



## Royal United Services Institution. Journal

Publication details, including instructions for  
authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rusi19>

### The Framing of Orders in the Field

Lieutenant-Colonel G. F. R. Henderson <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> The Staff College

Published online: 11 Sep 2009.

To cite this article: Lieutenant-Colonel G. F. R. Henderson (1896) The Framing of  
Orders in the Field, Royal United Services Institution. Journal, 40:221, 821-850, DOI:  
[10.1080/03071849609416249](https://doi.org/10.1080/03071849609416249)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03071849609416249>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the  
information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform.  
However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no  
representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness,  
or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views  
expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and  
are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the  
Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with  
primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any  
losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages,  
and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or  
indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the  
Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes.  
Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan,

sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>



## THE FRAMING OF ORDERS IN THE FIELD.

*By Lieutenant-Colonel G. F. R. HENDERSON,  
The York and Lancaster Regiment,  
Professor of Military Art and History, The Staff College.*

---

Friday, April 10th, 1896.

Lieut.-General Sir F. D. MIDDLETON, K.C.M.G., C.B.,  
in the Chair.

---

### PART I.

THE grand maxim of war is to establish superior force, moral and physical, at the right place at the right time. Simple in conception, the difficulties which attend its execution are enormous. It is to overcome these difficulties that armies are organised and disciplined; that generals are educated and soldiers trained; it is to this end that the vast preparations of peace are directed. And, as you are well aware, it is by no means possible to make these preparations thorough and complete. Every army has its peculiar deficiencies; and these deficiencies, probably without remedy, are all obstacles to mobility, that is, to the swift and certain application of the maxim.

Deficiencies in preparation, however, are of less moment than the difficulties inherent in war. We have historical examples of ill-trained and ill-equipped levies defeating veteran and well-appointed armies. Regular soldiers have before now been worsted by troops who knew little of drill and less of discipline. "For the conduct of an army," writes von Moltke, "character weighs more than knowledge and science." There are leaders whose will and energy triumph over all obstacles; leaders who, despite the shortcomings of their troops, find the means of massing the larger numbers at the decisive point; leaders who can inspire their men with their own spirit of resolution, and make that spirit the substitute for long training. Such men are rare. They are not to be found in every garrison. They are the born leaders of men, they are not to be manufactured, and they are exceptional even in the most military of nations. Yet even with such men the hardest part of their enterprise does not consist in moving their troops rapidly and in order, in feeding and

supplying them. Even with comparatively raw soldiers, the born leader will find the means of keeping his ranks full, of making long marches, and of seasoning his men to hardships.

But full ranks, long marches, and hardy soldiers, are not sufficient to ensure the concentration of superior force at the decisive point. Nor is generalship sufficient. A leader may have the penetration to select the decisive point, and set his columns in motion in the right direction long before the enemy perceives the manœuvre. But the recognition of the correct objective, even if followed by rapid movement, is not in itself sufficient to ensure success. The strategy may be sound, but if the tactics are not skilful victory may easily escape. And it is when the sphere of tactics is reached, that is, when the hostile forces come into touch, that obstacles present themselves at every step; it is then that the friction inseparable from the movement of armed masses begins to assert itself with all its disadvantages. Whether on the march or in battle a commander, even of a small force, cannot be everywhere. He cannot handle his army as he handles his sword, communicating simultaneously to every part the impulse of the moment, and controlling the entire mass by a word or signal. He is compelled to act through intermediaries. Even a small force is parcelled out into detachments. Advanced, flank and rear guards, frontal and flank attacks, must for the time being entail the separation of some portion of the force; and with larger numbers, both in movement and in attack, a division into several columns is inevitable. Moreover, when forces are composed of the three arms, each of these, notwithstanding that their functions are entirely distinct, must, if success is to be won, be employed in the closest combination. Then only will that moral strength, which each arm derives from the support and presence of the other, be concentrated at the decisive point. To bring about this combination is the task of the commander, and it is a task which few, even of the greatest generals, have satisfactorily accomplished. Even with the very smallest force the commander would find it difficult to personally direct every movement throughout the ever-varying phases and unexpected vicissitudes of a hot action. With a larger force each one of the three arms must have its own leader; and each of these leaders, as none is independent of the other, but all working together for the attainment of a common aim, must not only know what that aim is, but must know in what manner he can render the most effective assistance to his colleagues. And so, on the march, the separate columns must be informed for what object they are moving; advanced, rear, and flank guards cannot be left wholly in the dark. If they are so left and the enemy makes some unexpected movement—and in war it is the unexpected that always happens—it is not always possible to send back for orders. Events, when troops are in close contact, develop with astonishing rapidity, and it is often absolutely essential that the commander of a detached portion of the force should act with rapidity and energy. To send back to the general-in-chief and to receive his instructions takes time, and the time thus employed, although no more than fifteen or twenty minutes,

may be the critical moment of the engagement. "It is always those quarters of an hour," said Napôleon, "that decide the issue of a battle." But, if the aim of the commander, the manner in which he intends the three arms should combine and the several portions of his force co-operate, are already known to the subordinate leaders; if his intentions have been so clearly expressed that no doubt remains in the minds of any one of those leaders as to what is proposed, then energy will take the place of hesitation; quick decision and rapid action will forestall the endeavours of the enemy; opportunities will be utilised, and combination, so far as is possible, will be assured.

It is by the clear enunciation of his intentions, of his object, of the combination by which he proposes that this object should be attained, in one word, by his orders, that a general impresses his single will upon the mass of individuals he commands; that he enlists their activity and resolution; that he provides against emergencies which may occur when he is unable to intervene; that he saves time, and secures the concentration of superior force at the decisive point.

It is, I believe, in great part by this means that even with ill-trained troops the born leaders of men have achieved extraordinary results. A little reflection will show us that this is no far-fetched assertion. There can be little question, I think, that their orders were the reflection of their own personality. The most marked characteristics of such men are the clearness with which they see both the end to be achieved and the best means of achieving it; and it is impossible but that these characteristics should find expression in their orders. History, unfortunately, concerns itself but little with the means by which many of the greatest captains set their troops in motion, infused harmony into their action, and combined their efforts in one powerful blow. Of the battle orders—those issued whilst the fight was hottest; and which turned the fortunes of the day—even of the greatest generals, we have but few examples. And yet we know that they were recorded. We know, for instance, that at Salamanca, Wellington initiated one of the finest combined movements in the whole history of war—the great counterstroke of 30,000 men, cavalry, artillery, and infantry in closest concert—by means of scraps of paper on which he had hastily scribbled his instructions. But these scraps have vanished. The many volumes of the Wellington despatches contain no trace of them; and yet, written as they were in the midst of fierce excitement, involving as they did that most complicated of manœuvres, a simultaneous frontal and flank attack, and the combined action of large masses of the three arms, they would hardly yield, either in interest or instruction, to any one of the innumerable documents which have been religiously preserved. One may imagine the anguish of an ordinary soldier, suddenly called upon to write, in the space of a few minutes—for that was all the time available—orders for the advance, in battle order, of six divisions of infantry and three cavalry brigades. What a revelation of character and capacity these orders of the Duke's would be!

The battle orders of generals who conquered on less famous fields, and with armies of different character, have disappeared more completely

than those of Wellington or Napoleon. We have at least the preliminary orders, laying down the plan and the dispositions which led to some of the greatest victories of these two great soldiers. But the orders of Cromwell, of Clive, of Peterborough, of many of the great men of action, who won their victories with armies hurriedly improvised and weak in organisation, have vanished altogether. Yet, as I have said, these orders must have been the mainspring of their successes. To take for instance the orders of Cromwell. We may judge what they must have been from his letters; and in his summary of the style of these letters, Carlyle has exactly described the characteristics of a good military order. "They were written," he says, "most of them in the very flame and conflagration of a revolutionary struggle, and with an eye to the despatch of an indispensable pressing business alone; but it will be found, I conceive, that for such they were well written. Superfluity, as if by a natural law of the case, the writer has had to discard; whatsoever quality that *can* be dispensed with is indifferent to him. With a great solid step he presses through towards his object; has marked out very decisively what the real steps towards it are; discriminating well the essential from the extraneous; forming to himself, in short, a true, not an untrue, picture of the business that is to be done."

