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Short Tactical Lessons for all arms at the Ontario Gunnery School.

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No. 1.

Tactics from Latin *tango*, I touch, I hold.

Tactics is the art of handling troops in the field.

Strategy is the moving of troops on plans preconcerted in the office of the general in pursuance of his directions from his own government

Or *Tactics*, may be called the handling of troops in the field.

Strategy, the manœuvring of troops before being in contact with the enemy or the soldiering of the office or cabinet.

These two subjects touch each other sometimes, such as when the tactics of attack or defence are regulated with a view to cover the strategic line of retirement or base from which supplies and reinforcements are expected.

The *base* of operations is the place from which an army makes its start, and from whence it receives its supplies of food, ammunition and all things required for an army, recruits, &c.

In the case of attack the fighting tactics should be so regulated as to cut the enemy from his line of retreat towards his strategic base, without exposing your own.

Take the following example of the Franco-German war:—At Spichenon the Prussians threw their main artillery attack from Sterling on the French left, and so cut them off from retreat towards or expected supports from Feilbach, forcing them to retreat towards the right, away from Chalons and their supporting army, thus cutting their armies as under. (See Fig. 1.)

A *Tactical Unit* depends upon certain physical facts, which do not alter, and upon certain other physical circumstances that do alter. The things that do not alter are the size and strength of men. The power of one man's voice to make itself heard, and the power of one man to influence others in the field. The things that do alter; are the weapons used and the noise of modern war as compared with the comparatively silent slaughter of an ancient battle.

The size of a tactical unit depends then upon the greatest number of men that can be controlled by one man in the field having reference to the arms in use.

The Roman centurions command of 100 men or thereabouts, was the link of which the chains were formed that enslaved the world.

This number was determined as the greatest which one man could thoroughly permeate with his personal will or influence in peace time, so as to control them in war.

The men required to be such a distance apart when fighting as to use their weapons, (swords and javelins) effectively. The Greek Phalanx was a closer formation

where men with spears stood touching each other in wedge shaped column. The men in rear had longer spears. In the middle ages there were no regular armies and the size of a tactical unit depended upon certain feudal circumstances i. e., the number of retainers following feudal chief or sub chief.

They were further divided into archers which correspond somewhat to our rifle armed infantry, and mounted men at arms, (knights) wearing armour, for which there is no counterpart in modern battles, except, perhaps the charge of cavalry lancers.

When primitive fire arms and standing armies were first introduced it was found that a thousand men or thereabouts put shoulder to shoulder produced the best result by firing volleys at the command of one man. This was the introduction of the battalion as the tactical unit of infantry, but when arms of precision and long range were introduced, troops could not be exposed in close formation without destruction.

Fighting in open order became a necessity, and it was found that the colonel of a battalion could no longer command his men in such an extended line. The mode captain—then like the centurion of old—became the leader of a tactical unit; but it was necessary to maintain some sort of control over these units, the command, therefore, instead of being lateral has to be in depth, and it desirable that the companies and battalions support each other should be homogeneous and under one control. In a ten company battalion, therefore, the five centre companies might be extended as the fighting line, and the flank companies as supports and reserves, so that when the whole has to be pushed forward to the fighting line, the companies and sections composing them would find themselves in their respective places, under their officers and sergeants, which would be all the more important if the reinforcements had been sent up by five companies or sections. Moreover, the tendency of attacks to open out from the centre and avoid the crater of fire reinforcing from the flanks compresses the line for a final rush, if the men have been taught to close to the centre as casualties occur, while it tends also to prevent its being outflanked, the supports coming up on the flanks.

The Prussians were the first to return to the old Roman unit with satisfactory results, and it should be the constant effort in peace time to keep the same small body of men together in camp and barrack-rooms under the same non-commissioned officers and officers; the same system being necessary for brigades and larger divisions. Hence the value of localized armies, in brigades and divisions, which the British find it difficult to sustain on account of Indian service, but which the Canadian Military authorities should be careful not to destroy.

No. 2.

ORDER OF MARCH.

The great operations of war such as decisive battles and sieges are preceded and followed by minor operations such as marches and reconnaissances, which may be forced to make an enemy show his position, and if opportunity offers change, into a real attack.