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THE FOUR-COMPANY BATTALION IN BATTLE.

By BREVET-MAJOR HEReward WAKE, King's Royal Rifles.

(Originally given as a lecture to the London units of the Territorial Force).

THE subject of this paper is the four-company organization recently adopted for the infantry of the Regular Army, and which will shortly be also adopted for the Territorial Force.

I.—HISTORY OF THE CHANGE.

It may be of interest to start by giving a short account of how this important change has come about. Before the last century almost every army had small companies of about 100 men.

Foreign Armies.—The French had six companies to a battalion and so had Frederick the Great. In the wars of the French Revolution the Prussians had eight companies to a battalion, but they changed to four companies immediately after the disaster of Jena in 1806, and have adhered to four companies ever since. They have been imitated by every other country in the world, the last to do so being Great Britain.

British Army.—In the British Army, infantry battalions in the field have consisted of eight, ten, eleven, twelve or even thirteen companies, but not less than eight as a rule.

Cromwell's new model army had battalions of ten companies, Marlborough's battalions twelve or thirteen companies, Wellington's ten or eleven. In 1821 an order was issued fixing the establishment of all infantry battalions at eight companies.

Re-organization not a Recent Idea.—The question whether an eight-company organization was best suited to our military requirements is by no means a new one within the last few years. Ever since the Crimean War, in fact, the matter has been more or less continually under discussion. But our army, from 1857, had been entirely engaged in small wars and expeditions against uncivilized enemies, and the eight-company organization had not proved unsuitable for the operations in hand.

Influence of South African War.—It was not, in fact, till after our early experiences in South Africa that the advocates of a change began to make themselves more and more heard, and since that time the wave of military opinion gained in force continually, until a change became sooner or later inevitable.

It is not intended to lay the blame for any failures that occurred in South Africa to the eight-company organization, for we should probably have done no better at the start with four companies. To put

the matter differently, this was our first experience against the small-bore rifle with smokeless powder, and one of the direct results of this experience was to teach us the necessity of a radical change in our infantry tactics. Our organization has now had to be altered in order to make it possible to carry out the new tactical methods laid down in the Field Service Regulations.

Tactics and Organization.—First come tactics—that is, how are we going to fight and win? Then comes organization, the handmaid of tactics; that is, how are we to organize our army in the most convenient manner for fighting? The question was simply whether a battalion of eight small companies was or was not the most efficient fighting machine for the modern battlefield.

It may be the case that many distinguished officers in our army are still of opinion that our new organization is not a change for the better, and that some of the warmest advocates of the four-company organization were, and are, chiefly in favour of it because of the advantages it is admitted to confer from an administrative point of view, or for purposes of training in peace.

War, Training and Administration.—But the requirements of peace training and of administration, whether in peace or war, are entirely secondary to the requirements of the battlefield. And unless the case for four companies were clearly proved as far as tactics and fighting are concerned, we cannot doubt for a moment that the Army Council and the General Staff would have left things as they were.

Reasons for Change.—That they did not do so, that they changed the organization, that they faced the difficulties and discussions which were bound to ensue, is sufficient proof that in their opinion the eight-company organization was a bad one for fighting purposes.

Whatever our private views on this question may be, the four-company organization is now an accomplished fact; we shall never go back to eight companies any more than the cavalry will abolish the squadron organization to go back to troops. It would, therefore, be a mere waste of time to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the four-company organization as compared with that of eight companies. The subject is no longer controversial, for the thing is settled. But a clear understanding of the conditions which have led to the change is of great assistance to everyone who has to work under the new system, and with this object it is proposed in this paper to consider the working of the four-company battalion in the various phases of the modern battle.

II.—COMMAND AND LEADERSHIP IN BATTLE.

Leadership in Action.—Before modern weapons necessitated dispersion in battle, the commander of a company kept all his men throughout the day under his personal control, that is to say, every man could see and hear him, and obeyed his voice. A company of 100 men could easily be led by one officer under those conditions. The company was the fire unit. At the present day the problem of

leadership, or rather command, in action assumes a very different aspect. Human sight and hearing have not improved, but the extent of ground covered by 100 men in battle is now far greater.