Again, let us turn to a general who was in some respects the prototype of Cromwell, as chary of speech, as swift in decision, as unerring in recognising the true objective, as resolute in action, and as trusted by his men. Stonewall Jackson had no staff training. He had served but six years in the Regular Army of the United States. He had been ten years a professor of mathematics when he joined the Confederate Army, and he was almost immediately promoted to the command of a brigade. And yet Stonewall Jackson's orders for battle were in every essential respect a model. They were very short, not to say abrupt; but they were exceedingly clear. They left no doubt whatever as to the intentions of the general-in-chief. They entered into no details, except when details were absolutely necessary. Commanders of divisions and brigades, of the advanced cavalry, of advanced, flank, and rear guards, were given a perfectly free hand as to the disposition of their troops, and they were expected in case of emergency to act on their own initiative. The only unpardonable fault in Jackson's eyes was to do nothing under plea of waiting for orders. To an energetic and active subordinate, even if he were sometimes led into errors of judgment, he forgave everything. His orders, moreover, whenever possible, were given to his lieutenants in a personal interview, where questions could be asked, explanations given, and all doubts removed; and to this systematic method of directing his troops his wonderful success is in no small measure to be ascribed.

It may be noticed that the chief points of Jackson's orders were their clearness, the impossibility of mistaking either the aim or the means, and this is characteristic of all great leaders. Lucidity of thought is the most marked attribute of a mind above the common. Most men of action have found the means of expressing their thoughts with the same distinctness as those thoughts present themselves to their own minds,

and on the minds of their hearers they have therefore been able to impress "a true picture of the business that is to be done." In the Wellington Despatches and the Napoleon Correspondence there are innumerable examples of orders and instructions to subordinate generals; and in each one of these, whoever examines them closely can hardly fail to be struck with the simplicity yet completeness with which the ideas are explained, and with the sharp outline of the purpose to be achieved. The same may be said of the orders of von Moltke. Nor is it without interest to note that Nelson's orders were no less graphic and perspicuous than those of Wellington and Napoleon; that they display in every line what Captain Mahan calls "the transcendent merit" of trusting subordinates, and that they paved the way to the triumphs of the Nile and of Trafalgar.

## PART II.

It has been said that "few appreciate the real extent and importance of the influence which language has always exercised on human affairs, or can be aware how often these are determined by causes much slighter than are apparent to the superficial observer." This reflection may be applied with equal truth to war. Battles have been lost simply and solely because a single order has miscarried; because instructions have been misread; because the intentions of the commander were not understood; because orders have been insufficient, vague, or careless. An instance of deep interest to English soldiers is the extraordinary blunder of one of the Russian columns at Inkerman. It had been ordered to attack the right and centre of the position, and to ascend to the heights by the *left* bank of the Careenage ravine. It ascended, however, by the *right* bank of the ravine, which was on its left. In consequence of this blunder two columns found themselves on a narrow plateau, unable to deploy, and were compelled to engage the English lines in close column. Again, referring to the same campaign, there can be little doubt but that to a badly-worded order the useless, if heroic, sacrifice of the Light Brigade was due.

The war of 1870 is not without examples of indifferent orders. Those of the French, although exceedingly detailed, were seldom adapted to the situation. The very first battle of the war throws a curious light on the relative efficiency of the staffs of the hostile armies. On the 3rd of August, Marshal MacMahon, from his headquarters at Strasburg, directed General Douay's division to take post near the frontier town of Weissenburg, thirty miles distant. There was no mention of the enemy in these orders, possibly because there was no reliable information; but neither was there any mention of the purpose for which the division was thus pushed forward. In other respects, the orders were strangely precise. General Douay was ordered to occupy Weiler, Weissenburg, and Altenstadt, a front of three miles, and his cavalry was to reconnoitre, not to the front, but as far as Schleithal, a village four-and-a-half miles distant on the right. The last paragraph was remarkable. It instructed General Ducrôt, who was to take post with another division at Lembach, some

nine miles from Weissenburg, to take over the command of both divisions, and to give instructions to General Douay for the distribution of his troops. General Ducrôt thereupon issued *his* orders, and he very wisely ignored the detailed instructions of the Marshal, who had probably had no decent map to refer to, and very little knowledge of the ground. Weiler, Weissenburg, and Altenstadt were all three at the bottom of a valley, commanded by high hills, and with dense forests in the near neighbourhood. General Ducrôt, who knew the ground, instructed Douay to post only one battalion in Weissenburg, and to keep the remainder of his troops on the hill behind the town, with one brigade on the Geisberg, one on the Vogelsberg, and the cavalry and artillery in second line behind the crest of the heights. He also informed Douay of the direction in which his cavalry were to reconnoitre, that the enemy would probably not attempt anything serious for some time, that he was to organise a brigade of bakers in his division, to bake 30,000 rations of bread in Weissenburg, to draw supplies from the country, and that he might take his choice of three places for his headquarters.

Douay arrived at Weissenburg on the night of August 3rd, and proceeded to place his troops as well as he could, in accordance with his numerous instructions. He sent one battalion to Weissenburg, where it was eventually captured. His cavalry started out to reconnoitre, in the direction prescribed by the Marshal, and found nothing. The three places of which he had his choice as headquarters were none of them convenient, and he had to go elsewhere. The position indicated by General Ducrôt was much too extended for his small force. The artillery, had it been posted behind the crest, would have been far out of range of any possible attack. The right was in the air, and the cavalry, instead of being retained in second line, had to guard the flank; and, worse still, before he could organise his bakers or think of commencing baking, the enemy, who had 130,000 men within a few miles of his position, did something very serious indeed. At 8.30 the French camp was surprised by artillery fire. At 10 o'clock General Douay was killed, and by 2 p.m. his unfortunate division had lost nearly half its numbers. It is noteworthy that the orders of the Crown Prince, commanding the German Army, were just about half as long as those of MacMahon to Douay, although in the one case 130,000 men were concerned and in the other 6,500; moreover, so applicable were the Crown Prince's orders, written the night previous, that until the French were defeated, and instructions had to be given for pursuit, he had no occasion to supplement them.

But the German staff was not always infallible. Several of the earlier battles were brought on by the commanders of advanced detachments; and it is interesting to consider how far the action of these officers was due to faulty orders. At the battle of Wörth, the orders of the Head Quarter Staff were most certainly to blame. On the morning of the 6th of August, the outposts of the Crown Prince and of Marshal MacMahon were in close contact. The Germans, however, were not yet fully concentrated, and the Commander-in-Chief had determined to postpone attack until his troops had



closed up. In his orders of the previous evening, this intention had been clearly expressed; and the whole army was aware, when the sun rose, that battle would not be joined until the next day. It happened, however, that the 2nd Bavarian Army Corps, standing opposite the French left, was divided from the remainder of the army by a steep and densely wooded mountain; and to this Corps special orders had been sent, to the effect that if they heard artillery fire they were to attack immediately, in order to prevent the French turning in full strength against the 5th Army Corps, which held the German centre. This order was not communicated to the remainder of the army. In complete ignorance, therefore, of the consequence likely to arise from his action, the officer commanding the outposts of the 5th Army Corps, early on the morning of the 6th, made a small reconnaissance in force. A battalion pushed forward beyond the piquet line, and a battery was ordered into action. This demonstration evoked a brisk skirmish. Four French batteries replied to the German guns, and the thunder of the cannonade, reverberating through the wooded valley which hid all view of the combat, brought the Bavarians into action. From political as well as tactical considerations it was found necessary to extricate them from their false position; and the battle once joined, could not be broken off. Victory, indeed, was the result, and the inferior numbers at the disposal of the French Marshal made it impossible that it could have been otherwise. But the loss of life was far greater than would have been the case had not the intentions of the German Commander-in-Chief been nullified by the blunder of his own staff.

We may now turn to Gravelotte. That great victory was not won without a useless sacrifice of life. In the attack upon St. Privat, faulty orders again asserted their baneful influence. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon, when the battle had been in progress for about four hours, Prince Frederick Charles, acting as commander-in-chief in this quarter of the field, received information that the Saxon Army Corps, on the initiative of the Corps Commander, the present King of Saxony, was advancing to turn the French right. The Guard Corps was instructed to hold back until the Saxons could co-operate. Beyond some general instructions, delivered verbally to the Commander of the Guard, no definite order was issued which would have ensured close concert between the flank and frontal attack. That part of the Saxon Corps which was to carry out the turning movement had several miles to march before it reached the French flank; it had a long defile to pass through, a steep hill to climb, and then to deploy for attack. All this was unknown to the Commander of the Guard; and none of Prince Frederick Charles' staff had thought it necessary to make the necessary calculations of space and time, and to embody the result in an explicit order. The consequence was that at 5.15, the Guard Commander, who had reason to believe, from various sources, that the turning column had arrived and had deployed, gave, with the approval of the Prince, the order for his Army Corps to advance. At that time, however, the Saxons had not yet got free of the defile, and the order, as a matter of fact, was given exactly an hour-and-a-half too soon. The result is historical. In that hour-and-a-half the Guards lost

6,000 men, and a vigorous counterstroke would have probably destroyed them.

