



George B. Wright and Family Papers

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No 93, Warren St

Boston, May 1893

Col Amos A. Fowles

11 Reg. W. S. A.

Care L. R. Hamersley & Co
Phila, Penn

Dear Sir,

I presume you are the
Capt Fowles who was I believe on the
staff 1st Div G. A. in 1864 when
I was asst 2^d Brigade.

I was in Washington the
last week in April & picked up
the United Service & read your paper
with care and attention. I have
read it since more than once, and
I am much pleased.

There is at last a recog-
nition that long range, rapid-
firing arms of precision have
wrought a change of the condi-
tions of war when in the hands
of men trained to their use, which
the men themselves recognise
and act upon even if writers
of tactics do not.

I presume "Tactics" to mean

manoeuvres and conduct in presence of an active enemy who resists an advance or prepares a retreat.

All the drill and exercises of the soldier have for object, his efficiency at this crisis of his career. And there is but one test of efficiency at this time, an ability to harm the enemy of superior quality to that possessioned by the enemy against him.

To give your soldier a preponderating power of harming his adversary is the object of all his training. To give your inspector an opportunity to judge of his proficiency in this regard is the object of reviews and parades.

Hence, as no man without a thorough gymnastic training can execute the Prussian march in review, they make their men perform a difficult waltz dance on review. It proves the setting up. The ceremonies of review should contain the for-

mation of battle order, movement, to, in and from battle order and changes of direction in battle order. Otherwise they cease to be useful.

Now to return from the general subject to your special-ization. A short name for this long range, rapid firing arm of precision of the present day will be Magazine Rifle. The Magazine Rifle has a danger radius of over five times that of the smooth bore of 1815. It has an accuracy within this radius of at least four times as much. It can not be doubted that a soldier with a Magazine Rifle advancing against an adversary a mile away has fifteen times the chance to injure him as the individual French or English soldier had at Waterloo. Wellington was four deep. Napoleon was two deep. The 4 battalions of chasseur of the Guard who made the last attack

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were two deep. If there, when men could get up to two or three hundred yards without much loss except from artillery or cavalry, the depth of two to four was sufficient, and it has so proved since, surely when the danger radius is so largely increased a longer firing line of less depth is enough now, particularly with arms of flat trajectory.

I noticed in our men that as troops became experienced they tended more and more to extend their lines, and get even to work. This instinct should be availed of.

I have studied your column of three, and compared it in every way I could with the column of four, on paper. The column of four was adopted because in column of two the men lost so much distance. But the interval in column of four was not enough. They were apt to lose in that. 23

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think you will get your firing
line to position full as fast in
threes as in fours. There is no
doubt you could not pass with
it, except a sheep track like that
around the "fort of Band". Yet a
brigade in column of threes would
be strung out on the march
more than one in column of
fours. A war brigade of 4000
men in column of threes with
out ~~distances~~ ^{distances} would be about
2400 yds long, with battalion
and regimental ~~distances~~ ^{distances} say
a mile and a half. To form it
front into line each company
in column of sections in open
order would take about 15
to 20 minutes. It would occu-
py a mile and a half of front.

A brigade of ^{4000 men in} 3 regiments or
9 (4 co) battalions in column of
fours would if it had lost no
distance & with its battalion
& regimental ~~distances~~ ^{distances} be about
a mile long, and its deployed line
would be a mile of front. It

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would require to cover it a
skirmish line of a mile and a
quarter at least. It could be
brought up and put in position
at the same rate of movement
probably a few minutes quicker
than from the column of threes,
that is the third regiment could,
I think, one could only ^{certainly} tell,
from competitive trial, - that
the leading regiment from col-
umn of threes would be in
fighting order on its own front
five minutes sooner than from
column of fours, the second
regiment in about the same
time, and the third regiment
if one relied on the rest of the
division for reserve, five min-
utes later. But in one case
the fighting line would be a
mile and a half long, and in
the other little over a mile.
The rear of the 3^d brigade if in
column of threes would now be
three miles off & if in column
of fours two miles, plus the

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artillery, which if you suppose two batteries between the first and second brigades, and two between the second and third at about $\frac{1}{10}$ of a mile to a battery would add half a mile nearly to the distance in either case. Of course, the two leading batteries would quickly get out of the way of the column of march and the head of the reinforcement be a quarter of an mile off. Undoubtedly the column of three has superior mobility over the column of four, probably in a route march of 50 minutes with 10 minutes rests it would cover $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles as against $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and would do 15 miles straight away half an hour quicker with like exertion.

In either formation the another man ought to see the whole division and its artillery on the ground.

When we know what Reynolds & Buford did at Gettys-

8.
hug, what Larrous did at Fried-
land, what Perponcher & Pistoia
did at Quatre Bras, this is quick
enough.