The Smallest Unit.—Hence we find that command by voice and signal has to be delegated to subordinates from the very start, till at length, when infantry are under fire, the largest number of men that can personally be commanded by one man is limited to a dozen at most.

For this reason the smallest unit of men in our organization is the fire unit of ten or twelve men (now called the section), and the question is how to group these sections, of which there are 64 in a battalion, into larger units.

Organization of a Company.

Platoons	No. 1.	No. 2.	No. 3.	No. 4.
Sections				
Subalterns				
Sergeants				
Buglers				
Coy Comr Mounted				
Junior Captain				
Coy Sergt Major and Q.M. Sergt.				
Bugler				
Rangetaker Corpl.				
Ammunition Pack Horses with two drivers, one corpl. and one man per platoon as carrier.				

Number of Units that can be Commanded by one Man.—This question is settled by asking how many units can be conveniently commanded in battle by one man. Everyone will admit that the fewer subordinates a commander has the easier will be his task. For instance, it would be easier for a colonel to control three companies than six. But he must be given as many as he can manage or else you will multiply the number of battalions and brigades.

It has been found that four is a convenient number, and in the new organization each platoon has four sections (or fire units), and each company has four platoons.

So the battalion commander has four companies, plus the machine-gun section, which makes five.

Officers must command Units, not Men.—The chief point to remember all through is this. Under the fire conditions of the battlefield of to-day, officers cannot command *men*—they must command *units*. If they try to command men, they will succeed in commanding so few that their influence over the majority will be lost. We must leave the commanding of *men* to section leaders. Each subaltern who commands a platoon has four sections; he must command four section leaders. Each company has four platoons—the officer commanding a company must command the four platoon leaders. When once this fact is fully understood, the advantages of our new organization will doubtless be admitted by everyone who puts fighting where it should be put, namely, first. It is not difficult to spend time demonstrating the unsuitability for fighting purposes of a battalion divided into eight companies, with each of these companies divided into two half-companies. But that would be merely flogging a dead horse, and therefore waste of time.

Let us now consider one or two imaginary situations on the battlefield such as will frequently occur, and let us follow the fortunes of an imaginary battalion, supposing it to be organized in four large companies.

III.—IMAGINARY ATTACK BY A BATTALION.

Invasion and Mobilization.—As we are told so often that the Territorial Army exists for home defence and not for purposes of aggression, the scene of action must not be where we would all prefer to have it, in some foreign country. We must bring the enemy over here in order to get up a fight. England, then, is invaded. The Territorial Force is mobilized. Troops are rapidly assembled, and in due course the defending army advances on the foe, drives in his cavalry and advanced troops, and the battle begins.

Opening Phase. Situation of Battalion.—Let us imagine that your battalion is lying assembled under a small hill about 3,000 yards from a long, low ridge which appears to be the enemy's main position. The enemy's shells are whistling and screeching overhead—they all seem to be overhead, though, as a matter of fact, most of them are over other people's heads. Some of them are bursting on the ridge behind you from which some of our guns have opened fire, though you cannot see them.

Commanding Officer sends for Company Commanders.—Presently the adjutant, who has been out with the colonel to see the brigadier, comes riding back and tells the officers that the colonel wants company commanders to come up to him at once. Everyone realizes that the time for action has come. The company commanders call for their horses and, with the senior major, the signal officer and the machine gun officer, canter off to the adjutant without loss of time.

Advantage of being Mounted.—You will observe that the four company commanders are mounted and the Commanding Officer

would have to wait some time if he had to give his orders to eight officers who had come out to him on foot, and would, I fear, in some cases, want five minutes to recover their wind.

Well, the party make their way through a couple of gates up the shoulder of the hill, dismount behind some trees to which the horses are tied, and are led by the adjutant to some bushes from the other side of which a clear view can be obtained of the ridge held by the enemy and the ground between. We will describe it in more detail later.

They join the Commanding Officer.—They find the colonel looking intently through his glasses from the cover of a bush. Silently they all lie down on either side of him, keeping well out of sight, and get out their glasses and take careful stock of the view in front.