Such was the outcome of the neglect of staff duties in the attack. A fortnight later the maintenance of the position at Noisseville, when Bazaine made his greater sortie from Metz, was jeopardised by insufficient orders. Noisseville village formed an important part in the defensive front; if it fell a wide breach would be opened in the line, and the Commander-in-chief, General von Mauteuffel, intended that it should be held to the last. This intention was not made clear to the subordinate generals, for the battalion which occupied Noisseville received orders from its brigadier to retire directly it was menaced by superior numbers. Consequently, before it was seriously attacked, the village was abandoned; and although, owing to Bazaine's bad generalship, the consequences were not disastrous, many Prussian lives were sacrificed in vain endeavours to recapture it.

One of the most famous of the campaigns of the American Civil War supplies some useful instances, both as regards verbal and written orders.

On June 27th, 1862, at the battle of Gaines' Mill, before Richmond, General Jackson sent by his aide-de-camp a *verbal* message to his reserve divisions, communicating his plan of attack. The messenger, however, misconceived the general's intentions, and instructed the reserve divisions to await further orders before engaging the enemy. The error was eventually rectified by the chief of the staff; but for two hours the first line had been left without the support which Jackson had intended should be furnished, and was well-nigh overwhelmed.

Two days later, June 29th, another Confederate general, Magruder, received *verbal* instructions from General Lee as to further action against the retreating Federals. Magruder was to co-operate with another division. This co-operation failed for the reason that Magruder believed that this division was to move by one road, while Lee had ordered it to move by another. The verbal instructions were at fault.

On July 1st, advancing against a strong position, Magruder was ordered to march by a road which was designated in his orders as "The Quaker Road." Three guides directed him to this road; but it was found afterwards that there were two roads called by the same name, and that the staff had intended Magruder to march by the one which he did not take.

The same afternoon the Confederates were bloodily repulsed at the battle of Malvern Hill, and the order of attack had much to do with the disaster. It was issued by Lee's staff to the officer commanding Jackson's advanced division, who was to attack the right, and to Magruder, who was to attack the left. It ran as follows:—

"Batteries have been established to rake the enemy's lines.

"If *it* (sic) is broken, as is probable, Armistead (one of "Magruder's brigadiers), who can witness the effect of "the fire, has been ordered to charge with a yell. Do "the same."

Unfortunately for the Confederates, their own artillery was overpowered; the Federal line was not even shaken; a yell *was* heard, but it was not raised by Armistead's brigade; and when the divisions, obedient to the signal, moved forward, their attack was premature, and their loss nearly as heavy as that of the Guard at St. Privat.

Nor did this deplorable incident crown the mishaps of this campaign. The same night the Federals, although victorious in the battle, abandoned the field; but the Confederate pursuit was feeble, the leading divisions mistaking the road which had been pointed out by the Head Quarter Staff.

I shall now give you an instance of a battle lost by inadequate orders. On the same day as Wörth, a single German division attacked at Spicheren the 2nd French Corps d'Armée (commanded by General Frossard), which was believed to be on the point of retreating. Frossard, who was under Bazaine, reported the first appearance of the enemy to his superior. The reply came back from headquarters, twelve miles in rear, to the effect that if the 2nd Corps was attacked by superior forces, it would do well to fall back, and that three divisions had been sent forward to three different points within ten miles of the scene of action. The German division was roughly treated; but other divisions, marching to the sound of the cannon, came hurrying up, and the French became engaged in a stubborn fight with equal numbers. Frossard again reported to Bazaine, and the Marshal informed him that he had ordered one of the three divisions in rear to march to a village five miles from Frossard's extreme right, and another to march direct to his assistance. The latter, however, was not found by the messenger for nearly three hours, and it was then too late to render aid. The 2nd Corps, left without support, was compelled to leave the field, and the chance of a brilliant victory was suffered to escape. But had Bazaine informed his divisional commanders, when they were first ordered to advance, that they were expected to lend a hand to Frossard, the Germans must have been overwhelmed by superior numbers.

Time forbids me to pursue this subject further. Nor is it necessary that I should do so. Further illustrations, drawn from other campaigns, will probably suggest themselves to many of my hearers. I will only say that the mistakes made in the early battles of 1870 were in no way due to the fact that the German Army had seen little of war. In few campaigns has such vast experience been found on either side as in the campaign of Waterloo, and yet from first to last the blunders on both sides as regards orders were of an almost abnormal character. The Prussians were not faultless, but their errors have been obscured by the gigantic mistakes made by the staff officers of both Wellington and Napoleon. Both these great captains were deprived of the trained assistance which they had received in previous campaigns. Few of his Peninsular staff, in spite of his repeated applications, were allowed to join the Duke; and Napoleon, in place of Marshal Berthier, the amanuensis who for so many years had formulated with such absolute precision the instructions of his chief, was compelled to trust to the pen of Marshal Soult, a great

general, indeed, but lacking the mechanical aptitude and the power of expression which had belonged to his predecessor.<sup>1</sup>

### PART III.

I have endeavoured in this brief historic sketch to show the vast importance of clear and complete orders, and I shall now attempt to show how the art of expressing one's intentions in proper form, and, at the same time, with that rapidity which the exigencies of active service demand, may best be mastered. I shall deal first with an objection with which I have been often met. Officers have sometimes urged, when asked to practise writing orders, that, as regards movements in the face of the enemy, such practice is unnecessary except for staff officers with large bodies of troops; and that for the staff officers of the smaller units, and more especially for regimental officers, verbal and not written orders are and will continue to be the rule. To this objection the first answer is that regimental officers do not remain regimental officers all their lives, that they may possibly rise to high command, and that it is their bounden duty, if they intend to accept such command, to fit themselves for its functions by every means in their power. The second answer is, that whilst it is perfectly true that many orders, in presence of the enemy, must of necessity be verbal, yet if verbal orders are to be clear and complete some previous practice is necessary, and constantly writing them is the best practice. Clearness of expression is the first requisite in orders; and clearness of expression, which is to a great degree a literary accomplishment, can best be attained by constant practice in putting your intentions into unmistakable terms. Again, written orders can be more readily criticised than verbal ones. Mistakes are more patent; excuse is impossible; and the order, improved by the instructor, remains as a guide for future use. Thirdly, it is an unfortunate circumstance of war that units cannot always be kept intact. Even the smallest force may be compelled to make detachments, and with such detachments the commander may find it impossible to communicate personally by word of mouth. He must use an intermediary; and, without again referring to history, it is a notorious fact that in war verbal messages, as a rule, are more often incorrectly than correctly delivered. Even at peace manœuvres this is the case. In the excitement of battle it is almost impossible to avoid. While, therefore, I quite agree that verbal orders are often the only orders possible, I am at the same time convinced that practice in giving such orders is absolutely essential, that facility in writing orders will give facility in issuing them by word of mouth, and that wherever possible it is far better to reduce all orders to writing.

<sup>1</sup> Of the valuable aid such an amanuensis may render, a striking instance occurs in the story of a most brilliant action fought by an English soldier. In his account of Tashkessen, General Valentine Baker writes as follows:—"The conduct of Shakir Bey was beyond all praise. He stuck to me like a shadow, and wrote every order which I gave with such clearness that everything worked perfectly. The troops had carried out the somewhat difficult manœuvres that had to be executed with the precision of parade, and, excepting the bad conduct of the Mustaphiz (a battalion which bolted), not a hitch of any kind occurred in the movements of the battalion."

I may mention here that the issue of verbal orders is most carefully practised in the German Army, and that all officers, from the time they join the Service, are constantly and systematically trained in this essential phase of the art of command. What may be called the verbal war game is a method which is much used in some, if not all, of the Imperial Army Corps. The players, who are often the junior subalterns, give their orders verbally to the instructor. They then leave the room, the pieces are moved on the maps, and the situation is shown as far as it has developed. The players on one side are then called back. They are given a few minutes to look at the map, and then they again give their orders, which are criticised on the spot, not so much as to their tactical soundness, but as to form, length, and expression. German officers moreover, however humble their rank, are constantly asked to write orders, and the result of this consistent practice is certainly remarkable. It is impossible not to be struck by the ease, clearness, and precision with which all officers, previous to any movement in the field, communicate to their subordinates the object of the movement, and the means by which they intend to carry out their task. For instance, in the case of a battalion attacking, the officer commanding gives his orders to his company officers, the company officers to the section commanders, the section commanders to the men, and each one of these officers follows exactly the same system; every order is modelled on exactly the same pattern; hesitation, even amongst the juniors, is hardly ever to be observed, and the consequence is that every man in the whole battalion is exactly informed of what his commander intends to do, and how he intends it should be done.

