

# **Infantry in Attack**

**Course In Organization and Tactics,**

**Lecture No. 14,**

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**December 13, 1904.**

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## INTRODUCTION.

It is understood that, besides our Infantry Drill Regulations, Wagner's "Organization and Tactics" is the authority on this subject for our army. It summarized, up to the date of its publication, the opinions of all those whose experience in actual warfare entitled them to be considered as authorities. However, the recent improvements in arms have been so great, **that** some important modifications in our formations for attack have probably become necessary. The nature of these probable changes must be determined by the careful study of recent wars. Our War with Spain was of too short duration to really test modern improvements, while the conditions in South Africa were so exceptional in many respects, that there is danger of drawing erroneous conclusions from them. The War between Russia and Japan, however, has already tested all the improvements in modern warfare, but the rigid censorship has prevented our obtaining very full particulars. Many disputed points, therefore, still remain to be settled, though our new Infantry Drill Regulations has introduced some tentative changes.

## APOLOGY,

This is a compilation, pure and simple. Warfare is far from being an exact science, and I have thought it best to give you the exact words of a few of the authorities, rather than try to rehash their thoughts in my own words. The result is, of course, not always very coherent. It will be noticed, too, that many points are hardly touched upon, or

are even omitted altogether, while considerable space has been devoted to others. Without belittling the importance of other points, it has seemed to me that skirmishing,—including accurate shooting and the use of cover—is *the* important point.

## I. OBJECT OF THE ATTACK FORMATION.

“The object of the attack is the forcible expulsion of the enemy from the position in which he strives to maintain himself.” “To this end the formation must be such as: 1—To enable the troops to make the most telling use of the rifle, and thus diminish the effect of the enemy’s fire by subjecting him to heavy loss in return. 2—To present the least favorable target to the enemy, and profit by the sheltering features of the ground. 3—To admit of celerity of movement, and thus minimize the time of exposure to hostile fire. 4—To be able to deliver a heavy shock at the end of the fire action.” (Wagner.)

“The formations in which infantry moves and fights are not the result of haphazard theory, but have grown out of the conditions of warfare, and their importance is attested by the fact that in spite of the improvement in fire-arms, the losses in battle have become gradually smaller.” (Powell.) They “are designed to facilitate, as far as in them lies, that great object of every commander,—to make himself stronger than the enemy at the time and place of actual combat,” which “can only be done by preserving unity of command, concerted action, and mobility, combined with the least exposure to the men to loss.” “The formations in use attempt to fulfill these conditions, and the main principles governing in modern infantry tactics, are an individual training and instruction to develop a high degree of initiative, combined with perfect subordination; the greatest development of fire in the firing line; a subdivision into fire units of such strength as to insure complete control by commanders ;—in the attack,—pressure against the flank, combined with a

frontal attack; the reinforcement of the firing line by a succession of lines gradually closing to the front; and, if possible, the accumulation of a greater depth of forces opposite the portions of the enemy where the attack is to be concentrated." (Powell.)

## 2. GENERAL PLAN OF ATTACK.

"The destruction of the enemy's means of injury and resistance is attained by holding the enemy everywhere by vigorously menacing his whole front, and then at the proper time, striking at the chosen place (preferably one of the enemy's flanks) such a rapid and decisive blow as will determine the victory. This double aim necessitates the division of the attacking force into two groups,—one charged with the preliminary engaging and demoralizing attack, and the other with the final decisive and smashing attack." "These two parts of a battle should not be independent activities ; they should always be most intimately connected with one another. The attack on the major portion of the front not to be assaulted is more or less demonstrative, in order to deceive the enemy as long as possible as to where the assault is to be ultimately delivered." (Mayne.)

The decisive assault "must be preceded by a demonstrative action having for its object to feel for the enemy, to force him to show his dispositions, to use up his physical and moral forces, and to induce him to engage his reserves prematurely ; or, in other words, to make him so weaken himself, materially and morally, as to render him incapable of successfully resisting a vigorous and sudden blow struck at some locality with fresh troops. This blow should accordingly be characterized by the factors of surprise, short duration, and fierce headlong offensiveness. Its purpose is to complete a demoralization that has been begun, and nearly brought to a head by the earlier and preparatory fire-fighting."

