

The Autumn Manœuvres.

Blackwood's Magazine, for September 1875, has the following excellent article entitled "Lessons on the Recent Summer Manœuvres," which we republish for the benefit of our readers under the hope that our Military Authorities will be convinced that the further development of our militia organization demands a training other than that which can be given at company or battalion headquarters, in minor tactics, which necessary and effective as it may be for purposes of discipline and mechanical knowledge of the soldier's profession, cannot be all which proficiency or efficiency therein demands without a complete knowledge of major tactics, strategy, and the various branches of knowledge which the Manœuvres of an army in the field will impart.

Our political economists of the press who have been assuring themselves and misleading the public by a cry for greater efficiency, will but discharge their duty to that public by directing its attention to the necessity indicated.

In another column we have copied an article from the *United States Army and Navy Journal* on "Autumn Manœuvres" in which the subject is viewed in a similar manner to the following:—

LESSONS FROM THE RECENT SUMMER MANŒUVRES.

With some slight variations the system of summer or autumn manœuvres has been persevered in for four years, and it appears probable that this plan of training our army will become recognised as necessary for the education of all ranks, and that it will survive the temporary excitement occasioned by the German and French war, which first called it into existence. As, however, there are some who, on grounds either of expense or of expediency, are inclined to relax or dispense with this method of training; and as those who preach peace, either directly, or indirectly, will always receive a certain amount of encouragement from men who see the evil without believing the good results of the more severe education which these manœuvres afford the army, it may not be uninteresting at the close of the present year's operations to consider the lessons that they may be supposed to have taught.

It is often said that the manœuvres are instructive to the generals and staff but are of little value to the regimental officers, and still less to the men, and that consequently the country is called on to pay too dearly for this comparatively small advantage; whilst, supposing that such a staff school were requisite, the course of instruction could be undergone, not yearly, but at stated and longer intervals. Again, it has been alleged that the hardships attending camp life hinder recruiting and increase the sick list, and that it is useless to put officers on a campaign which tries the constitution without, to an appreciable extent, increasing their efficiency. These and other minor objections are frequently alleged, and although each and all could be replied to in detail, it will be more satisfactory to deal with the matter broadly, and to view the question from some fixed and recognised point of view.

First, then what is the object of the training and discipline of an army? Clearly, that a certain number of men, paid for by the civil population, should be in a condition, at a moment's notice, to engage in war. The experience of all ages has shown, that for this force discipline is the main requisite. By disciplining men are taught to subordinate self and self preservation to the will of those who are set over them, and to encounter readily, and without flinching, dangers and hardships which only a few men constitutionally bold, and who are aroused by feelings of heroism or duty beyond the ordinary motives of men's actions, would otherwise face. Besides, therefore, the use of his arms, whether rifle, sword, or cannon, and in addition to the physical training requisite to insure health and develop muscle, the soldier is required to possess certain moral qualities which will enable him to perform the severe duties required in the abnormal condition of war. The system of discipline, although differing in detail, has been founded in all ages on similar great principles; and armies have been found fit or unfit for war in proportion as their training has imbued them with the qualities which will best enable them to meet its trials. Habits of obedience and of order, with strong feelings of *esprit de corps*, and a concern for the honour of the regiment, troop, or company to which he may belong, are the first essentials of a soldier, and directly and indirectly these are inculcated by the ordinary system of discipline, including careful and precise training in the use of his arms. During long periods of peace, and when the lessons and experiences of campaigns have been somewhat forgotten, a tendency is always found to exaggerate what may be considered as the pomp of war, at the expense of its greater essentials. Consequently, the means come to be considered as the end, and mere smartness, without reference to what it is intended to inculcate and to lead to, is aimed at rather than efficiency in all that pertains to the military profession. Periodical campaigns of short duration would doubtless be of incalculable value to an army; but as the army exists for the nation, not the nation for the army, such methods of training are out of the question, and imitation war becomes necessary so that the teaching of the barrack yard in respect to the regimental officers and soldiers, and of the staff school in regard to the staff, may be tested as to their real value.

Camps of instruction have from time to time been formed for these purposes; and although during the long peace, and prior to the camp at Chatham, in 1852, they had of late years been little used in England, yet the remembrance of them was kept alive in our army, and notably the training at Shorncliffe under Sir John Moore, which some of our best regiments received previous to the Peninsular War. During the Crimean campaign the camp at Aldershot was formed, and subsequently the system of flying columns, regulated as far as possible by a war standard, was employed. The campaign of Sadowa, in which the Prussians, with but little recent experience of war crushed in a fortnight an army well versed in campaigning, and still more the great struggle of 1870 and 1871, when the troops of the leading military power were as easily overwhelmed by the same army, directed the attention of soldiers and civilians to the methods employed for making these troops effective. Consequently, with some hesitation the autumn manœuvres, organized on the German type, were commenced in 1871, and have been continued up to the present year. Whether they have or have not fulfilled

their object is the question which the taxpayer is entitled to ask.

In endeavouring to put before him the means of satisfying this query, the axiom attributed to the first Napoleon, that the moral qualities of an army are of even greater or importance than its physical qualities, should be distinctly remembered. The influence on the minds of officers and soldiers of large numbers of troops of all arms collected together under conditions very similar to those of active service, originates habits of thought and trains of ideas which conduce to just estimates of the military profession. The mere fact that for three weeks or a month the greater portion of the regular army of England are thinking and talking of little else than matters pertaining to their profession, is a great point gained. Every proposition and every scheme is subject to the criticism of men who feel that their lives and their reputations may depend on their soundness and correctness; consequently much that may appear good in theory breaks down under the rude but crucial tests to which it is submitted, and gradually, out of a chaos of plans and out of a mass of a rash and inchoate ideas, some definite results in regard to the changes which have passed over the art of modern war are obtained. These remarks apply to all ranks—from the generals and their highly educated staff to the private soldier, who views matters from a very practical and often very sensible point of view; for it must never be forgotten that the great lessons of strategy are subordinate to the importance of regulating the everyday life of the soldier in the trying conditions of actual service.

The efficiency of the French army under the first Napoleon, proved by the campaign of Ulm, was in great measure due to its training in the camp at Boulogne, although the Memoir of the Duc de Fezensac show plainly enough how little the benefit of a large camp were really utilised, and how greatly its good was diminished by the idleness of those in high command. That this criticism can in any way be applied to our camps of instruction, the record of the work performed, chronicled with considerable ability and accuracy in the daily press, is a sufficient disproof; and before attempting to deduce lessons, it may be well to give a short summary of the system of instruction which the troops were called on to pursue.

Prior to the summer manœuvres—for they are more than summer drills—the staff at Aldershot, in communication with the heads of departments at the Horse Guards, were actively engaged in preparing general schemes, and in selecting the ground, often too much curtailed by cultivation, for the movements of the troops. The staff of the several corps, divisions, and brigades were organized and, prior to the arrival of the troops, employed in choosing the position for their camps, and in arranging for their subsistence. As the regiments arrived they were at once put under canvas and commenced the usual routine of camp life. Kitchens were dug, watering places for the horses prepared, streams and marshes bridged, and country lanes or wood tracks converted into roads fit for the passage of artillery and stores. Direction posts were put up, and the field telegraph either laid along the ground, or placed on temporary poles by the side of the roads leading to the quarter camp. At the recent manœuvres the 2d corps d'armée, comprising two divisions, was encamped at Aldershot, the 1st corps near Woolmer forest. The infantry and field artillery were encamped by divisions at a few miles' distance from each