In sum then the column
of fours offers no great advan-
tage over the column of threes in
moving troops ~~to~~ en route except
it is nominally 33% shorter, with
a far greater liability to stretch
and 9% about inferiority in speed.

Take this on the march, the
head of column starts at 5 o'clock
in column of fours, this is a division
with four batteries. Its rear will
pull out of camp about 1/2 past
6. It will make a halt ^{elaborate} ~~at~~
for an hour with march 15
miles and by half past one or
two can begin to look for camp.

The column of threes starts at
5 o'clock it makes the same
halts and rests. Its rear will
pull out of camp about five
minutes before 7. It ^{will} ~~will~~ gain
half an hour in the fifteen miles
and arrive about the same time

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137.5 / 252.80 / 38.5
~~44.25~~
~~146.50~~
~~11000~~
~~952.5~~
~~6500~~
~~87.5~~

as the other column.

My own experience has taught me that men in loose order move far easier than in compact, and that except on metalled roads a column of four must be allowed to become, practically, a column of six or eight by the overflow of men into the fields, in order to keep it from stretching and to fairly make over two miles an hour. On the limestone pikes of Kentucky we have not too wet nor too dry one can make in column of four without straggling or stretching 2 1/2 miles an hour with 10 minutes halt, and do an easy 20 miles in nine hours with a rest for dinner. I saw the corps do it often in 1863, before it went to Mississippi and after return.

It is clear then is no decided advantage enough to vote in the column of three either for route or manoeuvre, at least none.

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which it would not require effort to determine.

The ~~firing line~~ ^{fighting force} would be twenty seven hundred men to the mile about, arranged in three lines of nine hundred men each. Gen Grant of the reduced the infantry force in the Petersburg line to 1000 men to the mile, and orders will be given to this effect. Rifles with flat trajectory, long range and rapid fire in the hands of trained marksmen make this force far more formidable than the same count of twenty eight or nine years ago. By the dispersed order each man is a small target, whose chances of escape of hits are, horizontally, four to one, over men in close order. The chances of vertical error are as great in one case as in the other. The difference may be stated argumentatively as a difference between hitting a door, and that of hitting its key hole.

Two of your ideas being thus probably correct two others remain to be examined. Have you in your system provided all that is needed for the battle field maneuvers. These require (1) passage from line to column headed in any direction, (2) passage from column to line ~~headed~~^{headed} in any direction, and parallel to the line of march or transverse to it, and extended in any direction from the head of column. (3) reinforcement, relief and passage of lines, including in this advance and retreat.

All of this seems to be thoroughly taken care of in a simple way save that I do not find what was a very useful maneuver to Julius Caesars Aug 19 1864 with the 1st Div G. A. C. - the movement which places the line of battle parallel to the line of march but not along side of it, extending it wholly by successive ac-

cretions in prolongation of the
line of march. "On right (or left)
into line." I think this ought
not to be dropped. With that, I
think of our battle & marching
regulations would be of elegant
simplicity. And when I think of
the early tactics of the time of
Gustaf Adolph relative to form-
ing a regiment of pikes into
square on the principle of
extracting the square root, and
the recondite mysteries of be-
ring deficient numbers blank,
and of filling in superfluous
men, I feel like saying this
is about ultimate simplicity.

The other idea I combat
that of close order regulations for review.

A review or parade should
exhibit the soldier's proficiency
or in battle maneuvers. Other-
wise it is show & not useful,
or of little use. This would
be my review. A battalion
in single rank at close order
is directed to "prepare for review."
The next order would be "See

from front open order." Salute being given, and the line inspected by the reviewing officer, then he takes his place; and the column of threes is formed "right into column" & marched to the right; direction is changed to the left, and when on the line of the "march past" the order "sections left open order" executed at double time past the reviewing officer would show him another battle movement.

Converting now into column of threes again "right into column", the left of each section moving at quick time only and facing to the left so as to combine this movement of forming column of threes with that of ~~the turning~~ changing direction of line of sections. On reaching the prolongation of the original line, sections left, open order is taken up, and being in this order they are formed to the left in line

of sections and brought back to close order. The reviewing officer will then ride along the front of the line and judge of this condition. He would then learn something of the value of his Xⁿ.

I am not struck on this scheme. It might be better to turn the open line of sections into an open column of sections and keep it so till after the "round past", then form column of three, ~~without~~ closing intervals then form them into open column again "sections left" at the left of the parade ground & then turn into original ground, and close order.

What I want is that a review shall teach the reviewing officer something of his tools, and their set. The present review gives him a minimum of information. He ought to get facts with politeness. He now gets politeness only.

No 93, Warren St

Boston, May 1. 1893

Col. William W. Powell

17 N. S. Ave

Care L. R. Hammersly Esq

No. 1510, Chestnut St

Phila.