Excellent, however, as are these results, it is not at first sight clear how they are to be attained. I may say at once that there is no royal road to perfection or even to average skill in framing orders. Practice, and practice only, will give the necessary facility, and every example that is written must be closely criticised. The great difficulty, however, which confronts officers in our Service is the lack of theoretical instruction and of good models. The question really resolves itself into this: How are officers, who intend to attain such skill in framing orders as to be able to instruct others, to instruct themselves? Where are the examples with which they can compare their own efforts? Where are they to find the rules and principles which should be followed? Unfortunately, even the best of our military text-books have little to say on this important subject. In Germany, however, the contrary is the case. Not only is the bearing of orders on both strategy and tactics adequately recognised, but orders are the vehicle of all theoretical instruction. The manner in which principles are applied is taught by imagining a certain force in a certain situation, giving the orders best adapted to the circumstances, and supplementing them with a full explanation of the reasons which dictated them. The best of the tactical treatises which follow this method is, to my mind, the work of Captain Griepenkerl.<sup>1</sup> This work, which

<sup>1</sup> "Taktische Unterrichtsbücher." Berlin: Mittler & Son, Kochstrasse 68-70. 1892.

deals at length with the operations of a small detached force of the three arms, contains a large number of excellent orders, and many admirable suggestions as to the considerations which must be borne in mind when writing them. Complete instruction, moreover—so far as rules and principles, without models, can instruct—is to be found in Colonel Hare's excellent translation of the "Duties of the Great General Staff," published by the War Office, and giving what is practically a summary of von Moltke's methods and von Moltke's teaching. This volume, at the same time, is perhaps the most valuable tactical text-book which exists, for it embodies the experience of two great wars, and the chapter on orders is so full—at least, as regards European warfare—that it is hardly necessary to go further. I may mention, however, that the "Felddienst-Ordnung," translated by Major Gawne and Mr. Spenser Wilkinson, under the title of "The Order of Field Service of the German Army," has four short pages on orders which are nearly as valuable as the instructions for outposts.

Having informed you of the best sources from which instruction in writing orders may be derived, I hardly think it necessary, even if time permitted, to discuss step by step this afternoon the framing of orders in the field. To do so, indeed, would be only to recapitulate the rules laid down in the "Duties of the Great General Staff," and I shall do no more than to enlarge on certain points which, judging from my own experience as an instructor, require further explanation. I will first describe the ordinary procedure. Orders in the field come under one of three headings:—

In Wellington's Army, for instance, there were—

1. *Standing Orders*. These were issued in the form of General Orders, were gradually embodied in printed volumes, and issued to all commanding officers.
2. *Daily Orders*, dealing with administration, discipline, subsistence, and sanitary arrangements; issued by the Adjutant-General's Department.
3. *Operation Orders*, dealing with marches, attack, the occupation of positions, etc., etc., and issued by the Quartermaster-General's Department.

Of the first, the Standing Orders of the Light Division, compiled by General Crawford, are the best example. They contain much that is embodied in our present Drill Book, for it is to be remembered that in the days of the Peninsular War there were no tactical regulations with which every officer was familiar; and at the same time they contain much that was only applicable to the country in which the troops were then operating. This must always be the case. Standing Orders, especially such as refer to supply and transport, police and camp followers, marches, outposts, encampments, pay and subsistence, must vary with the theatre of war. Standing Orders applicable to Europe are not applicable to India or to Africa, but they must be framed in accordance with local conditions. It is unnecessary to speak at length as to the orders coming under this heading; but I may remark that if Standing Orders

are carefully compiled, much labour in framing daily and operation orders may be saved. For instance, in Wellington's orders, outposts are very seldom mentioned. It will be found, however, on reference to the Despatches, that from time to time General Orders were issued which contained all the necessary instructions; details, it appears, were left entirely to the officers commanding divisions and brigades; those nearest the enemy were expected to provide for the security of the army, and it was unnecessary to give them daily instructions as to their normal duty.

Daily orders need not detain us. They are not peculiar to the field, and are similar, *mutatis mutandis*, to those issued in peace.

Operation orders are the important part of our subject, and whereas standing and daily orders have a very large scope, the orders for military operations are strictly limited. Dealing all of them with the enemy, and with the means by which he is to be defeated or checked, they follow much the same form, and may be embodied, to a great degree, no matter what the situation, in almost identical phraseology. In orders for marches, for attack, for defence, and for outposts, words and expressions may be said to be stereotyped. The question of the shape in which orders should be issued, however, is one on which there is not complete agreement. For the march, for outposts, and for the occupation of a defensive position, when time is not pressing, a combined order is the best method of securing intelligent obedience. When time presses, on the other hand, the speediest method of directing the troops may be to send a separate order to each portion of the force. On this point it is impossible, I think, to lay down a hard and fast rule. It is to be noted, however, that a combined order has many advantages; and for the preliminary movements of an engagement, for communication of the general plan of battle, and of the part each arm is expected to play, it will save time and trouble, and ensure *thorough combination*, if the instructions to each portion of the force are embodied in a single document. Even if the order cannot be dictated to the staff officers of the various units concerned, with carbon paper (putting the type-writer out of the question, as inapplicable on the battle-field) copies can be multiplied. It is true that carbon paper is not altogether a satisfactory medium of transfer. In rain or wind it is difficult to manage. But it is the only medium which exists; and until some more manageable invention takes its place, officers must put up with the complicated process which its use involves. I may mention that I read lately, in a report by an officer of the Guards, of a "reduplicating pad" employed in the United States Army in the Civil War, which was capable of producing eighteen copies simultaneously. This is a great advance on any copying process of which I have knowledge, and the officer who could invent as efficient a substitute for our present field order books would be a benefactor indeed.

The next point is the *form* of the combined order. All tactical orders, so far as possible, should be framed in accordance with a stereotyped form. In the first place, if orders are issued in a form with which officers are familiar, comprehension will be facilitated. And this is of peculiar

importance in war. Orders have to be read and digested under the most disturbing circumstances. A camp lantern, illuminated by a sputtering candle, may be the only light. The recipient will often be tired out. He may be in bivouac, without shelter, and in the worst of weather, or he may be under fire. No single precaution, therefore, should be omitted which will aid him in grasping his instructions without trouble and without delay. They should be as short as possible. The language should be simple. The handwriting should be exceedingly legible. Names and places should be printed in block capitals. Paragraphs should be numbered. Orders of march, and the distribution of units should be in tabular form, and if possible in the margin, and above all no officer should have the slightest difficulty in finding the paragraph in which he is specially interested. He should know where to look for the information as to the enemy, for the intention of the general officer commanding, for the position of the ammunition column or of the field hospitals, just as he knows where to turn for the leading articles, or perhaps for the sporting intelligence, in his daily paper. I have given in the appendix the forms applicable to the more prominent tactical operations, to marches, outposts, attack, and the occupation of a position, and although I have not the slightest doubt that they may be much improved, I believe that if officers copied these forms into their note-books they would find them of great use on service; and further, that if officers, in issuing either written or verbal orders, were consistently to adhere to these forms, it would be difficult either to neglect essential details, or to create confusion in the minds of those who would have to execute the orders. The forms are logical. They state what is known of the enemy; the position of those portions of our own army with whom we are working in co-operation; the intentions of the general officer commanding; the tasks allotted to the three arms—each arm in the order in which it will join in the engagement—and they conclude with all necessary information as to the auxiliary services, and the position of the officer issuing the order. The outcome is that the recipient of the order views the situation from exactly the same standpoint as his superior; that he has a true picture before him of the end to be achieved, and of the successive steps by which that achievement is to be accomplished.

Putting tactical considerations aside, the chief difficulty of applying these forms to situations, is connected with the first two paragraphs. The first gives the general situation. This information, as a general rule, when it is to hand, is undoubtedly a most desirable preliminary. To take for instance the cavalry. It can hardly be questioned that the cavalry commander, under all circumstances, should be informed of the strength of the opposing cavalry; and of what is known of the enemy's dispositions. If he is aware that he may be opposed in force he will act with prudence. If the enemy is weak in cavalry, he will act with boldness. And so with the other arms. If officers know with what number, and with what arms, they may have to deal, they will be prepared—forewarned is forearmed. At the same time, the rule that this information is to be given is not of universal application. The



enemy's strength or disposition may be but vaguely known. It may be considered undesirable that the troops should know that the enemy is superior in numbers, or that spies and deserters should inform the enemy that his strength and dispositions are the property of his adversary. I will take for instance von Moltke's orders issued on the morning of Gravelotte.<sup>1</sup> The first, issued before the position of the French was known, gives merely the order of march, details a flank guard, and concludes by saying that "further arrangements will be dependent upon the measures of the enemy." The second, issued when the French disposition had been discovered, gives the sum of all the information received up to that time, and dictates the general plan of battle.

