

transition at the same drill, from the unbending exactitude of the formal manoeuvre to the flexible intelligent application of it; let frequent thinning forward as for attack, with the exercise of firing under orders, and frequent consolidating in, be practised on the same occasion; let men feel that at any moment during the formal drill they may be called upon to move out promptly in action exercise in any direction, and from any formation, both from the halt and on the march, and that at any moment they will have to resume the exactitude of the parade, and to move with the precision and minute accuracy that the action exercise forbids, and they will gain aptitude for maintenance of practical order in action exercise and rapid recovery of accurate form when required, which they can never obtain while the two different classes of exercise are dealt with as being separate systems, to be practised at different times. The direction that officers commanding "should make a marked difference between parades for drill and those for field manoeuvres" (*Field Exercise*), is scarcely a wise one. It would be much better if it read "commanding officers should make a marked distinction between parade drill and action drill, but should practise both on the same occasion, passing frequently from the one to the other." Such a course is now enjoined by high authorities. The Prussian *Exerzir Reglement* orders (though probably the spirit of the parade resists it) that even recruits shall have their parade instruction interspersed with the "extended order of fighting." This is no new idea, but was urged in vain long ago, so that troops might be "most familiar with the transitions from the more regular into the less regular, and the less regular into the more regular positions. This once made familiar to them, they will be capable immediately to revert from the loose into the compact and from the compact into the loose formation" (*Captain Suasso, 1816*). This idea, sound when it was written, is now more than ever to be commended. "The greatest stress must be laid on rapid change to the order of attack, and *vice versa*" (*Field-Marshal the Archduke John of Austria*), constant practice in thinning forward, yet maintaining connectedness and cohesion; constant rallying into exact and compact order, both forward and backward, the whole interspersed with frequent firing under orders, whether with empty or loaded rifles. "In a word, I would like to see the soldier trained in those duties and exercises which are essential to his efficiency in the field, and in nothing else; but all these should be matters of *daily* concern, and combined on the same occasion, and not as now separated and practised at different times and seasons." (*Gen. Sir Donald Stewart*.) If this sound maxim were carried out, then every drill would give its quota of help to these important matters, which ordinary parade drills at present lend no direct aid to at all—(1) accurate movement with interval, (2) recovery from loss of form, and (3) regulation of fire, all which tend greatly to make the soldier's work interesting, thus directly tending to its being well acquired.

This would be the true solution of what has been so happily expressed: "The marriage of the swarm to the line made subtler and more flexible than of old" (*Colonel C. B. Brackenbury*); let them be wedded so as to be constantly together, the one the complement of the other at all drill work.

One plea in conclusion. If it be true that "no one has yet been able to give an exact solution to the problem: *What are the best measures to take in peace time in order to keep men in hand in action?*" (*Keucher*) if such practical soldiers as Colonel Henry Brackenbury ask how we are to seek and where we are to find a good working system, and such able exponents of tactics as Colonel Lonsdale Hale speak of existing "chaos" in the world of tactics, then would it not be wise to do what is done in other departments of military science, and give some facility for practical and exhaustive experiment? In all other departments practical experiment goes merrily and expensively on. Thousands of pounds are spent on a gun which penetrates another inch or two of armour. New and thicker plates are rolled. A new "Big Will" is built, and again crashes through the armour with its first shot, and perhaps blows off its own muzzle with the second. Treasure-devouring sea monsters are built, superseding one another at short intervals. Torpedoes, torpedo boats, and machine guns are subjected to crucial experiments. But from the nature of the material with which experiment has to be conducted in the case of the most important land fighting machine—the infantry—the circumstances are exactly reversed. Experiment would cost nothing; but while inventors can experiment in armour metal, gun building and rifling, and explosives, before offering appliances to the Government, there can be no practical experiment with the only material out of which the infantry machine of war is made without order from authority. It is only by leave of the state, through its officers, that any proposals to improve the working can be tested, and—as is the case in all invention—not only tested, but developed and improved by experiment. Almost all successful invention is the result of alternate thought and experiment. There is also the further difficulty that the proposers of tactical improvements are not independent men, but servants of the owners of the material. They cannot consistently with discipline pro-

