worthy of study.

The *Amherst Gazette* is publishing, from the collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society, extracts from the journal of General John Winslow, who had command of the British troops in New England in the old colonial days, circa 1755. They form very interesting reading, despite the quaint diction and spelling, recalling many of the events which led to the revolution, as well as constituting a valuable addition to our records of early colonial history.

Lieut.-Col. Worsley, who has been brigade major since 1870, and who is at present stationed in Montreal, has received a well-deserved promotion by his appointment to the deputy adjutant generalship of the Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island military districts, made vacant by Lieut.-Col. Taylor's removal to command the Mounted Infantry School at Winnipeg. Col. Worsley was for many years in the 60th Rifles, leaving the regular army with the rank of captain, and used to be an excellent rifle shot. He is so favorably known in Montreal, and has had so long a staff experience, that we feel sure he will be appreciated by our Maritime confreres.

The militia general orders this week contain the official report of the memorable trip of the *Northcote* down the South Saskatchewan past Batoche, which is substantially the same as the descriptions published at the time by the newspapers. It will be noticed that the names of Mr. Bedson and Captain Wise are specially mentioned.

All the other changes in the militia list are in the lower ranks, and this part of the orders is brief, summing up five promotions, three new appointments, and six retirements, leaving a net loss of three officers.

REFLECTIONS ON TACTICS.

BY COLONEL W. W. KNOLLYS.

In Germany the question of tactics best suited to the modern conditions of war has probably been more carefully studied than in any other country. We imagine, however, that most of the chief German authorities would frankly admit that the subject is, with regard to some of its parts, at all events, still in an experimental state. To us it seems that during the last ten years little progress has been made. The Franco-German war swept away both the close order line and the battalion column. The Germans still clung to the company column somewhat, but in the course of a few years became gradually convinced that even the latter order was unsuitable within the zone of effective rifle fire. The Russians in the Russo-Turkish war, as a rule, handled their infantry in a rather coarse manner, still, on most occasions hurling that arm against

the enemy in masses of more or less size. The only lesson, indeed, to be learnt from that war was that afforded by Skoboleff, who taught and practised the doctrine that in the actual assault of a strong position successive masses of troops should be sent forward, each following wave carrying the general tide a little further. This method, which proved successful at Plevna, is no doubt sound, and sometimes it is the only one that can be applied. It is not, however, the solution of the whole problem of infantry tactics. Indeed, it is but the application of mere brute force if carried out on a large scale, involves a fearful loss of life, and requires for success, at all events, a large local numerical superiority. It is one of the blows which may be delivered, but is not the only one.

Since the termination of the Russo-Turkish war the only illustrations of any progress or modification of ideas have taken place at peace manœuvres. Of such as have taken place in England, France and Italy the writer of this article can speak from personal knowledge, but in the case of the manœuvres of other countries only from the perusal of newspaper reports. Speaking generally, the tendency of most armies seems to be to cover too much ground in proportion to the number of troops, while in the German army one great object aimed at seems to be to obtain an enveloping fire. The result of the almost universal practice of spreading troops excessively is to render it impossible to give sufficient consistency to the line, to provide adequate supports and reserves, to collect rapidly a sufficiently strong body of troops to deal or ward off a heavy blow, or to make a vigorous counter attack at precisely the right moment. Moreover, the sound principle that command should extend over depth rather than length is violated, the troops broken up into small scattered fractions are apt to work for local rather than general purposes, to fail to combine their action in short, and the senior lose all control over their junior officers. Of course, when a body of infantry are once in the actual firing line, and closely engaged with the enemy, the chances are, save under special circumstances and conditions of ground, that the only thing the commander of each fraction of such fighting line can do is to induce his men to stand fast, to advance straight to their front, or to advance with a slight obliquity of direction to either right or left. Practically, he can restrain his men from running away, induce them to advance, and that is all. As for the company chief, if with the company supports or reserves, he can, to a certain extent, control these, but only up to the moment of their joining the firing line. The battalion commander in theory pulls the strings which guide the companies, but in practice has little authority over any but the body with which he posts himself as soon as his command has been broken up for attack; the very amount of space covered is an almost insuperable obstacle to control. The regimental, or in our army, the brigade commander, for a foreign regiment of three battalions may be considered to correspond with a British brigade, has, of course, still less control, while, as to officers commanding larger bodies than three battalions, they can initiate an attack; but having done this, and placed his men in actual contact with the enemy, his functions practically cease for the time. In many cases, impatient at being even for the moment cyphers, he attaches himself to a particular portion of his command, thus ignoring the immediate commander of that portion, and losing even the shadow of control over the entire body.

To sum up the results of the prevalent method of fighting at manœuvres, they amount to the various tactical sub-units getting thoroughly out of the hand of the commander of the next higher group. But allowing that this scrambling disjointed method of fighting proves a success so far that the enemy are driven from the whole, or a portion of the position, what happens then? The senior officer on the spot, if under the circumstances and the present system it can be ascertained who he is, should at once direct his attention to two matters—one the repelling of a counter attack while his men are necessarily in a state of confusion, the other the following up, if thought desirable, of the success already gained. For the former purpose, at all events, it is imperative that order should be restored in at least a portion of the force. Companies should be got together, and, as far as possible, formed into battalions. This is the minimum that should be attempted, but it is likewise desirable to separate brigades and divisions from each other. How often during the Franco-Prussian war do we find that after capturing a position, especially if it happened to be a wood, it took the Germans a considerable time, twenty minutes, or half an hour even in some instances to disentangle the fragments of the different battalions, regiments, brigades, and even divisions. It would have been bad enough if the enemy had made a counter attack on the breathless and disorganized mass before the attempt to reduce it to order; but how much worse would it have been had an attack taken place when the process of disentanglement was taking place?

With long thin lines, and command extending over length rather than depth, it may very well happen that the whole of one supporting