After asking a few preliminary questions in order to satisfy himself that the extra ammunition has been issued, that all the men have their rations and their water bottles filled, that the horses have been watered; in a word, that the battalion is in an efficient condition for the fight, the colonel proceeds to point out the important points and explains the plan as follows:—(The general character of the country resembles Hampshire).¹ “The enemy’s guns are firing from behind that distant ridge, which is 3,000 yards away. His infantry are holding that ridge, and one can just make out lines of concealed trenches along the top of it and about half-way down the forward slope. His right appears to be near those three trees on the skyline, and a good many cavalry have been seen moving out to the west over Big Hill.

Says what Orders he has received.—“The brigade has been ordered to attack the enemy’s right. We shall be on the left of the brigade (the Blankshire Regiment on our right) and our objective is from the house on the ridge (called Ridgeway House on the map) to the three trees, both inclusive. Just in front of this objective and, I think, about 400 yards from the top of the ridge you will notice a long hill with telegraph posts across the top. We will call this ‘Telegraph Hill.’ It looks to me from here as if that hill will be our final fire position, and it seems probable that after leaving it you will find a certain amount of dead ground at the foot of the ridge itself.

“The enemy are probably holding Telegraph Hill with their advanced troops.

“You will notice the small wood and on its left the farm on this side of Telegraph Hill. I see they are called Plain Wood and Plain Farm on the map. They are both about 500 yards from the top of Telegraph Hill and therefore about 900 yards from the top of the main ridge and are probably also occupied by the enemy, but not in strength.

“Between us and Plain Wood is the low hill with the Red Inn on it. This is about 1,000 yards from the edge of Plain Wood. On our left front is the hill with the dead tree, which we will call One

¹ See Sketch No. 1 at end.

Tree Hill. This is 850 yards from Plain Farm and 950 from the near corner of Plain Wood.

"One squadron of the divisional cavalry will operate on our left and protect that flank to some extent. The attack will be carried out as follows:—

Commanding Officer's Orders for the Attack.—"At 10.15 a.m. A and B Companies will move from where the battalion is now, A Company to occupy the Red Inn Hill, B Company One Tree Hill.

"As soon as B Company (which has furthest to go) is in position, C Company will move round the west side of One Tree Hill and seize Plain Farm, supported, if necessary, by the fire of A and B Companies. B Company will be careful to watch Plain Wood and be ready to check the enemy, should he interfere from there with C Company's advance.

"As soon as C Company is in possession of the farm, D Company will be ordered by me to move between Red Inn Hill and One Tree Hill and to occupy Plain Wood and establish itself on the front edge of it. The other three companies will all be prepared to direct their fire on to Plain Wood in order to assist D Company to advance and take it.

"As soon as D Company moves, my headquarters will go to the Red Inn, or near it.

"C and D Companies will now be in front and I anticipate that both will be engaged with the enemy holding Telegraph Hill.

"I shall then probably order B Company to leave One Tree Hill and to advance through the gap between Plain Wood and Plain Farm and to attack Telegraph Hill, supported on both flanks by the fire of C and D Companies, who will be careful to bring a cross fire to bear on the point of attack.

"As soon as this attack begins to develop, I shall myself move with A Company from Red Inn Hill to some suitable spot this side of Plain Wood.

"D Company will, if necessary, co-operate in the attack on Telegraph Hill on C Company's right, and will in any case go on and occupy the right end of this hill, prolonging D Company's firing line.

"I regard Telegraph Hill as our probable final fire position.

"C Company will be at Plain Farm, and must hold that place to protect our left flank. It is impossible to say from here whether it will be necessary or advisable for C Company to send a platoon, or perhaps two, forward to the hill in front. I must leave that to the Captain's judgment, but you must clearly understand that the job of C Company is the protection of our left and I do not therefore wish this company to co-operate (except by fire) in the final assault on the ridge."

The colonel winds up his instructions by giving orders to the machine gun officer how to use his guns. The signal officer, the sergeant-major who has charge of the ammunition carts, and the medical officer with his battalion stretcher-bearers will also want

some instructions, and the company commanders will want to know these arrangements before they start, but these details will be omitted, as they make the story too complicated.

IV.—REMARKS ON COMMANDING OFFICER'S ORDERS.

Your attention is drawn in the first place to a few points about the colonel's orders to his company commanders.

