

Queries and Replies.

THE STATIONS OF THE PERMANENT CORPS.

Q. Can you inform me if it is the intention of the authorities to change the stations of the companies of Infantry School corps at no distant date.—X.

Q. We believe no such change has yet been decided upon.

IMPERIAL COMMISSIONS FOR CANADIANS.

Q. Referring to your leading article in your issue of the 6th inst., respecting "Commissions for young Canadians having some military training, and able to pass prescribed examinations."

Would you kindly through your columns give fuller information on this subject—such as the nature of the examinations, training required, and the conditions, generally, under which such commissions are offered, and in what publication a copy of the original offer may be seen.

Winnipeg, 4th November, 1890. "MOUNTED INFANTRY."

A. The original offer may be seen in Militia General Orders of 30th May, 1890, (for which see file of this paper; or the printed regulations may be obtained upon application to the Adjutant General, Militia Department, Ottawa.

Major Mayne's Lecture on Infantry Fire Tactics.

The following lecture on Fire Tactics, with especial reference to the Canadian Militia, by Major C. B. Mayne, R.E., Professor of Surveying, etc., Royal Military College, Canada, was delivered before the members of the Canadian Military Institute, Toronto:—

Modern Meaning of the word "Tactics."—The subject before us this evening, is one which is second to none in importance in the whole range of military art. But before proceeding further, it may be remarked that of late years the word "tactics" has developed a wider meaning than the one usually attached to it, namely, the mere handling of troops under fire, so as to ensure, and if possible, to secure victory. The newer and more useful meaning now attached of the word "tactics" is best expressed by the word "*execution*," in the sense of "*the methods adopted for carrying out*" anything. In this sense we now find in most military writings of note the word "tactics" usually qualified by some other word; for instance, Battle Tactics, Fire Tactics, Marching Tactics, etc., meaning the execution of, or methods adopted for carrying out a battle, fire, marches, etc., respectively, and it is in this wider sense that the word "tactics" is used in the title employed to express the subject matter of this lecture.

Outline Description of a Modern Battle.—The importance of the subject of Infantry Fire Tactics will perhaps be best understood if we first consider for a moment what a modern battle is.* In this term "battle" I do not mean a guerilla skirmish, or the fighting that takes place in irregular warfare, but the combat undertaken between two highly organized and trained forces, armed with modern weapons and skilled in their use. Further, we must suppose that the fight takes place in daylight and in ordinary country, over which the advance to the attack can be seen, to a certain extent, by the defenders. Under such conditions the battle is not a quickly decided act. On the contrary, it cannot be too strongly remembered that the battle is a long drawn out and continuous act, in which four periods can usually be distinguished, though they cannot always be clearly separated. These periods are: (1) The period of reconnaissance; (2) The period of preparation or destruction; (3) The period of decision; (4) The period of completion or retreat. The period of reconnaissance is daily growing more and more important as weapons improve. During this period the mounted troops will drive in the enemy's advanced troops, draw his fire, and ascertain where his flanks end. The drawing of the enemy's fire is necessary to ascertain the disposition of his Infantry and Artillery in his front line. During this period, which it may be judicious to prolong until all the reports of the enemy's position and disposition have come in, the positions for the Artillery of the attack are chosen and the ranges measured.

When these positions have been chosen, and the Artillery has arrived and is drawn up ready to enter into the fight, then the period of preparation or destruction commences. This preparation is begun by the Artillery coming into action, protected by a small portion of the Infantry, and until this preparatory Artillery fire has produced a considerable effect, which it may take some hours to do in some cases, it would be making a useless sacrifice to attempt to push forward the bulk of the Infantry. But as the Artillery succeeds in its object of destruction or preparing the way, the Infantry and machine guns are pushed forward until they can, with their fire, begin to effectively assist in the destruction of the enemy. This pushing forward of the Infantry and machine-guns will usually take place *after* the enemy's Artillery has been somewhat subdued and our own guns have been turned on the enemy's Infantry. It may be assumed that during this period of destruction the attacking

line will arrive at a distance probably about 600 yards or less, from the defenders' position. It is especially during this period the C.O.C. must decide on the point of assault, and there direct the bulk of his reserves.