“The general idea for the battle is decided by the commander of the force, who determines where he will act defensively, where demonstratively, and where decisively. These decisions should be communicated to the subordinate leaders, so that all may know what part they have to play during the contest, and how they can best act in case of the unexpected happening, when new orders cannot be given in time.” (Mayne.)

## 2a. FLANK ATTACKS

“Purely frontal attacks are to be avoided. If necessary to adopt a frontal attack, it is made in conjunction with a flank attack whenever possible. This flank attack is arranged for by overlapping the enemy’s flank and wheeling in by the overlapping portions of the command ; or, by making a turning movement with a portion of the command. The turning movement completed, the conduct of the force so employed follows the rules for the frontal attack.” (I. D. R.) If flank attacks do not come as a surprise, and are not supported by a powerful frontal engagement, they only result in making the enemy change front to meet them, or else run away before he is beaten, to fight again under more favorable circumstances. This is what happened in South Africa, where the British were never able to bring the Boers to brook a decisive engagement.

“Decisive action is usually sought on a flank, but not necessarily on an extreme outer flank of the line, for a modern skirmish line, from various causes is very apt to have a number of inner flanks, which are also points of weakness. In the early part of the engagement, the enemy must be forced to unveil his position, and then these interior flanks can be determined and the commander may decide where to concentrate his forces, for superiority is desired only at decisive points. The rest of the front can be held by comparatively weak forces.” (Powell.)

### 3. ORGANIZATION OF THE ATTACK.

But whether the attack be called frontal or flank, the battle formation is essentially the same,—consisting of a thin firing line, reinforced by successive lines from the rear as it approaches the enemy. “The thin firing line attracts and holds the attention of the enemy,” thus affording considerable protection to the lines in rear ; “for it is a well-known fact that soldiers in battle instinctively and invariably fire at those who are shooting at them.” (Wagner.) “On the other hand, the enemy should be met with superior forces from the beginning, and this superiority kept up. Between these two limits the commander must decide.” (Powell.)

#### 3A. BATTALION THE TACTICAL UNIT.

“Regimental and larger organizations move by battalions.” (I. D. R.) And therefore “the battalion is the tactical unit,—and the front it covers, as well as the particular nature of the action, determines the number of companies it places in the firing line.” (Powell.) “The maximum front will be regulated by the necessity of supervision and control by the battalion commander. The minimum—by the requirement that each man should have space enough to enable him to use his rifle with the greatest effect.” (Wagner.)

#### 3B. LINES OF ATTACK.

The attack is normally formed in three lines,—called the first, second, and third lines. The first line, in the early stages of the attack, is also divided into three lines, called the firing line, support, and reserve ; the first two being called the fighting line. Each of these lines has its own peculiar functions.

In the normal formation of the battalion acting alone, “the second and third companies form the firing line ; the other two companies form the support and reserve,—one company in each,” but “the number of companies in, and their assignment to, the different echelons may be varied at

the will of the major." (I. D. R.) The battalion in regiment may be formed as when acting alone, or it may be extended in one echelon. With large forces, although other formations may be necessary under exceptional circumstances, "the best formation for a strong attack is undoubtedly the formation of regiments side by side, each in three lines. This enables a separate objective to be assigned to each regiment, and limits the intermingling of troops to men of different battalions of the same regiment." (Wagner.)

### 3B 1a. F I R S T L I N E.—SCOUTS.

The firing line, as soon as it arrives 'within the zone of effective artillery fire "(on ordinary ground about 2,500 yards)" sends out scouts, who cover "its front and flanks at about 300 yards so as to prevent closed bodies being subjected to a fire at short range, drive in the enemy's scouts, gather information regarding the ground and the enemy's position, and send or signal such information back to the firing line." "An officer from each battalion accompanies the line of scouts." (I. D. R.)

### 3% . 1b. F I R S T L I N E.—F I R I N G L I N E.

"The firing line is essentially the fighting part of the army, and the other portions of the infantry are merely to repair its losses, protect its flanks, and reinforce it to the density necessary for conducting the combat." (Wagner.) Its commander "designates some well defined object, as a house, tree, etc., that can be seen and recognized by all," forms "line of squads on arriving at the limit of effective artillery fire," and at 1,200 yards deploys it as skirmishers. The first halt is made "at 1,000 yards, and then every 50' yards until arriving at 200 yards." "The quick time is used to 800 yards, after which the double time is used." "The skirmishers close in on the center as they advance, so that at 600 yards the line consists of about one skirmisher per yard." "At the first four halts, one squad in each platoon fires one round ; during the next four, two squads in each

platoon fire two rounds ; during the next four, one platoon in each company fires at will ; during the next four, the entire firing line fires at will. At the 200 yard halt, rapid fire is delivered," after which the charge is made.