The second paragraph, that which gives the intention of the general officer commanding, is really the crux of all orders. To reduce a plan, which involves the three arms, several units, and possibly intricate manœuvres, to a few short sentences, of which the meaning shall be unmistakable, is, for the majority of men, a task of much difficulty; and the composition of this paragraph, as a rule, requires more thought and attention than the composition of all the remainder put together. Constant practice and very careful criticism are the only methods by which the requisite facility can be attained, and I would strongly advise all students of military history to study, whenever they can get hold of recorded orders, the manner in which such men as von Moltke and his pupils dealt with this difficulty in their campaigns. Here, again, it is to be observed that the rule is by no means to be considered invariable. It is impossible to deny that a thorough understanding of the aim of the operations in which they are engaged will ensure the cordial and intelligent co-operation of all ranks. But if there is the slightest possibility of the intention of the general being conveyed to the enemy, it should not be divulged until the last possible moment. It should be remembered that despatches have a constant habit of going astray. Staff officers and orderlies may lose their road and ride into the enemy's lines. They may be captured by daring patrols, or spies may make their way into the headquarter offices. "If we knew what our enemy was going to do," said Frederick the Great, "we should be certain of beating him." Secrecy, therefore, is a point of paramount importance, and the German Staff Duties lay as much stress on the necessity of keeping orders from the knowledge of the enemy as on the necessity of framing them in accordance with sound principles. It is a historical fact that the first Confederate invasion of Northern territory was defeated by the discovery of a confidential order of General Lee, the Confederate Commander-in-Chief. It had been dropped by some careless staff officer or orderly, and was found by the Federal cavalry in an abandoned camp. The Federal general, who had hitherto been entirely in the dark, immediately moved forward, and marching with resolution, was enabled to inflict a decisive check on the invading army. Nevertheless, the preservation of secrecy does not prevent the general officer commanding communicating his

<sup>1</sup> See appendix.

intentions confidentially to his immediate subordinates. Nor is it necessary, in any case, or even desirable, that the orders issued to units should be in any single paragraph a literal transcript of the orders which the commanding officer has received. He does not, as in peacetime, or as in daily orders, "publish for information" orders with regard to operations, but he uses his own judgment as to the amount of information, both as regards the enemy and the plan of action, which it is necessary to impart to his command.

I now come to a point which deserves attention. How far should orders go into detail? The answer is simple. According to the "Feld-dienst-Ordnung":—"An order must contain everything which the subordinate cannot of himself arrange for the attainment of the object, and nothing more." According to the Staff Duties:—"It is absurd to attempt to give instructions in detail to meet the various and possible contingencies that might occur. Experience in past wars shows that when this has been attempted, some cause that had not been reckoned on was almost sure to happen and find the subordinate leaders fettered with a variety of instructions effectually crippling their free and independent action." I will give one historical illustration. The night before the battle of Jena, Prince Hohenlohe, commanding the Prussian corps which was nearest the French, was ordered to remain in his position on the steep plateau above the town, and on no account whatever to leave it. During the night Napoleon scaled the heights, and occupied the crest with his advanced guard. So daring a proceeding had never been contemplated by the Prussian Staff; Prince Hohenlohe was fettered by his orders, and next morning, instead of attacking vigorously and driving his audacious enemy down the hill, he suffered the whole French Army to deploy at leisure on the heights. Again, it would be a great waste of time as well as a want of judgment to recapitulate the normal duties of the commander of an advanced or rear guard. Those duties are contained in the drill-book; and if an officer is not acquainted with them, or needs to be reminded of them, it speaks badly for the training he has received. Absence of detail is especially important in peace. Orders at field days and manœuvres should be even less minute than in war. Exercises across country afford the best opportunities of teaching officers to use their judgment, to apply the principles of tactics, and to act in accordance with the necessities of the situation. To make men self-reliant it is not sufficient that they should be full of knowledge. They must have acquired the power of bearing responsibility; and to train them to this extent it is absolutely necessary that they should be placed in responsible positions, *and that they should be encouraged to employ their intelligence in furtherance of the general aim.* If officers blunder at manœuvres; if their judgment is faulty; if they cut loose from all control, not only is no harm done, but, if their shortcomings are clearly pointed out, a great deal of good will result. Every officer engaged will receive a most useful object lesson—a lesson which would be altogether lost were every movement directed on the spot by superior authority, and the subordinates allowed no opportunity of making mistakes.

You are well aware of the care with which self-reliance and initiative are fostered in the German Army. In our own Army such incessant and peculiar care is hardly demanded. The conditions of service are so diverse that English officers of all ranks, in India and the Colonies, are constantly called on to assume grave responsibilities. Moreover, the character of the two peoples is essentially different. Whence the difference arises is not a question which concerns us here, but it is certainly an undeniable fact. It is seldom necessary to inculcate self-reliance in an Englishman or American. It is the predominant characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon stock, of the great sea-going and colonising race. But there is a danger. Some of you may perhaps have noticed that in a lecture on the South African Republics, delivered a few weeks ago, Mr. James Bryce declared that President Kruger "enjoyed an unexampled influence over his fellow-citizens, an influence which arose partly from his astuteness and resolute will, these advantages being seconded by the great fact that his natural vigorous faculties had not been spoiled by education." Now whether it is the case in Germany that over-education has undermined the natural vigour of her sons, and that it has to be counterbalanced by special preparation for responsibility, I am not aware. But it is most certainly to be apprehended that if men are always kept in leading-strings, never permitted to use their own judgment, they will degenerate into mere machines, incapable of independent resolution. So, notwithstanding the temperament of the British officer, it is essential that in this day of incessant education he should be so trained in peace that he will not lose his power of initiative in the field. If, then, orders at field-days and manœuvres cannot assume the brevity of Suworoff's famous order: "God wills, the Czar commands, Suworoff orders, that the enemy shall be defeated," they should at least refrain from interfering with the normal functions of subordinates. In war it is different. Much will depend on the character of the officer to whom the order is addressed. He may be absolutely unknown to the commander. He may be ignorant, strange to his position, or fearful of responsibility. If it is impossible to remove him, blunders must be guarded against by giving him minute and detailed orders. It would seem that this must especially be the case with troops which lack training; and I have no doubt, Sir, that you, the only English general who has led a force composed solely of Volunteers against the enemy, can speak on this point with all the weight of unique experience. Nor is it wise in a general to omit every possible precaution against disaster. With a highly-trained army, however, detailed orders should be rare. It is noticeable how Wellington's orders in the Peninsula gradually decreased in length as his troops learned their business. In the earlier campaigns the most careful instructions were issued for every movement, especially when generals were concerned whom he could not trust. Later, when the incompetent had disappeared, his orders became almost as brief as those of the German generals in 1870. He knew his lieutenants, his officers were veterans, and his orders were a mark of their mutual confidence. A foreign officer, of great ability and great observation, once remarked in my hearing:—"You can always tell the value of an army by the orders.

If the officers are good and the orders detailed, the general is stupid. If the general is a good soldier, and he finds it necessary to issue detailed orders, his officers have been badly trained."

Moreover, as regards attack, it will often be impossible to go into detail in the order which sets the troops in motion. It will be rare indeed that the exact position of the enemy is known before the troops are already in collision. Time will seldom permit of elaborate arrangements. An order for an advance on a broad front to a rendezvous position is the shape which the formal battle order will generally assume. Further orders will depend on the results of reconnaissance, of the action of the advanced guards, and on the gradual development of the fight. A short combined order is, therefore, the best means of initiating the fight, leaving all details to the subordinate leaders. Brevity is essential. When two armies meet, the general who makes up his mind first, and who carries his plan through with all the energy he possesses, will have a great advantage over an adversary who deliberates too long; and if this be admitted, there can be no question that attack orders ought to be reduced to the very smallest compass, and that subordinates should be trained to act intelligently on orders which leave much to their discretion. I refer you to the orders of von Moltke, given in the appendix, for the attack on the French position at Gravelotte. They certainly do not err on the side of verbosity.