The period of preparation having been completed, as judged by any disorder appearing in the enemy's ranks, or by the lessening efficacy of his fire, the order is given for the decision, which is then carried out with the greatest energy and celerity. The fire is maintained, but with as few and short stoppages as possible. Bayonets are fixed, a rapid fire is delivered at about 100 yards from the enemy for a few minutes, when the advance is sounded and the charge takes place over the last 50 yards with cheers, bugles sounding, drums beating, colours flying and all the pomp and dash of war.

Then follows the final period of completing the victory or of retreat, into which we need not enter more than to say that if the pursuit cannot be taken up by fresh troops, the retreating enemy should be subjected to volley firing, and not followed up recklessly by disorganized troops, who would be easily checked, and perhaps even routed, by any organized and intact reserves the enemy may still possess.

Thus we see that a battle is a long continued act, and is chiefly composed of a long drawn out destructive act or fire combat, and a short, sharp, decisive act or close combat. Both kinds of combat are essential, though their relative values alter with the size and quality of the combatant forces. But time does not permit of our entering into this important question, nor as to how it affects the fronts to be taken up by different sized units for both the fire and for the close combats. But what I desire to impress on you is that the fire combat or the destructive act is, or rather may be, of considerable duration, and that during its continuance it is necessary to make the very best use we can of our fire, whether it be artillery, machine-gun or infantry fire. The advance of the firing line during this period may be frequently checked, and the firing line even sway backwards and forwards, according as it feels the pressure of the enemy's fire, or is carried forward by the impulses given to it by any fresh troops sent into it from the rear. During this fire combat, both sides are trying to wear down the resisting and destructive power of the opponent. Both sides are gradually disorganized. And this disorganization and demoralization is affected by fire alone. Hence we must consider how best to employ this fire, in order to get the best results with the least expenditure of ammunition, which at such moments is of priceless value on account of the present impossibility of replenishing in adequate quantities.

This consideration we include under the name of *Fire Tactics*; and though this subject is capable of many sub-divisions, yet it is not proposed to define them very closely, because in dealing with the affairs affecting human nature, there is as much danger in too close and fine definitions as in no definitions at all.

"*The Man.*"—Again, it is very essential in all military matters to consider *the man*—"the essential man," as Emerson calls him. We must always remember that the value of all weapons depends on the man using them, and the value of all methods of procedure depends on the training and discipline and characteristics of the men and officers who employ them. And herein lies my difficulty as lecturer. I am addressing a body of officers, who command troops whose training and discipline is not, and cannot be expected, to come up to those of European troops who are continuously under arms and training for a considerable term of years. We can expect and do expect more from such troops than we have a right to expect from troops like the Canadian Militia, with their limited means of training. We must always remember that men are controlled more by emotions and habits than by a mere knowledge of what they ought to do—*i.e.*, by the truth. Training and discipline are powerful means of overcoming the inherent fear of death and pain, and the dislike of the fatigues and discomforts so inseparable from war, and consequently of making men better fighting organisms, and more amenable to control during the demoralising influences of battle and of war generally. But the problem that faces every officer is, *How to best make use of the various elements which lie at his hand on the day of battle?* The *theoretical* must then give way to the *practical*. And in thus making good use of the available material lies the test of a good officer. The fault of our text books is that they only consider the theoretical material and rarely the actual material that has to be made use of. The French in 1870-71 had a far better rifle than the Germans, and the Turks in 1877-78 had better rifles and Artillery than the Russians, yet both the French and the Turks were defeated, chiefly because their opponents made a better use of what they actually possessed, than did the French and Turks. Mere superiority of armament is not everything, which fact may afford some consolation to Canadian troops armed with the Snider.

With these premises we can now enter into the subject before us this evening—namely, how to make the best use in battle of the fire of the Snider rifle, with which the Canadian Militia is armed.

(To be Continued.)

*The following remarks apply to army corp, units and under.