"To advance by alternate portions of the line, ( formerly called 'advance by rushes'), the major designates the companies to move forward and those to open fire. Each captain gives the commands necessary for his own company to advance, halt, and open fire, independently of the other companies. The advance by alternate portions of the line, once taken up, is continued until the major directs the companies in rear to halt on line with the leading company." (I. D. R.)

"In the exceptional cases in which the firing line must be relieved? the commander of the same is notified, and in turn causes such notification to be transmitted to all his subordinates. The relieving line completes its deployment in rear of, and moves up into, or through, the firing line, which is then marched to the rear, and assembled on favorable ground. If the line is moving to the rear, the relieving line deploys and halts in favorable position ; the firing line passes through the relieving line and is assembled as before." (I. D. R. )

### 3B. 1c. FIRST LINE.—SUPPORT.

As has been said, "the support is charged with the duty of protecting the firing line from flank attack," but its "paramount function is to reinforce the firing line." (Wagner) It "gains 300 yards from the firing line by remaining at a halt, (or, if the firing line is halted, by moving to the rear) " after which it conforms "to the movements of the firing line, usually forming line of squads and deploying as skirmishers on the same ground as the firing line." But "in nothing is the skill of the tactician more evident than in the choice of the time of deployment or the change from close to extended order. To act too soon, in this respect, is to abandon the control which close order gives, and incur the risk of the

men getting out of hand ; while delayed action results often in ruinous losses and invites defeat." (Wagner.)

The support "is placed on the flank or in an interval of the firing line when the latter arrives at 600 yards from the objective." (I. D. R.) and in order to avoid an intermingling of troops of different organizations as well to secure unity of command, both the support and reserve should belong to the same battalion as the firing line.

### 3B rd. FIRST LINE.—RESERVE.

The reserve, which follows the support at 300 yards, conforms also "to the movements of the firing line, usually forming line of squads and deploying as skirmishers on the same ground as the firing line." It performs the duties of the support, after the latter joins the firing line, "and is placed in the line by squads between 600 and 200 yards, or reinforces as a unit at about 200 yards, taking part in the rapid fire." (I. D. R.) Great care must be taken to reinforce at the right moment. "The reserves must be sent in at the moment when the reasonably brave men have been long enough engaged and met with enough resistance to begin to feel nervous, but before they have begun to retreat." (Skobeloff). If possible all reserves should be kept in rear of one or both flanks in order to avoid acting as a butt for shots fired at the firing line.

### 3B re. FIRST LINE.—SUMMARY.

The first line, then, "makes the attack and conducts the fire action. It is protected against flank attacks by its own supports in the extreme and long range zones, by its reserve in the mid range, and by the second line after the reserves are absorbed. In some cases, the first line makes the charge without waiting for the second line ;--this, when the commander of the first line is convinced that the enemy is wavering and that such charge will be successful." (I. D. R.)

## 3B. 2. SECOND LINE.

“The 2nd line (about 600 yards in rear of the reserves on extension), supports the first line, gradually closing up as the first line halts for fire action, and joins the first line in the charge—the arrival of the 2nd line being in general the signal for the rapid fire to cease and the charge to be delivered.” (I. D. R.)

## 3B 3. THIRD LINE.

“The 3rd line, (about 1000 yards in rear of the and on extension) , unless a special body of troops is used for the purpose, follows the action, and is frequently conducted to extend beyond and overlap the enemy’s flank so as to attack the same while the frontal attack is in progress. If not used in such flanking movement, the 3rd line follows the 2nd at such distance as to allow protection of the flanks of the preceding lines ; pursuit of the enemy after he has been thrust out of his position ; occupation of such position while the preceding lines are being reformed ; protection of their retreat if defeated.” (I. D. R.)

(Note :—The subjects of pursuit of the enemy, occupation of the position, and protection of retreat have been covered by a previous lecture, as also the subjects of command and general reserve.)

3B 4. RECENT CHANGES IN ATTACK  
FORMATION.

