

INFANTRY ANNUAL TRAINING.

There are few now in the service who remember, or who have served under, that fine old type of soldier, Col. Wilford, the first commandant of the School of Musketry at Hythe, one of the British Army's first enthusiasts in rifle shooting or target practice.

When lecturing on musketry it was his almost daily custom to make the following opening remarks, which he evidently intended should sink deep into the hearts of the young soldiery: "Drill but places you in a position to use the rifle with effect. A soldier who can't shoot is an encumbrance to the service."

As time goes on, and the "modern major-general" has succeeded the "old colonel," it is gratifying to all who have the efficiency of our force in view to see the steps being taken towards improvement in shooting, and the country is to be congratulated that the MILITIA GAZETTE has taken the matter up earnestly. There is, however, it must be admitted, much room for improvement in this direction, and in at least the following important points: 1. The general training of the force in target and judging distance practices, as distinguished from the acquisition of individual skill in handling the rifle. 2. Team shooting and coaching. 3. Firing at moving targets.

Each of the above is, I conceive, a subject in itself for development, and I will, if you desire it (as an old Hythe man), gladly give my views on each at a future day. Drill, not target practice, however, is the theme of these brief notes. To direct attention to certain pages of the "Field Exercise, 1884," too seldom, I fear perused, and too seldom used in practice in the training of our force, is my present object.

Catch questions, so called, in drill, are asked and answered from time to time, all which show an enquiring mind on the part of the young soldier, but, after all, in such questions and answers, we are but moving along in the groove of the "old colonel." This reminds me of a certain annual inspection, years ago, when with pride I brought forward my pet subaltern officer for examination by a strict inspector-general of infantry. My sub. had left no leaves of his drill book unturned, and besides, he had a most retentive memory. Question after question, of a practical kind, went on for some time, each question bringing a satisfactory and speedy answer; the British sub. could not be "run to earth." The general must try other tactics of a less practical nature. The question, "How many buttons on a regulation tunic?" touched an uncultivated spot. Of course the sub. made a shot at it, but did not hit the mark, and thus ended his first lesson.

In order to find out what is really practical in drill and field manoeuvres, we must ask what drill and what field movements have been used in modern warfare? What in our own recent campaign in the N.W., under our own "modern Major-General?"

Lord Wolseley truly says that "many pass their lives (officers brought up in regiments) without discovering that the military career has any higher aim than that of moving men on parade by a most complicated process called drill, and that of keeping order amongst them at all times by a rigid system of espionage which is believed to be discipline."

Surely in England's little modern wars, in South Africa, in Egypt, and the Soudan, as well as in our own experience in the suppression of the rebellion in the N.W., commanders had not to dip deep into "Minor tactics," by Clery, nor into "Tactical notes," by Jones, (admirable though these books are on the subjects therein treated) for instructions as to the movement of troops in the face of the enemy, nor had they to turn over many pages of the "Field Exercise" to find the brief instructions in squad drill. "Soldiers should be instructed to avail themselves, for their protection, of the slightest inequality of ground and the *smallest patch of cover* and how to make the best of it; also, how, in advancing or retiring, to run or creep from one point of cover to another, without unnecessary exposure."

I do not wish for a moment to depreciate the value of attention to details, which results, as a rule, in success in general principles. We no longer hear of the "handicraft" of war—for war has become an art that must be exercised with mind, science and sagacity, as well as resolution and energy, and requires accurate technical instruction and constant practice.

The following questions, however, remain: How many infantry corps go through their annual training (would that it were annual) and have not been instructed in the details or general principles of "extended order," as clearly shown in the "Field Exercise," for squad, company, and battalion? How many officers, or how few, have been instructed in the application of drill in field manoeuvres, in outpost duty, or in scouting, not to mention preliminary drill as a necessary preparation to target and judging distance practices? I am aware there are noble exceptions to the rule; and our recently established schools of infantry are, I believe, doing good work in the above directions.