#### PART IV.

I come, lastly, to orders as a method of instruction. "In orders," it has been said, "tactics crystallise," and from orders, applied to a concrete situation, the extent of the knowledge of the man who gives them is most readily determined. The examinations for promotion are to-day chiefly concerned with orders, and, in my humble opinion, this is a long and most practical step forward. It would seem, however, that preparation for such examinations and instruction in the art of framing orders cannot begin too soon. Simple orders might well be made a feature of all military examinations. From the moment a boy joins as a cadet he should be taught to apply the principles of tactics by presenting his ideas in the shape of orders, and a movement in this direction has already, I believe, been made at the Royal Military College. No tactical scheme, to my mind, can be called complete, nor can full profit be derived from it, unless this is done, and unless, at the close of a field-day, the orders issued are closely criticised, full advantage has not been taken of the opportunity for instruction. At the Staff College the framing of orders has long been one of the main features of the course. Every year its importance has become more clearly recognised; and at the present moment an order in one shape or another, is attached to almost every report that is submitted. The system has gradually developed, and I may inform those who may have to do with instruction of officers, that to get the best value out of written and also out of verbal orders, students should be asked to give their reasons for every paragraph of their orders. This system has been lately established at the Staff College by the present Commandant, and I am

convinced with the very best results. If officers have to give the why and wherefore of every decision; if they have to explain why their detachments are of such and such a strength; why they put a battery with the advanced guard; why they send a certain number of squadrons in a certain direction; why they consider so many companies sufficient for a rear-guard, etc., etc., etc.; and if they are clearly given to understand that to say such a disposition is suggested by the drill-book, or is the custom of war in like cases, is no reason at all, they will soon learn to exercise their judgment, to discard leading strings, and to apply their common sense to the work before them.

I may add, also, that it is excellent practice to issue orders on the ground, without a map to which to refer. English soldiers have generally to fight in countries where maps do not exist, and it is of very great importance that officers should acquire the habit of describing roads, tracks, and natural features, so that there may be no mistake as to direction or objective.<sup>1</sup>

With this advice to my brother-instructors—and nowadays who is not an instructor in the Army?—I will bring my lecture to a close. To those regular officers—if such there be—who are not Cromwells or Stonewall Jacksons, who are merely ordinary soldiers, and not great men of action, who lack something of the clear insight and the unerring decision of military genius, I trust I have made clear the necessity of perfecting themselves in the art of writing orders. To those who are not regulars I would say one word. Wellington, in words that should be for ever memorable, said of the Spanish troops in the Peninsula that they had enthusiasm enough, but that they lacked two essential qualities—habits of obedience on the part of the men, habits of command on the part of the officers. Now, without suggesting for a moment that there is any resemblance between the magnificent material of our citizen soldiers and the ignorant and half-starved levies of Spain, I am still of opinion that to some degree at least these words must be true of all troops who are not regulars. It is impossible that it could be otherwise. Discipline is neither an hereditary nor a natural instinct. It is created by habit, and by habit only. But just as on an ordinary parade, the officer who has a good word of command, who knows his drill, who betrays neither hesitation nor uncertainty, is readily obeyed, so the officer who has learned to give clear and unambiguous orders, leaving no doubt as to his intentions, and no doubt as to what he expects, has acquired something at least of the habit of command. From practice comes confidence; and confidence, apparent in every tone of a man's voice, begets confidence in others. Hesitation is the parent of doubt and apprehension. Stonewall Jackson, the great soldier of whom I have already spoken, carried in his haversack on service Napoleon's Maxims and the Bible, and it is said that it was not from the first alone that he derived strategical and tactical inspiration. The statement is possibly true, for there is one sentence at least which is peculiarly

<sup>1</sup> Compare Orders for the Attack of the position of Vera, dated 5th October, 1813.—"Wellington Despatches," Vol. VII., pp. 37-40.

applicable to my subject—"If the trumpet give forth an uncertain sound, who shall prepare for battle?"

I should like, in conclusion, to express my thanks to those officers whose ideas on orders I have appropriated, to Colonel Hildyard, Commandant of the Staff College, to my brother Professors, and to Captain Gaisford, of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, for the loan of a collection of orders issued at various stations and camps of exercise.

## APPENDIX.

### SKELETON ORDERS FOR A FIELD FORCE OF ALL ARMS.

#### ORDER OF MARCH.

Number	Place	Date	Hour of Issue
	<i>Distribution.</i>	<i>Para.</i>	
1.	Independent Cavalry— C.O. Cavalry	1. Information as to— 1. Enemy 2. Our other Forces	
2.	Advanced Guard (not in order of March)— C.O. Infantry Cavalry R.A. R.E. Bearer Company.	2. Intention of G.O.C. Field Force 3. Order for the Independent Cavalry 4. Order for the Advanced Guard 5. Order for the Main Body	
3.	Main Body in order of March— Cavalry Infantry R.A. Infantry R.E. Bearer Company.	6. Order for the Flank Guard 7. Order for Ammunition Column Field Hospital Heavy Baggage 1st Line Supply Column	} Escort
4.	Right or Left Flank Guard— C.O. [As for Advanced Guard]	8. Position of G.O.C.	

NOTE AS SOMETIMES NECESSARY,  
Orders for—

- NOTE.—1. Mounted Infantry  
2. Machine-Gun  
Sections  
3. Pontoon Troop

1. Signallers  
2. Halts  
3. Rations to be carried  
4. Military Police.

To whom dictated

To whom despatched

By whom

## ADVANCED GUARD ORDER.

Number	Place	Date	Hour of Issue
<i>Distribution in order of March.</i>		<i>Para.</i>	
1.	Advanced Guard Cavalry— C.O. Cavalry	1. Information as to— 1. Enemy 2. Our other Forces	
2.	Van-Guard. C.O. Cavalry Infantry R.E. (if necessary)	2. Intention of O.C. Advanced Guard	
3.	Main Body— Cavalry Infantry R.A. Infantry R.E. Bearer Company.	3. Order for the Advanced Guard Cavalry	
		4. Order for the Van-Guard	
		5. Order for the Main Body	
		6. Order for the Flank Guard	
4.	Right or Left Flank Guard— C.O. Infantry Cavalry R.E. Bearer Company.	7. Position of G.O.C.	
NOTE.—1. Mounted Infantry 2. Machine-Gun Sections		NOTE AS SOMETIMES NECESSARY. Orders for— 1. Signallers 2. Halts	
To whom dictated			
To whom despatched			
By whom			

## OUTPOST ORDER.

Number	Place	Date	Hour of Issue
<i>Para.</i>			
1.	Information as to— 1. Enemy 2. Our other Forces		
2.	Mission of the Outpost Troops. [Including line to be occupied.]		
3.	Order for the Outpost Cavalry. [Including Troopers to be attached to Outpost Companies for patrolling at night.]		
4.	Order for the Outpost Companies		
5.	Order for the Reserve		
6.	Order for establishment of Examining Guard		
7.	Order for Signallers and Telegraph		
8.	Action in case of Attack		
9.	Position of O.C. Outposts		
NOTE.—The majority of the points noticed in Infantry Drill, Section 164, would be dealt with in Standing Orders.			

## ORDERS FOR THE OCCUPATION OF A POSITION.

Number	Place	Date	Hour of Issue
<i>Para</i>			
1.	Information as to—		
	1. Enemy		
	2. Our other Forces		
2.	Intention of G.O.C.		
	(May include: 1. Extent of position. 2. False front. 3. False flank. 4. Counter attack.)		
3.	Order for the R.A.		
4.	Order for the Infantry, or for each section of position		
5.	Order for the Third Line		
6.	Order for the R.E.		
7.	Order for the Cavalry		
8.	Order for the Signallers		
9.	Order for Medical Arrangements		
10.	Order for the Ammunition Column		
11.	Position of G.O.C.		

Orders may be required for—

1. Mounted Infantry
2. Machine-gun Section
3. Signallers and Telegraph

NOTE.—1st Line Supply Column and Heavy Baggage generally dealt with in a separate Order.

To whom dictated  
To whom despatched  
By whom

## ORDER FOR RETREAT.

Number	Place	Date	Hour of Issue
	<i>Distribution.</i>	<i>Para.</i>	
1.	Advanced Guard (not in order of March)— C.O. Infantry Cavalry R.E.	1. Information as to— 1. Enemy 2. Our other Forces	
		2. Intention of G.O.C.	
2.	Main Body in order of March— Bearer Company. R.E. Infantry R.A. Infantry Cavalry	3. Order for Heavy Baggage 1st Line Supply Train Field Hospital Ammunition Column 4. Order for Advanced Guard 5. Order for the Main Body	} Escort



ORDER FOR RETREAT—*contd.*

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>3. Rear Guard (not in order of March)—<br/> C.O.<br/> Infantry<br/> Cavalry<br/> R.A.<br/> R.E.<br/> Bearer Company.</p> <p>4. Right or Left Flank Guard (as Rear Guard)</p> <p>5. Independent Cavalry—<br/> C.O.<br/> Cavalry</p> | <p>6. Order for the Rear Guard</p> <p>7. Order for the Flank Guard</p> <p>8. Order for the Independent Cavalry. [Unless forming part of Rear Guard]</p> <p>9. Position of the G.O.C.</p> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

- NOTE. 1. Mounted Infantry  
2. Machine-Guns  
3. Pontoon Troop

To whom dictated  
To whom despatched  
By whom

NOTE AS SOMETIMES NECESSARY.

