

THE OPEN FORMATION.

FOR some months past considerable discussion has been going on in Great Britain on the subject of a radical change in infantry drill, and several suggestions have been suggested by ingenious officers. That advocated and tried by Lieut.-Col. the Right Hon. J. H. A. Macdonald, who commands the Queen's Edinburgh Brigade, and who is the author of the essay on Common Sense on Parade, which is now being reprinted in our columns, has been given special prominence, and has now again been brought forward in consequence of the remarks made upon it by Major-General Elliot, commanding the North British district, after inspecting an experimental open drill of the brigade. That officer reports as follows:—

"I consider the open drill which I saw a battalion of the Queen's Edinburgh Brigade exercised in a very decided improvement in the right direction

"In the first place, it affords great facility of movement in every direction, without confusion or hitch of any sort.

"In the second place, in working from column four deep it takes up no more front than the existing system.

"In the third place, the men are free and have elbow room, which for all purposes of manœuvre is absolutely essential, in my opinion.

"In the fourth place, it does away with wheels in column.

"In the fifth place, it diminishes to a great extent the effect of *direct fire*, as the intervals must, of course, argue *conclusively*.

"Finally, it is more simple, which is, after all, one of the chief objects.

"I have not seen it practised before, but it has always been my conception in principle of the required drill for infantry, and I think might well be applied to cavalry also.

"It does not appear to me to involve confusion in any sense; rather the reverse. And the example which you showed me of passing your line through your camp at an oblique angle without hitch or break up of the formation, demonstrated the facility of maintaining your front intact through any sort of broken ground.

"Altogether, I was much impressed with the drill, which, with only two days' practice to your men, proves not only how easy it is to work out, but is very creditable to the intelligence of your volunteers.

"I hope the system will be generally adopted in the service."

A sketch of the proposed changes, which is not claimed to be complete, being only drawn up for the purpose of experiment, is appended:

MEMORANDUM OF THE DRILL.

COMPANY.—Companies will fall in and be exercised with 30 inches of front to each file, and the ranks 60 inches apart. As a consequence of this, side pace in closing will be 15 inches, and in forming into or out of fours the pace back or up will be 30 inches, and the side pace 30 inches. The subalterns will be in rear of the centre of half companies. Two sergeants will act as guides, and will take post on the flanks of the company. The markers will always take post in rear of the flank files. Guides and markers will never change flanks. They will be spoken of or to as "the guide on the right (or left)"—"the marker on the right (or left)."

BATTALION.—In column, the distance between companies will be the front of the company and three paces. In quarter-column, the distance will be eight paces. In line, there will be three paces between companies. Companies will never be re-told off. When any company has to be spoken of, it will be called "Captain —'s company," or if on a flank, "the right (or left) company." When a company is named on which any movement is to be performed, the captain will hold up his sword. If in line, he will also move back five paces. The following movements will no longer be practised:—Wheeling, except when moving to a flank in fours or files. Break into column to the right (or left). Counter-marching. Forming to the right and right-about, and *vice versa*. Breaking off files. Movements in double companies. Retiring in rear of flanks or of any company. Column forming line by companies in succession to a flank. Movements in oblique echelon, except by fours. Changing front in line, except by fours. Forming square from line.

GENERAL RULES.—No front will be named in the internal movements of the company or battalion. The words, "right turn," "left turn," "about turn" will be used in all cases where "front," or "front turn," or "rear turn" are used at present. The word "right" will not be used before "about turn." Where it is necessary, on turning about, to pass the supernumerary rank to the other side of the company, the words "change ranks" will be used, on which that rank will move forward through the company before turning about. All movements at present executed by wheel will be executed by "forming up," the commands being, if the movement is that of a company at the halt.