This is the formation laid down in our new Infantry Drill Regulations, and it differs in many respects from that given in the old Regulations. It was published before anything definite could be learned from the present war in the East, but plainly shows the influence of the Boer War, especially in the distances from the enemy at which deployments are to be made. It remains to be seen what further modifications, if any will be made as a result of the war in Manchuria. Corresponding changes have been made in

practically all the European formations as a result of the Boer War. In some of them, the changes are much more radical than in our own; particularly in the advance under fire--which is made in small groups, or even by single men, under the protection of the fire of the remainder.

#### 4. DETAILS OF ATTACK VARIABLE.

It must be remembered that "Every case arising in war is an exception, and will never rise again,-not a general rule which may be used as a model." (Powell.) "When once the Drill Regulations gives a normal course of procedure, there is a danger of it being followed under circumstances where it will be out of place, and of the commander ceasing to think for himself." Therefore, the Drill Regulations, "instead of laying down cast-iron rules, should leave a commander free to dispose of the units under his command in accordance with the circumstances of the situation, the object in view, and the nature of the country, supported by the spontaneous and independent action of his subordinate officers." "Though every one agrees as to the general principles on which the attack ought to be carried out, there is a great difference of opinion in the **matter** of details." (Balck.) The normal formation of the Drill Regulations gives "the general picture, but the details are very various. Long lines of skirmishers can only advance or retire on lines perpendicular to the front, and changes of front are no longer possible after the open order is adopted ; moreover, throwing out a skirmish line oblique to the front is dangerous, consequently companies must first be placed on the front to be formed before deploying as skirmishers. The skirmish line, to avoid losses, is often compelled to advance at a run, and systematic rushes are possible only on the drill ground ; in the field, these rapid advances depend on the local conditions, especially the effect of the enemy's fire. The long line, at 3000 or 4000 yards from the enemy? will pass over varied ground, part covered, part open ; on the

latter, artillery fire will make itself felt here and there, and at such points the men will advance at a run, then halt under cover, or out of the zone of fire? to await the other parts of the line. These conditions will constantly change in all the different parts of the field." (Powell.)

### 5. NIGHT OPERATIONS.

"The difficulty of crossing spaces beaten by the fire of the enemy will sometimes lead to the utilization of darkness in order to approach him. Ordinarily in such a case, the first line of troops should approach, during daylight, to the limit of the range of the enemy's fire, then advance a little before sunrise in order to open fire at daybreak. The assault can even be executed during the night." (Ger. Reg.) "Gen. Skobeloff, after suffering two failures, with enormous losses, in assaults by day on the forts of Plevna, finally gained his object by the slower but more methodical process of taking up successive forward positions at nightfall, and fortifying them sufficiently during the night to enable him to successfully hold them during the following day." (Mayne) This same method has been used at Port Arthur.

Night operations are reported from the seat of war in Manchuria to a degree never known before, and it seems certain **that** they will form a prominent feature of the offensive tactics of the future, "To be successful, it is essential to operate over ground known in advance," (I. D. R.) and surprise is an important element.

### 6. HUMAN ELEMENT OF GREATEST IMPORTANCE.

"All the inventiveness of the age is brought into requisition towards the production of weapons with longer range, greater rapidity of fire, and more deadly explosives. The progressive gain in this respect, so theorists have asserted, is all in favor of the defensive. Experiments carried out with each successive invention are so increasingly ac-

curate as to engender the belief that the attack will suffer appalling losses in battle, not to speak of the difficulty in getting even the most highly disciplined troops to face the sheets of lead which sweep the fire zone with the most withering effect on the nervous system." (Numerous instances in the Boer War seemed to prove this conclusively). But "the Japanese have demonstrated that the defensive is not so all powerful as was supposed. They have shown what all modern military theorists have failed to realize, that the human element is still the most potent factor in deciding the fate of battles ; and that the moral effect of destructive missiles and explosives, however thick, however rapid, and however disastrous they may be, will never be so great on the nerves as the aspect of men who unflinchingly advance through it all, regardless of losses and determined only to get home." ( Gilbert, )

#### 6a. ILLUSTRATION.—NANSHAN HILL.

The battle of Nanshan Hill well illustrates this, as also many other points in modern warfare. The Russian position stretched across the peninsula which was here only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles wide. "The topographical features of the ground were extremely unfavorable to the attack. The position was upon high ground. The earthworks and other defenses were walled, loopholed, and protected with all modern appliances. A series of batteries, strongly emplaced, crowded the crest of the hill, while rifle pits extended a-round the sides of the hill. Mines had been placed lower down the slopes. The armament of these redoubts consisted of 70 cannon of all calibers, including howitzers and quick-firers, also 8 machine guns. Several rows of entrenchments, one above the other connected the redoubts, and the whole of the front was protected with barbed wire entanglements, etc."