His General Method (1).—First you will notice that there is no stereotyped form of attack. He does not say, "A and B Companies firing line and supports, C and D reserve," and order the battalion to march straight on to the objective. That terrible phrase, "Firing line, supports and reserve," which is responsible for so much bad tactics! As a matter of fact, the two companies that start first are not the two that reach the enemy's position first. The method of detailing certain troops to find the firing line all through is only suited to a perfectly flat piece of ground like a billiard-table, which is very rarely met with. Instead of that, he uses his four companies as four units. He gives to each a definite job, and he so arranges their movements, and the order in which each job is done, that they all act together under his direction, and assist one another in their tasks.

Details left to Subordinates (2).—The second point is that the colonel does not tell a company officer *how* he wants a thing done. He simply tells him *what* he wants done and leaves it to him how to do it. Field Service Regulations I., page 132. "The choice of the manner in which the task assigned to each body of troops is to be performed, should be left to its commander."

The only legitimate exception to this rule would be where the colonel had an officer he could not trust to do things in the best way. A company commander who receives detailed instructions from his colonel, how to advance and occupy a hill, for instance, might be justified in concluding that the colonel would rather someone else than he were in command of one of his companies.

Exactly the same remarks apply to the orders given by a company commander to his four platoons, which we shall come to later.

Fire to Support Movement (3).—The third point refers to covering fire. You all know how much is made nowadays of "fire to support movement"—in fact, it is the gist of the attack. All subordinate leaders are taught that they must help the advance of their neighbours by fire.

Now you will notice that in these attack orders the colonel has been able, by his use of the ground and the progressive nature of his plan of attack, to go one step further in the matter of covering fire. Instead of merely leaving it to subordinates to provide covering fire when they see an opportunity, he has actually been able to *arrange* for covering fire, and to *order* it to be given, from the very start. And each company, as it moves, knows that it will be covered and supported by fire, and from where.

It is not pretended that the plan of attack which has been here invented on the colonel's behalf is the best possible. There are doubtless many better solutions. But in the method described an endeavour has been made to show a feasible plan of attack, combining fire effect with an intelligent use of ground, and with due regard to the organization of the battalion.

Plan compared with the Eight-Company Organization.—This only may be added: if you try and work out an attack of this kind with eight small companies, you will find it a very different business, and, in the author's opinion, at any rate, you will find it next door to impossible to get anything like the same co-ordination and control, or indeed to carry out the base principles regarding use of ground, fire and direction which are laid down for us in our Field Service Regulations.

Incidentally, it may be mentioned that the sketch is taken from an actual piece of country, and that the ground has not been entirely invented to suit the plan.

V.—HOW COMPANIES CARRY OUT THEIR ORDERS.

Now let us follow out the fortunes of one or two of our companies and see how they carry out the colonel's instructions.

B Company's advance.—Let us take B Company first. It will be remembered that B Company's initial task was to occupy One Tree Hill and from there to be ready to support the advance of C Company to Plain Farm.

Considerations.—The officer commanding B Company took a good look at One Tree Hill and the intervening ground before he rejoined the battalion. He made up his mind that the hill contained none of the enemy, but he saw that his company would be unavoidably exposed in their advance, for a distance of 300 or 400 yards, to view from the enemy's main position, and therefore that artillery fire might be expected. The question was merely "what was the best formation to move the company across the open ground, so as to avoid being seen, or, if seen, to avoid heavy casualties?" This is the first problem he has to solve.

Orders by Officer Commanding Company.—The officer commanding the company goes back, calls up his four platoon commanders and the junior captain, and gives his orders thus:—He points out One Tree Hill, and explains as much as necessary of the plan of attack. Nos. 1 and 2 platoons will lead, Nos. 3 and 4 follow in support under the junior captain. Company-scouts¹ (two from each platoon including the non-commissioned officers in charge) precede numbers 1

¹ It is understood that company-scouts are not included in the next edition of Infantry Training. Battalion scouts could be attached to companies, if required. But every soldier should be capable of acting as a company scout in such a situation as that described.

and 2 at a distance of about 400 yards, working in pairs, one pair out to the left front; they are not to expose themselves over the far side of the hill; the two pack-horses with ammunition under a non-commissioned officer with one man per platoon as carrier to follow No. 3 platoon. The officer commanding the company himself, with his company sergeant-major, range-taker and bugler, goes on with the two leading platoons. Nos. 1 and 2 advance in two lines of section columns, each section in fours or file, at 50 yards interval, 200 yards distance between lines. The lines to be irregular.