Orders for—

1. Signallers
2. Halts
3. Rations to be carried
4. Military Police.

### REAR GUARD ORDER.

Number	Place	Date	Hour of Issue
<i>Distribution in order of March.</i>		<i>Para.</i>	
1.	Main Body— Bearer Company R.E. (if present) Infantry R.A. Cavalry	1.	Information as to— 1. Enemy 2. Our other Forces
2.	Rear Party— C.O. Infantry Cavalry	2.	Intention of O.C.
3.	Cavalry of Rear Guard— C.O. Cavalry	3.	Order for Main Body
4.	Right or Left Flank Guard— C.O. Infantry Cavalry	4.	Order for Rear Party
		5.	Cavalry of Rear Guard
		6.	Order for Flank Guard
		7.	Position of O.C.

- NOTE.—1. Mounted Infantry  
2. Machine-Guns  
3. Signallers

To whom dictated  
To whom despatched  
By whom

## ORDER FOR ATTACK.

Number	Place	Date	Hour of Issue
<i>Para.</i>			
1.	Information as to—		
	1. Enemy		
	2. Our other Forces		
2.	Intention of G.O.C.		
3.	Order for the R.A.—		
	1. First Position		
	2. First Target		
4.	Order for the Infantry—		
	1. Distribution		
	2. Front		
	3. Objective		
	4. Time of Attack		
5.	Order for the General Reserve—		
	1. Troops		
	2. Position		
6.	Order for the Cavalry—		
	1. Position of Main Body (as a rule)		
	2. Special Instructions for Patrols (sometimes)		
7.	Order for the R.E.		
8.	Order for the Ammunition Column		
9.	Order for the Bearer Company or Field Hospital		
10.	Position of the G.O.C.		

	MAY BE REQUIRED
1.	C.O. to be detailed for Secondary Attack or Turning Column
2.	C.O. to be detailed for Main Attack
3.	Compass bearing of Objective

NOTE.—1. Mounted Infantry  
 2. Machine-Guns  
 3. Signallers  
 4. Telegraph

To whom dictated  
 To whom despatched  
 By whom

MAY BE REQUIRED  
 1. C.O. to be detailed for Secondary Attack or Turning Column  
 2. C.O. to be detailed for Main Attack  
 3. Compass bearing of Objective

## DISEMBARKATION ORDER.

Number	Ship	Date	Hour of Issue
1.	Information as to— 1. Enemy 2. Our other Forces.		
2.	Intention of G.O.C.	[Description of operation and time it is to commence]	
3.	Order for the Cavalry		
4.	Order for the Infantry		
5.	Order for the R.A.		
6.	Order for the R.E.		
7.	Order for the Heavy Baggage— Ammunition Column Field Hospital 1st Line Supply Column		
8.	Position of G.O.C.		

Orders may be required for—

1. Signallers
2. Mounted Infantry
3. Machine-Guns
4. Telegraph
5. Pontoon Troop

To whom dictated  
 To whom despatched  
 By whom

NOTE.—MAY BE NECESSARY.

1. Rations to be carried
2. Blankets to be carried
3. Extra ammunition to be issued before leaving ship
4. Horses to receive a half-feed, and troops to break-fast before disembarkation

## VON MÖLTKE'S ORDERS AT GRAVELOITTE.

17th August, 1870, 2 p.m.

The Second Army will be formed at 5 o'clock to-morrow morning, the 18th, and advance in echelon from the left between the Yron and Gorze brooks (generally between Ville sur Yron and Rezonville). The VIIIth Army Corps will accompany this movement on the right flank of the Second Army. Upon the VIIth Army Corps will devolve, in the first instance, the duty of protecting the movements of the Second Army against any hostile enterprises from the side of Metz. His Majesty's further arrangements will be dependent upon the measures of the enemy: Reports will, for the present, be sent to his Majesty on the heights south of Flavigny.

• 18th August, 1870, 10.30 a.m.

From reports received it may be assumed that the enemy intends to maintain his position between Point-du-Jour and Montigny-la-Grange.

Four French battalions have moved into the Bois des Genivaux. His Majesty is of opinion that it will be desirable to move off the XIIth and the Guard Corps in the direction of Batilly, so as, in the event of the enemy retreating upon Briey, to meet him at Ste. Marie-aux-Chênes; or, in the event of his remaining on the height, to attack him from Amanvillers. The attack should take place simultaneously by the First Army from the Bois de Vaux and Gravelotte, by the IXth Corps from the Bois des Genivaux and Verneville, by the left wing of the Second Army from the North.

### RULES ON FRAMING ORDERS IN THE FIELD.

1. Heading should invariably contain Number, Place, Date, Hour.
2. If in a town or village, it is not sufficient to head orders "Head-quarters"; the name or locality of the building should be given.
3. The language should be simple and the sentences short.
4. The handwriting should be legible.
5. The paragraphs should be numbered.
6. The paragraphs should be in logical sequence, so that the orders can be read through without interruption or harking back.
7. Everything the recipient ought to know, in order to enable him to act intelligently in accordance with the spirit of the orders, should be included.
8. In all cases where exact knowledge of the enemy's strength or dispositions is not to hand, the source of such information as is published should be invariably given. It is well, moreover, in publishing the enemy's dispositions, to say at what hour he was at such or such a place; for instance:—  

"According to the reports of the inhabitants, at least 10,000 men of all arms arrived at A this morning, April 10th, and were in occupation of that village at 3.30 this afternoon."
9. All names and places should be printed in block capitals.
10. If there are two places of the same name, care should be taken to distinguish which is alluded to. It will be found that there are often farms, woods, cross-roads, of the same name in the same district.
11. If cross-roads are mentioned, their exact position should be carefully described.
12. The map used should be mentioned.
13. Great care should be employed in using such terms as "right," "left," "before," "behind," "front," "rear," "on this side of," "on that side of."
14. Suppositions and probabilities, as well as instructions to meet possible contingencies, are generally bad.
15. "An order should contain nothing which the subordinate commanders, who have to execute it, can arrange for themselves."—Von Moltke.

16. "No order should be issued for anything that would be done by the troops without special orders. If the troops are accustomed to have every detail of their normal duty pointed out in orders, they will get into the habit of doing nothing when orders are not forthcoming."—Von der Goltz.

17. "The superior officer should never prescribe to his subordinate at a distance what the latter is better able to decide from being on the spot."—Von der Goltz.

18. "The expression 'will await further orders' should be most sparingly used. Such a measure paralyses the subordinate leaders."—Von Moltke.

19. In an order of march it should always be stated that the head of the column will move off from or pass a prescribed point at a certain time. So as not to block lateral communications, the head of the column should always form up in rear of cross-roads, or the tail in front of them.

20. Detachments, including advanced, rear, and flank guards, as well as turning columns, should have a C.O. detailed by name in orders. This facilitates the delivery of messages and reports.

21. If there is in an order a single word, the omission of which would make no difference to the meaning, the order is too long.

22. All orders sent by telegram should be most carefully numbered.

23. An officer after writing the order should test its clearness by reading it over, and putting himself in the place of the officer who is to execute it.

24. It is a great safeguard if, before issue, the order is read over and checked by an officer other than the writer.

---

Before I conclude, I must add that the Commander-in-Chief permits me to express his regret that he was unable to attend the lecture, and to say that he is firmly convinced of the very great importance of all officers, from the first moment they join, learning to put their intentions and ideas into clear, unmistakable terms, and of practising from that moment the art of issuing orders in the field and under fire.

Captain W. H. JAMES, Retired, late R.E. : I think it would be a great pity if the very able lecture which has been given this afternoon by Colonel Henderson provoked no discussion amongst this audience. Not that I think it would be possible for anybody to controvert the principles which he has laid down, but because the interchange of ideas on the many points to which he has alluded would, doubtless, give rise to thinking, the results of which would be valuable, not only to those who are here present, but also to those who may subsequently read the proceedings. I am sure we are much indebted to Colonel Henderson for dealing with a very difficult and very vital subject in the able and admirable manner that he has done, and I venture to think that this lecture may form the basis of a course of instruction which may be of the greatest benefit to the Army. Orders are the embodiment of the will of the general, and it is, therefore of the utmost necessity, as he has pointed out to us, that they should be clear on all the points that they deal with. It seems, therefore, curious at the present moment that we have in England no authoritative utterances on the subject of orders. The