My object, however, will be attained, if I draw attention to the necessity for annual, not biennial, drill of infantry corps, and to the character of the training, as it should be,—drills of a practical nature to be taught in camp, less time devoted to accurate dressing in Lord Wolseley's "complicated process, called drill," and corps taken on step by step, as the intelligence of individual members of our force will surely warrant, to extended order, to outpost duty, &c., all of which is as important as is the preliminary drill (too little attended to) before target and judging distance practices. Thus, and thus only, can we "in time of peace prepare for war."

MILITARY PUBLICATIONS.

The weeklies for the 5th are to hand. The editorials in the *Army and Navy Gazette* include articles on the situation in Servia and Bulgaria, and on the recent fighting there; on the mercantile auxiliaries, and on the French situation in Tonquin, the value of these being guaranteed by the name of the editor, Mr. William Howard Russell; also the usual regimental and naval news. A supplement contains, amongst other items of interest, detailed news from the British forces at Mandalay, and the beginning of a continued article on volunteer coast defence. The *Broad Arrow* contains leaders on the new dock yard policy; the third Burmese war; on Burmese jingoes, by General MacMahon, which gives a good idea of the fools' paradise in which King Theebaw was living; on the problem of another Soudan campaign; and on military shooting galleries. The general articles include a description of a new folding ambulance; and on the restoration of Gwalior fort to Scindiah. There are the usual short pithy notes, including a reproduction of our advocacy of the tuque for winter wear. The *V. S. Gazette* opens with two columns of Canadian items in its editorial notes, and has the usual interesting Scottish letter and a long article on the New Zealand volunteer movement, which is well worth study. The *V. S. Record* continues its history of the Wimbledon meetings, and, as usual, confines itself pretty closely to shooting notes. The result of the voting on the best all-round rifle shot is announced, the veteran McVittie distancing all competitors, while Col. Wilson, of Bannockburn, has been decided to be a little more popular than Col. Burt in the shooting world. It is somewhat singular that both these victors in an English ballot should be "frae the north." *Colburn's* for December opens with a paper by Col. Knollys on the British army of to-day, which is principally statistical. He thinks that since the short service system has been in force the army has become less efficient, and that the territorial system has lessened the *esprit de corps*. He is not hopeful of a change for the better under the present administration with Lord Wolseley all-powerful at the war office. The first instalment of a paper in the militia, by Major Nelson, promises well. The historical aspect of the question is here treated and the whole article will probably be of great value. The *Rifle* gives a historical illustrated sketch of Mr. W. Milton Farrow, who has an English as well as American reputation; a description of three-barrelled sporting guns, and an English letter, part of which we published last week. Most of the remainder of new matter relates to the choice of a standard target for off-hand rifle shooting at 200 yards. The Creedmoor target, which resembles the N.R.A. and D.R.A. is described as being too coarse, and one embracing ten divisions is proposed to be substituted. In this the outer would count one, the magpie would be divided into two, counting two and three respectively; the inner is divided into four, and the eight-inch bull's eye into three, thus giving a decimal division, the several rings getting wider as they recede from the centre.

MOUNTED POLICE NOTES.

At Prince Albert there are now eighty police, but the inhabitants are excited in consequence of the restless state of the Indians, and fear trouble. It is rumored that B Battery has been ordered back from Qu'Appelle, and the inhabitants are clamoring for the formation of a local militia corps in addition to their other safeguards.

The force at Calgary, with the exception of 25 men, are to be removed to Gleichen, and to meet this change the arrangements for all supplies to be delivered under contract have been altered and the erection of proposed new quarters stopped.

The newly appointed inspector, Mr. Brooks, has joined the Regina depot.

The force at Macleod, increased in strength to about 200, anticipate a lively time this winter, in consequence of bad feeling between the Bloods and Crees, arising from the theft of some two hundred horses from the former, and the general scarcity of provisions.