"Gen. Oku refused to be drawn" into battle "until the exact strength of the Russian position and their artillery had

been revealed. He employed 5 days in a systematic and thorough reconnaissance. For this duty he employed officers only, of whom a large number were out day and night, They worked boldly and drew the fire of nearly all the Russian guns, thereby unmasking them and even ascertaining from the segments of the burst shells the calibers of the guns from which they were discharged. They located the exact extent and flanks of the Russian position." "The attack was practically a frontal one. This does not reflect on Gen. Oku, who was compelled to adopt this course as, owing to the confined space there was no room for maneuvering or making wide turning movements. In default, he had arranged for a squadron of warships to carry out the flank attack."

"The army marched at night, timed to admit of the artillery commencing the preliminary bombardment at dawn from positions already selected. The infantry frontal attacks were most gallant and persistent, and after 12 hours fighting, when the artillery ammunition was exhausted, it is difficult to say what one admires most, the dogged determination and unhesitating decision of the General to risk all in a final fierce bombardment and assault, or the cheerful and gallant response to his call made by troops that had already made several fruitless charges."

"It is surprising and instructive how trifling the Japanese losses were in this battle (10 percent.) They made a frontal attack, under every disadvantage of open ground against a strongly prepared position. Their advancing lines must have been fairly thick and crowded, when we consider that 36,000 men and 18 batteries of artillery were deployed on a frontage of only 2½ miles." (Gilbert.)

#### 7A. IMPORTANCE OF FIRE ACTION.

The characteristics of infantry have already been discussed, but it will do no harm to repeat that "Infantry holds its high position mainly on account of its great fire action,

combined with its capacity to utilize fully the configuration of the ground." And "the perfection of fire-arms and the more extended utilization of the configuration of the ground, have greatly increased the power and significance of fire action." (Powell.)

"Every assault against an *unshaken* enemy is bound to fail, before the formidable fire effects of the defensive, and it is only by the destructive action of its own artillery and rifle fire that the attack must endeavor to produce on the defensive the demoralization, disorder, and loss that is the necessary preliminary for ultimate success." (Mayne.) "The first necessity is superiority in the artillery duel ; for without this factor the infantry assault will rarely be crowned with success. But it will always be necessary to obtain, at the decisive point, a superiority of infantry fire. Which-ever side nowadays knows how best to make use of this terrible torrent of fire according as it desires, will have the greatest chance of success." (Von der Goltz.)

#### 7B. FIRE DISCIPLINE.

This superiority of fire can only be secured by perfect fire-discipline, which means the "unhesitating habit, developed in the men by instruction and training, of commencing, or ceasing, or relaxing the fire, or of concentrating it upon a defined object, all in obedience to the will of the commander." (Mayne.) Our Drill Regulations therefore direct that "Officers and non-commissioned officers exact from the men obedience to the following rules:

- a. Never fire unless ordered.
- b. Never exceed the number of cartridges indicated.
- c. Never fire after the command or signal, 'cease firing.'
- d. Always fire at the named objective ; if so situated as to be unable to see the objective, do not fire.
- e. Always aim at the bottom line of the objective."

In addition to these, "battle" discipline requires of the men :

1. Endurance of the enemy's fire, even when it cannot be replied to.

2. The greatest attention to the signals and orders given by one's own leader and to the movements of the enemy.

3. Steady firing and economy of ammunition.

4. Prompt cessation of fire as soon as the target disappears, or when the leader sounds his whistle, or the order is given to cease fire.

5. Turning the ground to account, so as to increase to the utmost the effect of our own fire, and minimize the effect of the enemy's fire." (Balck.)

#### 7C. TIME OF OPENING FIRE.

"The time of beginning the firing will depend upon many circumstances of terrain supply of ammunition, morale of the troops, and the target offered by the enemy." (Wagner)

"A fire without useful effect is not only materially inefficient, but it also increases the moral valor of the enemy. There is, therefore, nothing else to be done than to approach the enemy as close as possible without firing, in a judiciously chosen formation, until the losses compel a halt, or until such time as the directing officers begin to lose their power over the leading troops," "The real importance of the small bore rifle resides, in a general way, not in the fact that it can be fired at long distances, but rather in the property which results from the greater flattening of the trajectory : viz.-that, at a short distance the bullets fly low. Hence, that which gives to our rifle fire, and to our improved instructions all their value, is the advance on the enemy, up to close distances, without long-range firing and without halting. Every halt in the advance which does not enable us to produce a useful effect, is more prejudicial than useful." (Von Schellendorf.)