The company commander warns his officers that the company may be shelled crossing the open ground, and recommends section columns for the first two platoons, the others moving in double section columns in one line instead of two.

He must give his own instructions to the scouts.

B Company advances.—Let us suppose then that the company very nearly escapes observation and only gets a few shells which do very little harm, as small moving columns are very difficult to see and very difficult to hit. As soon as the scouts reach the top of the hill, they signal back, "All clear!" and the officer commanding the company at once gallops on up to them in order to decide how to occupy the hill before the troops come up.

Method of Occupying a Position.—Now the order to occupy the hill does not mean that he is to put the whole company in one firing line along the crest. In fact, to march men up to the top would be certain to bring punishment in the shape of a heavy artillery fire.

The scouts are on the look-out over the top, so he just halts the whole company behind the hill under cover, ready to come up in a minute or so if required. The range-taker goes to the top, takes ranges to Plain Farm and Plain Wood and makes a little range chart, of which, if he has time, he will give one copy to each platoon.

Covering Fire for C Company.—Now to arrange for covering fire to support the advance of C Company on Plain Farm.

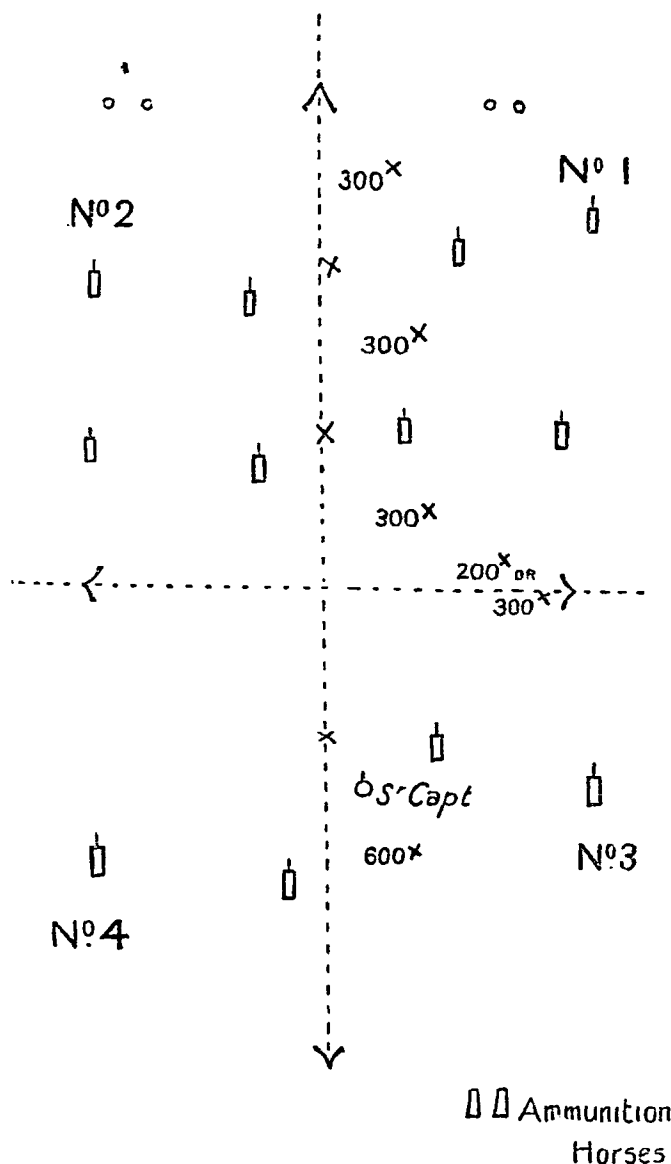
The officer commanding the company directs No. 1 platoon to occupy a position from which to fire on to the edge of Plain Wood, No. 2 platoon to engage Plain Farm.

Platoons occupy Positions.—What do the two platoon commanders do on receipt of this order? Do they say, "Platoon, quick march!" and bring the whole lot up at once? Not if they are wise. No, they each go quietly up and have a peep over the hill, accompanied by their four section leaders, and there point out where each section is to lie and what points they are to be ready to fire at when ordered.