Pa

Dear Sir,

I presume you to be the
Capt. Powell J. A. on Staff of
1st Div of A. C. in 1864, and yes,
you will not object to having
a criticism of your proposed
tactics from the Army of 25th
Brigade of that period.

I picked up the United
Service in Washington two last
week and read your paper with
care and have since re-read
it more than once.

The ~~With~~ long range, rapid
firing arms of precision have
~~been~~ impressed more and more
on the tactics of war, the lesson
of Pavia the first battle ever won
by musketry, that lateral exten-

view and not depths of formation was the thing needed.

The first object of war is to harm the enemy. Safety to yourself and your side is secondary. The officer and soldier will pay attention enough to that if he does not make it an object itself, and devote himself to the other matter exclusively. A long firing line in order loose enough to form elbow room, composed of men who know their weapons well and can use them with accuracy, and so posted or advanced as to command a full view of a mile of country on all sides, with an ample supply of ammunition and smart shooting guns is as fatal a tool for injury to others as can be imagined.

To provide this, to relieve it, to reinforce it, to support it, to give it a reserve, comprises pretty much all of the tactics of defense, and a very large

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75
 300
 22
 12/6600
 550

(1844) 25

part of the tactics of attack.

I have not seen any thing better adapted to this end than your proposition for a 3 section single rank company habitually put in action a section at a time, and hence even if of maximum strength not too big for close supervision by its captain. A battalion of 3 cos. in open order, all on one line if of maximum strength would tax the vigilance of the battalion commander to say no thing of his voice, but if in 3 lines would be much as in old days with a large battalion (800 men or so) quite manageable.

I can see that this proposed company presents admirable features for attack in a body solidified for a shock, and for extricating the charging line from the confusion of a charge, restoring order & holding the place won, or reforming after failure, wherein former tactics ~~lost~~ much to be derived. In this respect it is a highly improved tool of war.

In that limited and short-usage part of Tactics which may be called the "tactics of fight," and which consists merely in the array of men on the fighting line, in the strengthening and relief of lines and in facing them in any direction to meet an emergency, as was required of the Grenadier Guards at the Alma, of Ferraro's division at Blue Spring in E. Term on Oct 16 '63 and of Julius White's division on 19 Aug 1864, the flexibility of the open order and single rank by stem would be to the full as useful as the old tactics. That of the Guards was explained from the fact that it had so many officers present who had been Adjutants. The Blue Spring trouble arose from discovering the deployment of the enemy's skirmish line to have been made by echelon from their left, and to re-

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give our left to be swung up
so as to be in front a con-
version to the right nearly
at right angles to the first
line. In doing this the two
left battalions encountered
a stream of some width
with deep banks and about
a foot of water having
a formidable chaparral
on both banks; and left them
a battalion's length beyond
it the main road with a
dense and swampy wood
on the further side. There
we had a vanguard in 2^d line and
two in first line. The wood
could have been traversed in
open order perhaps, but the
men were only trained to
that as skirmishers. The left
wing of the 3^d Battalion & the
4th Battalion changed the
method of conversion & moved
by the right flank up the
road till clear of the woods
and then turning to the
left went ~~on~~ on right by

file into line restoring the array. Julius White used this movement to put his divisions in sections on the right of the road on which he was moving, thus forming his battalions individually and sending them forward in echelon.

With so small a command as a company a change of direction of the column of three and a formation left front into two line of sections would clear the road, and require no other regulations than you have, but I am clear that a battalion should be able to extend its alignment by successive formation in the direction of its line of march.

The ~~conversion of the~~ successive reduction of line to column by breaking from one end to march towards the other end is of no great value in

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battle tactics. I saw it used once
at Malvern Hill by my own
regiment, & in converting a skir-
mish line on the extreme right of
Sumner into a line of battle on the
extreme left of Porter, reinforcing
Buckner's brigade. The Irish
brigade was on the right of the 2^d
Corps, 2^d Mass, ~~was~~^{as} its right bat-
talion, with 6 companies as
picket in a swamp doing no
good. The brigade was ordered to
reinforce Porter. It was the
turn of the 2^d to be the left
battalion. Its pickets were re-
lieved, and line formed passing
the woods & with Porter's posi-
tion about three miles off in
the rear. We broke from the
right to march to the left
in company column, half
wheeling to the left and march-
ed to our place, and then moved
two thirds or more of the way
across, and went forward into
line, when Fiddell's battery
came on our right and we
were ordered to support that

and went up to the crew, House
in line. Clearly we could have
done many other things. We
could have changed front to
the rear on our right, and
formed column on our left
company. We could have formed
column from line left in front
and then deployed to our right
front. We could have formed
column of division & changed di-
rection by the flank as Massena
did at Wagram, and afterwards
deployed.