## 7D. LONG RANGE FIRING.

“Well disciplined soldiers ought to be able to hold their ground under the fire of the enemy without replying, when they cannot hope for any good results from their own fire. The invariable rule for the employment of fire is that the effect is only decisive when the enemy is near enough to be certainly hit. The judicious husbanding of the ammunition, especially at the long and medium ranges, is a necessity of the highest order, in order that the decisive success may not be compromised by any failure of ammunition.” (Ger. Reg.) Experience shows that it is impossible to supply troops with ammunition at the shorter and decisive ranges. “Again and again in South Africa, the British troops lay on the ground for hours, at about 800 yards or less from the enemy, until nightfall, without any possibility of their emptied pouches being replenished, and without any possibility of being able to repel any infantry or cavalry charge the enemy might have made and which would have been made by any other enemy than the Boers. The importance of this consideration will be increased with the probable introduction of automatic rifles in the near future.” (Mayne.)

“However, long-range (volley) firing should not be neglected by troops in rear of the firing line, whenever it is possible to use it with effect, because the material effects so produced, and the knowledge that such can be produced when conditions are favorable, gives a moral superiority which it is always advisable to make use of.” (Mayne). In this case, too, the supply of ammunition can be replenished without great difficulty.—The real use of long-range firing, however, is on the defensive.

## 8. BAYONET NECESSARY.

One of the debatable questions for some years past has been the advisability of discarding the bayonet. “Even 100 years ago it was a recognized axiom that hand weapons and brute force could only overcome the fire arm when such

conditions obtained, as prevented the effective use of the latter, e. g.—when the men using them had been either demoralized, or surprised, or had used up their projectiles.” (Mayne.) “The bayonet can no longer overcome fire action, but can only win the results of previous fire action.” (Powell) .

The actual use of the bayonet had been rare and its defenders were compelled to advance its moral value against the objections brought forward to its weight, glitter, etc. This discussion reached a climax in the Boer War, when many military writers, forming hasty conclusions from the exceptional conditions obtaining in South Africa, proved to their own satisfaction, at least, that all battles in the future would be settled by fire action alone. And now the reports from Manchuria fail to show a single action where the infantry did not close to hand-to-hand conflict. There can no longer be any doubt as to the necessity for the retention of the bayonet. “The laurel of victory still hangs on the point of the bayonet.” (Meckel.)

#### 9. COVER.

“The power of infantry fire action necessitates cover, and the utilization of the natural configuration of the ground to secure this has acquired vital importance.” (Powell.) “While the rifle is to assist the advance, the method of advance should also assist the rifle in producing good results.” (Mayne.) “The crossing of open spaces is avoided as much as possible, or postponed until decisive moments ; hence the battle usually crystalizes around woods, villages, and groups of buildings.” (Powell.) “Among the many so called lessons of the Boer War was one which, like many others, was only ‘rubbed in’ by the Boers ; the fact that cover is as necessary to the attack as to the defense.” (Fraser.) “The cover chosen, must, in every case be such that the men sheltered by it can see the enemy and have an effective fire upon him. No amount of protection afforded

by the cover can compensate for the least impairment of the efficiency of the fire of the men sheltered by it." And "cover must not, in any way, interfere with progress to the front nor obstruct a retreat." Moreover "the men should be instructed in taking advantage of all cover that may be available, but more particularly, they must "also be taught to leave it at word of command." ('Wagner.) "The greatest difficulty does not consist in charging home? but in leaving cover to begin the attack." (Boguslawski.) Many instances occurred in the Boer War where the British attack came to a halt and the men under cover were allowed to "shoot up their pluck" until they had shot away all their ammunition.