The section leaders make a note of these points and the range, go back to their sections and lead them up independently by the best way to the positions they are to occupy. If advisable, the men crawl up over the sky-line.

The other two platoons will also be given fire positions, but they may not be required, so for the present they are left under cover behind the hill.

Meanwhile, the company commander has signalled back to battalion headquarters that he is ready (the colonel will have seen for himself that there has been no opposition so far) and presently C Company is



seen moving out round the west side of One Tree Hill past B Company's left.

C Company move off.—We will now follow C Company. The commander of this company has doubtless watched the progress of

B Company and he will probably move off in the same formation to start with.

Officer Commanding the Company goes forward.—Leaving the captain to bring the company on, he will be prudent if he gallops forward to One Tree Hill and, leaving his horse under cover, goes to the top and confers with the officer commanding B Company as to the best way to go for Plain Farm.

This is what he sees of Plain Farm from the top of One Tree Hill. (Sketch No. 2). He also is able, by means of his glasses, to spot one or two of the enemy in the farm buildings

Orders by Officer Commanding Company.—He goes back down the hill to where his company is now halted behind the shoulder, calls up his officers and non-commissioned officers to a spot where all can see without being seen, and thus briefly gives his orders for the attack and occupation of Plain Farm.

"The company is to occupy that Farm and the small hill to our right of it.

"No. 1 platoon will first of all occupy that low hill with the tall trees 400 yards from the Farm.

"As soon as No. 1 is established there, No. 2 will move round its left and occupy the bank and hedge which runs away to our left from the Farm road. No. 2 will also send one section out to the left to protect that flank.

"When No. 2 arrives at the bank, I shall bring on Nos. 3 and 4 in rear of No. 1.

"No. 3 will then move out to the right and occupy the small hill overlooking the Farm, covered by the fire of Nos. 1 and 2.

"If necessary, I shall send on No. 4 to assist No. 3 if the latter cannot get on.

"As soon as that hill is in our possession, the enemy will probably have to evacuate the Farm, which will then be occupied by No. 2, who will still leave one section, or, if necessary, two, to guard the left flank. B Company will cover our advance from this hill and will protect our right by bringing fire to bear on to the edge of Plain Wood, if necessary.

"The two pack-horses will remain here till the Farm is taken, when they will be brought up to it.

"My orders are to hold Plain Farm and guard the left flank, so the Farm and the hill close to it will be put in a state of defence directly we get there.

"Is that quite clear?"

Officer commanding No. 2 platoon :—"Supposing when I get to the bank I find the enemy has left the Farm. Am I to go straight on and occupy it?"

Officer commanding the company :—"I think it will be better to wait till No. 3 are in position on the hill to the right."

Officer commanding No. 1 :—"Where will *you* be, after Nos. 3 and 4 have gone on to attack that hill?"

Officer commanding the company :—" I shall be with No. 1. The junior captain will please stop with me for the present."

Remarks on Orders of Officer Commanding Company.—Please observe again that the officer commanding the company has merely told his platoon commanders *what* he wants them to do, and has left it entirely to them *how* to do it.

Also he has *arranged* for covering fire and not left this important matter to his subordinates.

Platoons Move.—Now, to complete the picture, let us see how the platoon officers in their turn carry out their respective tasks. They know the Farm is occupied by the enemy and it is only 850 yards distant. They will also be exposed to view directly they leave the shelter of the hill where the company is now assembled.

Formation.—Under these circumstances it would be dangerous to move the leading platoons in small columns as this formation is highly vulnerable to infantry fire under 1000 yards range, and, in order to return the enemy's fire, the columns would have to deploy into extended order in full view and under fire.

No. 1, therefore, orders two sections to extend to five paces and to advance against their hill, and the platoon commander follows with the other two sections also extended at 300 paces distance.

No. 2 platoon extends one section as firing line, sends one section out to the left echeloned in rear of No. 1, and two sections follow in support under the platoon commander. He will probably be able to indicate to the section on the left the position they should make for in order to carry out their mission of protecting the flank.

Scouts.—We have not yet mentioned the company scouts. These useful creatures should receive their instructions direct from the company commander.

It is suggested that he would send out two pairs of scouts in front of Nos. 1 and 2 platoons and two pairs out on the important flank on the left of No. 2.

