

[Written Expressly for "THE REVIEW"]  
**CHANGES IN DRILL, AND A REVIEW  
 OF THE NEW AMERICAN SYSTEM  
 OF INFANTRY TACTICS.**

BY CAPTAIN DARTNELL, 34TH BATT. V. M.

(Continued from our last.)

The general instructions as to skirmishing do not vary, in any essential particulars, from our own. There is a characteristic direction to officers "to cultivate among the men the feeling that they cannot be whipped, and that, when compelled to give ground, a new position will be gained from which the action will be renewed. Experience will soon teach skirmishers that the very ardour with which an enemy pursues a temporary advantage will surely secure his defeat, if coldly and unexpectedly confronted by the men whom he had supposed to be demoralized."

Their suorts (called Company reserves) are small, being only sufficient to fulfil the duty of filling vacant places, furnishing the line with cartridges, and relieving the fatigued. They are posted, under command of a subaltern officer, 150 paces in rear of the skirmishing line.

*Deploying forward.* Equivalent to extending on the march according to the British system. It is used when the company is behind the line on which it is to be established. The captain directs one or more fours on its right, or left, to act as a reserve, causing them to step a few paces backwards. The left rear rank man of the centre four is regarded as the centre skirmisher of the company. On receiving the command *on the left four take intervals*, that four will move straight to the front in quick time, the others will wheel to the right in *echelon* in double time. The second four continues the march until it has gained 40 paces to the right, when it wheels to the left and marches to the front, taking up the quick step when abreast with the left four; the remaining fours proceed in like manner and successively gain 40 paces from the next one on the left; each taking up quick time upon arriving in line. On the left four arriving on the proposed line, the skirmishers (who are in fact small columns of eight men each, advancing at deploying distance). The command will be given to *halt*; upon which all the fours that are in line will halt, and each will deploy (or extend) in double time upon the left front rank man who will stand fast, the other front rank men moving to his right and the rear rank men to his left, and placing themselves at five paces apart; the other fours upon arriving in line, halting and deploying as just explained. Skirmishers will be extended from the centre, and from the right on the same principle.

Extending from a flank, is effected somewhat differently. In extending from the left, the company will be faced to the right. On the word *quick march* number one of the

front rank of the right, or leading, four will step off on the prolongation of the alignment of the company, and the other men, front and rear rank, will follow successively at the distance of five paces, number one rear rank stepping off as soon as number four front rank shall have advanced five paces beyond; and, so on, until the extension is completed; when the men will halt and face to their front. The extension from the right is effected in the like manner, except that the movement in each four will commence with number four of the rear rank. In extending from the centre, the captain superintends the movements of the right skirmishers, and the lieutenant that of the left. Increasing the intervals, whether from the halt, or on the march, is done precisely as with us, and directions are also given for diminishing the intervals, a provision not to be found in our drill book. There is nothing peculiar in the instructions of advancing, retiring, changing direction, or marching to a flank.

It will not be necessary to notice the various modes of firing, the foundation being merely the alternate fire of the odd and even numbers of the line of skirmishers.

Cavalry is resisted by the rally of fours, each four running in and placing themselves in a circle round the skirmisher upon whom the deployment is made; should the fours be too weak to resist the enemy, the rally will be made on the centre skirmisher of each company, being the left hand rear rank man of the centre four. Extending from or closing upon a named skirmisher is effected as with us, modified only in regard to the fact that the line of skirmishers is in single rank.

There appears to be no fixed rule for extending a battalion in skirmishing order, the extension being effected, at the discretion of the officer in command, who will direct it to commence from any named company. The battalion, being in line, the designated company, and the one next to it on its left will be marched, ten paces to the front, the companies on the right of these two companies extending from the left, and the other from the right. The companies to the right of the two mentioned will *form fours right*, those to left, *form fours left*. When the left (now the rear) four of the companies moving in fours to the right, arrives opposite its interval in the line of skirmishers, the captains will wheel their companies into line in succession, and extend from the left. *Vice versa* with those moving in fours to the left. The company reserves will previously step back at the caution from their captain. When the left four of the designated company (or company of formation) arrives on the line it is wished to occupy, the skirmishers will be halted, which command will be repeated by those captains whose fours have arrived on the line, the remaining captains halting their skirmishers when the four upon which

their extension was made arrives in line.

The senior major superintends the extension of the right, and the junior major that of the left wing.

Extending to the right and left from the halt on a named company is effected by that company, and the one next to it on its left being marched ten paces to the front, both extending from the halt. The remaining companies will *form fours outwards*, and as the rear four of each arrives opposite its interval, the captains will wheel their companies into line and extend.

The whole battalion (less the company reserves) may be extended from the left, number one of the front rank of the leading four stepping off and being followed successively by all the files of the battalion. When the rear file of the left company is about to step off the command will be given *Skirmishers, halt*, at which they will halt and front. Extending to the left is similarly executed, commencing with number four of the rear rank of the left company.

The battalion thus in skirmishing order may advance, retire, change direction, move by the right, left or centre, rally by fours or by companies, fire, &c., &c. at the discretion of the commanding officer.

The battalion reserves are to consist of two or three companies, one to be taken from each wing, the third from near the centre, and will be directed to step back a few paces before commencing the extension of the remaining companies. Their position should be on strong ground, three or four hundred yards in rear of the skirmish line, posted as follows: the right company in rear of the left of the right company of skirmishers; the left company of skirmishers; the centre company in rear of the battalion. Should there be but two reserve companies, their position is in rear of the centre of the right and left wing.

Should the skirmish line be attacked or threatened by superior numbers, the line will be reinforced by extending each company of the reserve from its centre file; and, the extension being completed, each company of the reserve will move up into the line at the *double*; and, having joined the line, will conform to all its movements.

Should the skirmish line be so pressed as to necessitate the assemble on the reserve, the latter will be extended in skirmishing order, the skirmishers will retire, and, upon arriving on the reserve skirmish line, will halt and front, when all will commence firing.

To recall the skirmish line, the commanding officer will direct the battalion to assemble upon the left skirmisher of (No. ) company, upon which the captain of the designated company; and those to its right, will each close his company on its left skirmisher. The captains to the left closing their companies on the right skirmisher. On the closing being completed, each captain will lead in towards the company of