#### 10. SKIRMISHING.

"However steadily or rapidly troops may have been trained to move, and however boldly and intelligently they may have been taught to take up positions unless they are able to use their rifle with effect when they have gained the vantage ground, they will be of little avail for the culminating point of all military training and instruction, viz-the struggle for victory between two forces, each armed with far-reaching, death-dealing weapons." (Roberts.) Good shooting, then, combined with the fullest utilization of the accidents of the terrain constitutes the most important element in the modern attack. In the most cursory review of the history of infantry since the invention of fire-arms, one fact stands out more prominently than all others. As the weapon increased in range, rapidity, accuracy, and flatness of trajectory, the troops opposed to it, changed, step by step, from dense masses to the present extended lines. But the tendency during peace has been to forget the lessons taught by war, and dense formations have repeatedly made their appearance at the beginning of wars, to be rapidly dissipated in actual warfare. It is difficult to believe that the formations obtaining in the British army in the early stages of the Boer War could have existed in any modern army.

“The more weapons improve, the more rapid and accurate their fire, the more (nearly) smokeless and noiseless their powder, by so much more will the importance of good skirmishing increase. The skirmisher must shoot straight, he must work with intelligence, cunning, boldness, and resolution. He must present the smallest possible target, for the (shortest) possible time, while at the same time doing his best to carry out his object, whatever that object may be.” (Crum.) “Skirmishers have become the most important element in modern tactics, and now not only begin the action, but fight it out to the end.” (Wagner.)

“The regimental commander can only assign to each battalion its general duty, the execution must be left to the battalion commanders. On the offensive he assigns to each his point of attack, and he lets go his control as fast as the circumstances require. The battalion commander, in the same way, gradually gives up control of his companies, and when once the battalion is deployed, he can only aid by caring for the supply of ammunition.” (Powell.) “Good subalterns and non-commissioned officers are, then, one of the first requisites for an efficient firing line.” (Wagner.) “It is obvious that when men are extended, they are less under control as each man gets nearer the enemy, and it becomes less and less possible, and finally impossible, for superiors to superintend and assist him. As the range, accuracy, and rapidity of fire of the rifle increase, each individual will be thrown more and more on his own resources. It will have to be left to him, more and more, to use his own head, to get himself to the best place, and to do his best possible toward the common end,

“What that common end is, he must be clearly told before starting. He must know what point he is wanted to attack, who is going to direct on to that point, and how it is intended to carry out the attack. Probably the attack will be

carried out by successive lines of skirmishers, co-operating with their fire, gradually working forward and merging in one strong firing line which will get as near as ever it can to the enemy. This firing line may merely be required to hold the enemy in front, while the assault is delivered elsewhere, or it may be reinforced and called on to assault the position. But the individual must know how to work his way forward, how to make the most (both for firing and advancing) , of accidents of ground, of walls, ditches, and cover. He must realize how grass, bushes, a similarity of color, and even the fact of remaining motionless, may afford him cover from view, He must know, and decide, before each start, where to go and how to get there, whether to crawl, or stalk, or crouch down, or get up and run for it. He should never give time for an aimed shot. He must realize that the positions he takes up, as he works his way forward, must depend on the good of the whole. He must not mask the fire of others, he must not lose touch, he may have to lie flat and still in the open. He must do all he can to co-operate and keep touch and pass on orders and signals, so that **all** may know what to do. He must rally and get back to control whenever occasions arise, and remember the danger which comes from a confusion of units. There is much, too, he should know of the effects of fire,--and, though shooting straight is the first and most important accomplishment of the infantryman, if he cannot skirmish, he cannot get to the right place to shoot from. If he cannot take cover, he may not live to shoot twice." (Crum.)

## 11. BATTLE DISCIPLINE.

"How are we to ensure that, when left to himself, the skirmisher will do well? There is only one way, and that is by discipline. There must be in him something of that 'state when the limbs obey before the order has passed from ear to brain!' But there must also be intelligence and good

spirit. Men must know how to combine these, but above all there must be that 'battle-discipline' which makes each forget himself for his duty." (Crum.)

\* \* \*

This summary of the requirements does not fit in altogether with the normal formation laid down in the Infantry Drill Regulations, but again I repeat that a "hard and fast form for the attack, applicable to all situations of an action, can never be given, and it would be also a misfortune to an army." "The infantry's method of advancing must be different according as the attack is made over open or covered ground." A good illustration is seen in the capture of Gorni Dubnik. "The Russians," after many unsuccessful assaults, "were within 100 to 400 paces from the Turks. They could not advance, and they could not retire. There seemed nothing for Gurko to do, but to wait for darkness and then either assault once more or retire. But the men of the Guards took the matter into their own hands ; they had tried it Gurko's way and failed; they now tried it their own way. A few of the more daring sprang up and darted across to some cover in front of them; more followed this lead, and presently the game 'caught on' of daring each other to dash from cover to cover. Some were shot clown, but soon hundreds had worked their way right into the ditch of the Turkish redoubt. Here they were safe, for any Turk who exposed himself to fire clown into the ditch was shot down by the Russians covering their comrades' advance." (Crum.)