Each party must be given a definite job and told where to send their reports.

Action of Scouts.—Infantry scouts cannot be used like cavalry. If sent too far in front they will only get scuppered, and their fate may never even be known. In this sort of attack, 300 or 400 yards is probably quite sufficient distance for scouts to move in front of the firing line. They must not mask the fire of the firing line and, when checked by the enemy, should either move out to a flank or lie down and wait till their own firing line comes up and join it. Their turn as scouts will come again later on when the enemy clear off and the advance is resumed.

VI.—GENERAL REMARKS ON TACTICAL METHODS.

We need not follow this attack any further in detail. Enough has been described to show the general principles under which a company of infantry of the new organization may be launched into

battle and controlled and commanded by its captain during the initial stages.

Importance of Initial Orders.—This is the important part of the fight. If the troops are *started off* under a clear, definite plan, which they all understand, the rest is comparatively simple.

Control in Battle and Position of Officer Commanding.—The control exercised by each commander, whether of the battalion, the company or the platoon, depends first of all on the instructions he issues at the start, and, secondly, on the use he makes of his reserves, with which he must remain himself, after the battle has really begun, during the course of the action.

In the final stage of all, when the fight becomes hot and the enemy's resistance is prolonged, the reserves will all be used up in the effort to carry out the orders received. It is *then* that the commander of the battalion or company or platoon must go forward himself, with his last reserve, and do what he can in the firing line, for there is nothing left for him to do in the rear. It is then that a commander must rely for the assistance which, in a well-trained army, he knows he can count upon from his superiors, if they are in a position to give it.

Unsuitability of Eight-Company Organization.—It would be of interest to reflect for one moment on the arrangements which could be made for the attack on Plain Farm, supposing this task were allotted to two companies of an eight-company battalion.

It is indeed doubtful whether any *two* commanders could hope, however cordial their co-operation, to carry out this job in such a practical and satisfactory manner as it can be carried out by one man with a suitably organized force to his hand.

Officer Commanding Company keeps his Company-Organization Intact.—You will notice in the methods adopted by these two company commanders that they have only dealt with their platoon commanders, thus carrying out the important principle mentioned at the beginning of this lecture, namely, that officers should command units as long as they can, and not men. It is a common experience to see company commanders violating this principle by taking sections away from their platoons and sending them off on separate jobs. If this is done, the company commander very soon finds himself commanding, or trying to command, eight or more units instead of four, many of these units being without an officer. His difficulties are at once doubled, and he has actually, by disregarding his organization, diminished very considerably the fighting value of his little force. A platoon officer, with four sections, is a power in the fight. Take away two, and his platoon as a fighting unit is less than half its former value, while the two you have taken away had far better be attached to another platoon than left to themselves. For one thing, who is to command them?

All company officers should realize the vital importance of retaining their organization as long as ever they can, and not splitting up commands and interfering with their subordinates, except in urgent cases of dire necessity.

The Rest of the Battle.—Time does not permit us to follow the fortunes of our battalion all through up to the final assault and capture of the distant ridge. It would have been interesting to discuss the further progress of the battle and to have shown how B and D Companies drove back the enemy's advanced troops and occupied Telegraph Hill—how C Company held on to Plain Farm and drove off an attack by dismounted cavalry—how A Company came up and occupied Plain Wood—how B and D silenced the enemy's fire and rushed forward down the slopes of Telegraph Hill, only to be met by a counter-attack which forced them back with heavy loss to their old position—how the colonel brought up A Company (heavily loaded with ammunition for the companies in front) to behind the hill—how he planned for B Company on the left to provide covering fire while A Company reinforced D, and both companies rushed into the dead ground below the enemy's position—how it was arranged for no less than six batteries of artillery to shell the trenches during the advance—how A and D climbed the hill under this fire and finally drove out the enemy with the bayonet.

Many Problems to Consider Afresh.—In every phase of such an attack there is some lesson to learn and something to be gained by considering which is the best of the many ways of doing a thing. Even then we would not have nearly exhausted all the problems which confront a battalion in war. There is the defence, action of a rear guard, outposts, advanced guards, rear guards, wood fighting, night attacks, and so on. There is not one of these things which must not be studied from a new point of view when your fighting machine is re-organized into four companies with four platoons. The new organization demands new methods.