ceed as other inventors are able to do. They cannot canvass higher officials, or exert extraneous influence. They may not use the soldiers who happen to be under their control as material for the experiment. Further, even if it be permitted to them to exhibit their ideas experimentally, the material with which they must do so is not dead material, plastic and absolutely passive. They have to test their invention with materials which have been turned into a machine already on a different system, and have therefore a way of working which unconsciously at first militates against the display to the best advantage of the new idea. An old gun that is broken up and put into the fire has no inherent resistance to take a new form; but a body of men that has been hammered by drill into an instrument of one style, has difficulty in conforming at once to what is new, from the mere habit of the old. Another thing which adds to the difficulties is that it would not, of course, be tolerable that infantry regiments should always be made available for experiments. But there are times when all these difficulties, however great, are not so great as the difficulties of going on without practical—and that it may be practical—*full* experiment. All nations learned a lesson in this matter when the German army went into the field in 1870 with obsolete manoeuvres, and had to change and fight in an improvised style, and therefore with unnecessary losses. Theory had long urged a change, the existing system having long been deprecated by the "best and most experienced heads," but military routine making experiment difficult, theory had to be confirmed, not by peaceful experiment, but by the stern demonstration of the battle-field. And having learned that lesson, can anyone say that the present is not one of those times when every difficulty that lies in the way of experiment should be overcome? The total change in the character of the comments by military men of experience and renown upon proposed modifications of the infantry system show that it is such a time. Is it asking too much to entreat that this matter be taken up in a thoroughgoing manner, that those suggestions which have upon them any reasonably good stamp of approval by military men of skill, should be investigated, really and crucially investigated, with opportunity afforded to proposers to meet difficulties that may be suggested, and that those proposals which *prima facie* can be defended from serious theoretical objection should be submitted to a few months' experiment in selected regiments and reported upon as to their practical working in the essential points of simplicity and uniformity of manoeuvre, adaptability to circumstances arising, maintenance of order, retention of unity of commands, rapid recovery of exact tactical form, and fire-control? Then let authority take what is best; it may be adopting here one detail and there another from different suggested systems which may commend itself. Thus, without the expenditure of one farthing of public money, there will be hope of obtaining the best article that can be devised and manufactured in time of peace. And what does the obtaining of the best article mean?—it means the possession by the nation of the machine which shall do the work of war at the cheapest rate, both in blood and treasure.—*Colburn's Magazine*.—The end.

### Mess Room Yarns.

"That reminds me."

In the year 18— young Sparks got a commission in a regiment then stationed in Jamaica. In those days there was not the same arrangement of regular reliefs, and this particular regiment, to which our young friend was gazetted, had been at Kingston a long time.

Before leaving his ancestral halls, Sparks' fond mother carefully urged him on his arrival to ask and follow the advice of his senior officers as to the best means of checking the effects of the climate, which was at that time by no means healthy, though now its reputation has somewhat improved.

Sparks accordingly like a wise boy, determined on the first opportunity after his arrival to ask the advice of his senior officer as to his mode of living. An opportunity soon occurred. One day at mess he sat near the senior major and at dessert asked him whether in his (Sparks') case he thought it would be advisable to abstain from spirituous liquors?

The major, an elderly man, in answer said: "Well! my boy, I can't give you advice, for one man's meat may be another man's poison; but I'll just tell you what we did when the regiment was ordered here fifteen years ago: We all knew that the climate was unhealthy and we had heard a great deal about the effect of liquor on the constitution in these parts. So there being thirty of us, we divided into two parties of 15, one of which agreed to abstain from intoxicating liquors, while the other party, to which I belonged, decla— well— h'm— didn't—"

"Well!" said Sparks, "which was the better plan?"

"O!" said the old major wiping his eye furtively with his napkin, "the fifteen who never drank anything are—all—dead!"

"Dear me!" said Sparks, quite shocked, "how sad indeed, that shows that drinking is necessary out here; but how did *your* party fare major?"

"They're all dead but me."—

*Cavalry Chestnut.*

Lord Wolseley, Adjutant-General, has issued a circular to the officers of the English army, intimating that the Duke of Cambridge, Commander-in-Chief, is dissatisfied over the small progress made in their military training during the recent inspections. The circular states the Duke has observed that many officers of all ranks have evinced much want of knowledge of the duties, and he strongly insists that the officers devote more time and attention to the instruction of the troops.

Capt. A. L. Demers, of St. Johns, who had just been elected by acclamation to the Legislature of Quebec, has died somewhat suddenly, of an affection of the liver.