#### RESUME.

"The attack consists of three distinct phases ; namely,

1. The preparation, which consists of the reconnaissance of the terrain and the hostile position and the use of artillery and long-range infantry fire to shake the enemy and prepare the way for the assault.

2. The assault proper, which begins with the arrival of the infantry at effective ranges, and ends with the final charge on the enemy's position.

3. The completion which includes the occupation of the position by a formed body of troops (generally of the third line) and the re-formation of the victorious troops disordered by the assault. In case the assault fails, the third phase consists of the withdrawal of the attacking troops."

"The following general rules should always be observed in conducting an attack.

1. Do not have a heavy firing line before you come within effective rifle range of the enemy ; then employ in that line as many men as can use their rifles with the best effect.

2. Regulate the fire from the beginning so that it may steadily increase in power up to the stage just preceding the final charge, when it should reach its maximum intensity.

3. Guard carefully against an exhaustion of ammunition.

4. Avoid a premature reinforcement of the firing line, in order that you may have men at hand to sustain it when the moral effect of reinforcement is greatest.

5. Endeavor to prevent your men from being influenced by any panic or demoralization that may seize upon troops supported by them.

6. Keep all your troops, except the firing line, in column, until considerations of fire action, or protection from the enemy's fire, demand deployment.

7. Always endeavor to hold in reserve a small body of formed troops for the moment when your attacking force is disordered by its own success or driven back in defeat ;

but do not keep large bodies out of action for this purpose.”  
(Wagner.)

### CONCLUSION.

There are many unsettled points connected with this subject, which we junior officers may hope to help decide in the future :-such as methods of supplying ammunition to the firing line, reducing weight of equipment so as to increase mobility as well as the number of rounds of ammunition carried by the soldier, controlling the firing line, devising feasible signals for scouts, training skirmishers, etc, etc.

JR. **M. PECK,**  
*1st Lieut. 6th Inft.*

Dec. 13, 1904.

## ORGANIZATION AND TACTICS.

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QUESTION SHEET NO. 14.

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Infantry in Attack. December 13, 1904.

1. What are the general requirements of the attack formation ?
2. What are the main principles governing modern infantry tactics in attack ?
3. What are the objects of the demonstrative action ?
4. Give the methods of making flank attacks.
5. What are the conflicting requirements as to the strength of the firing line.
6. What determines the length of front of the battalion in action ?
7. Name the lines into which the attacking force is divided.
8. When and how are scouts sent out, and what are their functions ?
9. Give the normal movements of the firing line from the time it reaches effective artillery range till it makes the charge.
10. How is the firing line normally relieved?
11. Give the normal movements of the support up to the union with the firing line.
12. Same for reserve.
13. Summarize the functions of the 1st line.
14. Summarize the functions of the 2nd line.
15. Summarize the functions of the 3rd line.

16. Why must companies first be placed on the correct front before attacking? .

17. What are the chief uses and requirements of night operations ?

18. What is the most potent factor in deciding the issue of battles?

19. What are the (2) chief characteristics of infantry?

20. Define fire-discipline.

21. What rules does the I. D. R. prescribe for fire control ?

22. What are the additional requirements of battle-discipline ?

23. In what does the real importance of the small bore rifle reside ?

24. What is the general principle as to the time of opening infantry fire ?

25. What are the chief objections to long-range firing ?

26. When may it be used?

27. What is the present status of the bayonet?

28. What are the chief requirements of cover?

29. What are the essential points which skirmishers should be taught?

30. What are the 3 phases of the attack?

31. Give the 7 general rules for the attack.

*"Whatever arguments may be drawn from particular examples, superficially viewed, a thorough examination of the subject will evince that the art of war is both comprehensive and complicated; that it demands much previous study, and that the possession of it 'n its most approved and perfect state is always of great moment to the security of a nation."*

**WASHINGTON'S LAST ANNUAL MESSAGE.**