VII.—ADMINISTRATION AND TRAINING.

Other Aspects of the New Organization.—This paper has been entirely confined to the fighting aspect because that is the most important. Of administration and training, very little can be said in the space at my disposal.

Administration.—As regards administration, the most important effect of the change is that for the first time in his life a subaltern has now got a definite command of his own in which he can take an interest, and for which he can be made entirely responsible without being saddled with work which is not his at all. This was never possible before. The new organization provides every leader with a second in command, who carries on his job whenever he is away. The platoon officer has a sergeant as second in command, the company commander has a second captain. It will, therefore, never be necessary to make a platoon officer command the company or take over a platoon that is not his own. This fact has already, in the author's experience, been of the greatest benefit to both officers and men, and should be remembered by those officers who dislike the idea of being junior captains. Another answer that could be given to them is that it is better to assist in a really good show than be boss of an indifferent show of one's own.

Four Units in place of Eight.—From the point of view of the colonel, the adjutant, and the quartermaster, it need hardly be said that four

units have proved naturally very much easier to deal with than eight. There are only four people to whom orders are issued, there are only four sets of company books and returns, and so forth. These things speak for themselves.

Delegation of Responsibility.—Most important of all, perhaps, the new system makes it possible for the commanding officer to delegate real responsibility to his company commanders. Territorial battalions may not be as badly situated, but in the Regular Army it seldom occurs that more than half the majors and captains of a battalion are available for duty with it. So with eight companies, the Commanding Officer found half his company commanders without the necessary seniority and experience, and the result was that he had to interfere more than he liked, and to maintain a highly centralized system which was certainly prejudicial to efficiency, as well as bad training for everyone. As for the subaltern, he had no responsibility at all. As a platoon commander, on the other hand, he can now be made entirely responsible by his captain for everything that concerns the training, clothing, and equipment, and general well-being of his own platoon, in which he can take a pride and interest.

The company commander should consult the platoon commanders with reference to every matter that occurs in the platoon.

Platoon Organization.—There is one small matter regarding the interior organization of a company which may be referred to here. In peace time, each company has a certain number of men belonging to it who do not fight in the ranks, but really belong to battalion headquarters, namely, the band, machine gun section, signallers, transport drivers, and a few odds and ends, such as grooms and servants.

In some companies one finds all these people forming a supernumerary platoon in each company. In others, they are all attached to one of the four platoons. In both these methods they become a nuisance. In the first, they have no one to look after them except the officer commanding the company himself or his junior captain, who have other work to do. In the second method, they are an unfair burden on one of the platoon commanders. Another method is to split them all up among all the sections, which is bad, because it makes the corporal who commands a section responsible for men he never sees. It is suggested that the best way is to form in each platoon a fifth or supernumerary section of these headquarter men. The company will then be organised as follows:—

Company headquarters, major and junior captain, company sergeant major, company quartermaster sergeant.

No. I. Platoon :—

Headquarters : Lieutenant, sergeant.

No. 1 Section.

No. 4 Section.

No. 2 Section.

No. 5 Section (Supernumeraries).

No. 3 Section.

No. II. Platoon :—Ditto.

No. IV. Platoon :—Ditto.

No. III. Platoon :—Ditto.

VIII.—CONCLUSION.

Conditions in Territorial Force.—It is possible that many officers have the impression that the conditions obtaining in the Territorial Force are scarcely realized or we would not so lightly advocate a change which will be to them in the shape of a revolution. They may rest assured that these conditions are well understood.

It is realized what a company in a Territorial Force battalion is—how it is kept going by its captain in the teeth of great difficulties—what the captain will feel if his company is taken from him and the results of all his efforts passed to another officer who will not know his men. It is realized that, in many country battalions, companies are scattered over a very wide area, and that there are many objections to grouping into one company 200 or 250 men.

Answer to Objections.—To these objections there is but one answer, which the majority of officers who have the interests of their regiment at heart will admit to be conclusive.

The Territorial Force is an army, and an army exists only for one purpose, and that is for war. If it is necessary to change the organization for the sake of fighting efficiency, that change must be made, whatever the difficulties that lie in the way. These difficulties must be faced and must be overcome, and personal matters must be put on one side in order to do it.