QUARTER (OR HALF, OR THREE-QUARTERS) RIGHT (OR RIGHT) CHANGE POSITION.—*Company, quarter (or half, etc.) form up, quick march.* On the caution, the man of the leading rank on the flank named will turn in the direction named, under superintendence of the guide. On the word "march" he will stand fast; the whole will step off at a partial turn in the direction named, and move up to their places (their rear men covering), and will be dressed by the guide as they come up. If the change is on the move, the commands will be ON THE MOVE, QUARTER (OR HALF, ETC.) CHANGE DIRECTION. *Company on the move, quarter (or half etc.) form up, quick march.* The flank man will proceed as above, but on the word "march" he will step off at a short pace, the remainder moving up and taking up the short pace, the whole receiving the word "forward." If "forward" is given before all the men are up, they will double up. If the company is on the march, the words "on the move" will be omitted, and the whole will proceed as above on the words "form up." The words "at the halt" will be prefixed, when it is intended to form up without going forward. If the company is on the march, and the word is given "in double time, quarter, or etc.," the guide will turn and move on at a full pace in quick time, the remainder will double up to their places, and take up the quick time. The same rules apply to "forming up" toward the left. All movements at present executed by "front forming" or "rear forming" from files or fours right or left, will be executed on the word "to the right (or left) form up." If the caution and command are AT THE HALT, FORM UP TO THE RIGHT (OR LEFT), *Company at the halt, to the right (or left) form up,* the men on the flank, named of the leading file or four will halt, the remainder will make a half turn in the direction named and move up to their places, those behind covering. If the word is given without the caution, "at the halt," the man on the flank named of the leading file or four will step short, the remainder making a partial turn, moving up, and taking up the short pace, the whole moving on at the word, "forward." If the word is given "in double time," etc., the man on the flank named of the leading file or four will move on in quick time, the remainder doubling up to their places. In these movements, if the company is in fours, it will not form two-deep.

Note.—Two-deep will not be formed out of fours at any time without direct word of command, except where necessary to pass any narrow place when in fours right or left, in which case it will be done without command, under direction of the officers, four-deep being resumed at once by each four after passing through.

BATTALION.—In battalion, when all the companies are to move together, the caution and executive order will both be given by the battalion commander. The caution will be, "the battalion will form to the right (or left) into line (or column)," adding "at the halt," or "on the move," or "in double time," as may be requisite. The executive word will be preceded by the word "battalion." When the companies are to change direction or come up in succession, the caution, as in company drill, will be preceded by the words, "by successive companies," on which the captain of the leading company will give the executive order, which will be taken up in succession by the other company commanders as they reach the spot at which the preceding company formed. When a line changes position, the change may be made by dressing up to markers if the angle is small. If it is large, the company of formation will be formed up to its position, the remainder turned and moved in along the alignment, as in deploying.

THE FORMATION OF FOURS.—Fours will be formed in one way only, the company, or battalion being turned in the required direction after fours have been formed. The word will be, "form fours," on which it will form fours-deep. When the company falls in, it will be formed into fours-deep. The fours will then be told off into groups of eight, thus, "first," "second." Groups will be ordered to "inwards turn" (the firsts turning to the left, the seconds to the right), so that the men may take note of one another, and the corporal or man who is ordered by the captain to act as group leader will shoulder arms. On the word "outwards turn," they will turn back again, and the group leader will order arms. Any odd men will be next the left group. If less than four, they will act with the left group; if more, they will act as an independent group. The formula for coming up into "two-deep" line is—second rank and fourth rank step to the left and up; for getting back into fours, the left men of pairs step back and to the right. When necessary to pass obstacles for which closing in of the fours will not suffice, the group may form eight deep by the four men on the left of the group moving each behind the man on his right, the ranks behind stepping short to let them in. They will step to the left and up as they clear the obstacle. In this way any part of the line can close in to less than a quarter of its front to pass an obstacle.

REVIEW ORDER.—The ranks being at 60 inches when two-deep, they need not be opened for parade. The command will be, "officers take post in review order. Officers to the front." The officers will move