Queen's Regulations deal with the Regimental Order Book, but says nothing whatever on the general principles of orders. Let us hope one result of this lecture may be an authoritative proclamation as to how orders should be issued, not only in peace-time, but in the field. Everybody must concede at once the desirability of orders being based and written on a definite system, because it is of the utmost importance that those who receive them should know where to look for every point, and should easily understand what is required of them. I am personally of opinion that you may divide orders really under four heads, these are: "standing" orders, which I need not say anything about; "formal" orders, viz., those orders which are issued some little time before they are meant to be carried out—probably the evening before, or even earlier; "immediate" orders, that is to say, orders which are sent off at the moment for immediate execution; and lastly, instructions. Colonel Henderson has quoted, with regard to "immediate" orders, one of the most patent examples of how not to do it that has ever been perpetrated in this or in any other Army, viz., the orders sent to Lord Lucan with regard to the conduct of the Balaclava charge. These orders failed in one of the most essential points—they did not clearly indicate the object for which they were issued. It is useless at this time of day, forty years after the event, to ascertain upon whose shoulders the blame should be laid, but everybody knows what the result was, and everybody who has read the history of the Crimean War can see that the blunder made did arise out of want of precision in the orders that were issued. In the case of "formal" orders, I think we may well go to that mine of wealth, the German Official Account of the 1870-71 war, or perhaps even to a better book, dealing with one phase of it, and that is Von der Goltz's "Seven days of Le Mans." He gives in that the best military history which exists of this phase of the campaign, for he specifies every day what was known before the orders were issued, and then gives the orders issued as the result of that knowledge. When we come to deal with "instructions" I think, with great deference to Colonel Henderson, and I believe I shall have a good many officers with me in what I am going to say, that it possibly is an English fault that we are rather apt in issuing orders to deal with points which would be better left to subordinates. There is a very good example of what instruction should not be in that excellent work by the Austrian General Staff on the war of 1859. It gives us six printed pages of instructions and orders that were issued by Gyulai to his corps commanders on the 19th May. These have been criticised by various eminent writers, and everybody who has done it has universally remarked that for a general commanding an Army to deal as he did with battalions and squadrons, is to go distinctly out of what is his sphere, and to interfere with the proper executive duties of his subordinate officers. Now, one great disadvantage of this interference with the duties of the subordinates is that it crushes out initiative. The officers who rely for inspiration on the orders that they receive from the higher authorities, are as a rule, incapable of acting themselves when they do not get them. You find this exemplified in many wars, and, therefore, it is of the utmost importance that we should follow out the rules laid down in the "Duties of the General Staff," and in other German authorities, never to deal with those points which the subordinate on the spot is better capable of dealing with than his absent superior officer. This leads me to another point, viz., this, that if the superior officer is to issue orders at all, it is perfectly plain that he must get the information about the enemy, or that he should, when possible, get it sufficiently early in the day to enable him to devise his orders for the next day. It is perhaps asking too much that we should follow Napoleon's example, who used to go to bed after a fairly early dinner, and get up at twelve o'clock at night, when he got the reports in from the advanced cavalry, and the detached corps commanders, and so on, and then set to work to write the orders for the next day; but whether the future commander does this or not, whether he issues them as is more commonly the case in the early evening, it is distinctly necessary

that the subordinates must report to him and facilitate the issuing of the orders by sending in the information in such time that it shall reach him. Referring once more to the question of detailed interference by English superior officers with the subordinates, I should like to emphasise most strongly what Colonel Henderson said about Section 164 of the Infantry Drill. Anybody who reads it will see that if it was to be the duty of the staff officer every night of his life to issue orders on all the points contained therein, he would find it monotonous, that those who received these orders would find them tedious, while they would be absolutely useless if the officers and men who received them had been properly trained in peace-time. In the new "Cavalry Drill Book" to a certain extent these outpost orders have been modified and such intense detail is not insisted upon, but I venture to think even there we might have gone a little further, and whilst describing what should be done, not have layed it down as a Median and Persian law never to be omitted, that all these little detailed points which are really matters of common knowledge or should be, should be reiterated night after night. I think, further, we in England might have a very judicious addition to the many subjects which the British officer is supposed to know nowadays, and that is what the Germans call *Geschäfts-Styl*, i.e., business training. Business training involves amongst other points the method of writing orders, and I am convinced that by the introduction of some system of instruction of that kind the issuing of orders would be much facilitated, and an immense amount of friction and worry and trouble would be saved, not only to those who have to write the orders, but to those who have to read them and carry them out.

Lieut.-Colonel E. GUNTER, Retired, late East Lancashire Regiment: May I ask the lecturer one question? He has referred in his lecture to the German system of practising the issue of verbal orders. Is any such system now carried out at the Staff College? He has said the officers there are much practised in *writing* orders. But is the practice of giving clear, verbal orders in the presence of others, especially of senior officers, carried out? It appears to me this is an important part of training. The fact that so much attention is paid to it in the German Army shows that it is. I think that like the system of "communicating drill" much good would come of its practice. A man may be good at writing orders, but unless constantly practised in giving orders verbally, he hesitates and makes mistakes, and does not inspire confidence. I think many officers will agree that it would be a good practice to initiate in the British as well as in the German Army.

The CHAIRMAN (Sir Frederick Middleton): I think after the very able and instructive lecture we have heard, you will all agree with me that the subject is a most important one, and one that I think has hitherto been too much neglected. The lecturer tells us that the writing of orders has for some time been a main point in the Staff College course, also that it has been considered in the case of the cadets of the Royal Military College. But I quite agree with what the lecturer says, that it is not staff officers alone who should be able to write out orders. Not only, as the lecturer says, do officers sometimes leave the regimental rank and become staff officers, but there are occasions when a second lieutenant might be called upon to issue an order; and I think, therefore, it is very evident that this should be studied regimentally, on some such terms as the lecturer mentioned, by every officer from the senior to the junior, and not only by those of the Regulars, but by those of the Auxiliary troops also. I consider it to be most essentially necessary that it should be made a regular branch of military study. I may remark on another point connected with this, though it is rather what Rudyard Kipling would call "another story," what I mean is the carrying of these orders when they are issued. That will afford a great deal of thought, and, I believe, at the present moment the Germans have a system which they are trying to introduce with reference to carrying orders. However, as I say, that is another story. With regard to this peculiar study, it appears evident that the autumn manœuvres, or, in

fact, any manoeuvres, would always afford a very excellent opportunity of testing officers' capabilities under this particular head. The lecturer has attached to his paper some excellent forms, and also rules, for compulsory orders in the field. The forms and rules seem to me to meet almost every exigency of the case. I would only remark with regard to one of the rules in which he warns people against the too indiscriminate use of "right," "left," "before," "behind," "front," and "rear." I think it would be advisable as much as possible to use the points of the compass in these sort of directions, or at any rate use them at the same time as the other, so as to prevent any conflicts of meaning. I would also accentuate what he says about the simplicity of language and clearness of orders, and that they should be written in simple language and without any attempt at what you call literary style. You are very often apt in indulging in that to make things a little doubtful. Everything should be sacrificed to clearness and terseness. I think it was Marshal Canrobert who warned one of his staff officers who was about to write some orders that he had given him, that he should write them with a firm conviction that those orders which he was then sending out would have to be read by at least one idiot, and I fancy that is a very good thing to bear in mind. There is sure to be some ass or other who will try and make a mistake, and therefore the clearer you put it the better chance you have of the orders being carried out. There are certain advantages certainly attendant, as the lecturer said, upon verbal orders. There are certain cases where probably it would be absolutely necessary in the first place to give verbal orders, but it would be very advisable if the first recipient of them wrote them down for further use. Word-of-mouth orders after they have passed two or three mouths are apt to get very much distorted, as I know from my own experience. I dare say some of you remember the game played by children, and sometimes, indeed, by grown-up people. They sit round a table, and one person writes a few lines and whispers them to the next person, and the next person whispers it until it comes round again, and is again written down, when it is invariably found the last story written has apparently nothing whatever to do with the original lines. It is just the same with orders: they very often are apt to be completely upset and twisted quite the wrong way. With regard to making field orders as comprehensible as possible and as much as possible indicative of the intention of the general, there is no doubt that it must be a very admirable thing. It cannot always be done to a very great extent, still it may be sometimes done, so as to let everybody who reads those orders know what the general intention of the commanding officer is; and I cannot help thinking if that system was more carried out at our autumn and other manoeuvres, it would have rather a good effect. The house where I was living lately was in autumn generally surrounded by skirmishers and troops of every sort and description—cavalry galloping across pits and tumbling into holes, and all that sort of thing—but whenever I have questioned any of the young officers as to what they were doing, the general answer I have got has been: "We have not the slightest idea what we are doing, and we have not the slightest idea what they want us to do." If that is the case with the young officers, it must be doubly so with the men; and I cannot help thinking if the orders were issued so that every man, even Tommy Atkins himself, had an idea of what he was wanted to do, it would have a very much better effect than their not knowing anything about it. I do not think I need detain you any longer. I am sure no word of mine will increase the value of the lecture which we have just heard, and I think I may be allowed, with your permission, to return your and my own most sincere thanks to Colonel Henderson for the able and remarkably interesting lecture he has delivered.