
INSTRUCTION
FOR SKIRMISHERS.

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Instruction for Skirmishers

Complete text from :

RIFLE AND INFANTRY TACTICS

(Revised and Improved)

by

Brig. Gen. W.J. Hardee,

C.S. Army

(Fifth Ed., Vol. I : Mobile : S.H. Goetzel & Co., 1861)

and supplemented with sections from :

SCHOOL OF THE GUIDES

by

Col. Eugene Le Gal,

55th Reg't, N. Y. S. M.

(New York : D. Van Nostrand, 1860)

Compiled

by

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2. MARCH (or *double quick*—MARCH).

To march by the flank.

96. To march skirmishers by the right flank, captain commands :

1. *By the right flank.*
2. MARCH (or *double quick*—MARCH).

103. To advance the reserve, the chief of reserve commands :

1. *Platoon, forward.*
2. *Guide left.*
3. MARCH.

To march the reserve in retreat, he commands :

1. *In retreat.*
2. MARCH.
3. *Guide right.*

105. To change direction to the right (or left) when skirmishers march by the flank, captain commands :

1. *By file right (or left).*
2. MARCH.

The Firings.

To fire at a halt or marching.

107. The captain commands :

Commence—FIRING.

THE RALLY.

129. If horsemen should advance to charge the skirmishers, captain commands,

Rally by fours.

131. If these squares are too weak and captain wants hold position, he commands :

rule, however, is not invariable. The reserves, while holding themselves within sustaining distance of the line, should be, as much as possible, in a position to afford each other mutual protection, and must carefully profit by any accidents of the ground to conceal themselves from the view of the enemy, and to shelter themselves from his fire.

8. The movements of skirmishers will be executed in quick, or double quick time. The run will be resorted to only in cases of urgent necessity.

9. Skirmishers will be permitted to carry their pieces in the manner convenient to them.

10. The movements will be habitually indicated by the sounds of the bugle.

11. The officers, and, if necessary, the non-commissioned officers, will repeat, and cause the commands to be executed, as soon as they are given ; but to avoid mistakes, when the signals are employed, they will wait until the last bugle note is sounded before commencing the movement.

12. When skirmishers are ordered to move rapidly, the officers and non-commissioned officers will see that the men economize their strength, keep cool, and profit by all the advantages which the ground may offer for cover. It is only by this continual watchfulness on the part of all grades, that a line of skirmishers can attain success.

13. This instruction will be divided into five articles, and subdivided as follows :

ARTICLE FIRST.

- (1.) To deploy forward.
- (2.) To deploy by the flank.
- (3.) To extend intervals.
- (4.) To close intervals.
- (5.) To relieve skirmishers.

APPENDIX B
Selected Commands
from the Instruction for Skirmishers

To deploy forward.

22. Captain commands :

1. *First platoon—as skirmishers.*
2. *On the left file—take intervals.*
3. MARCH (or *double quick—MARCH*).

23. First lieutenant commands :

Second platoon, backward—MARCH.

To deploy by the flank.

37. The company halted with first platoon in reserve, captain commands :

1. *Second platoon—as skirmishers.*
2. *By the right flank—take intervals.*
3. MARCH (or *double quick—MARCH*).

44. To deploy the company upon the centre of one of the platoons, he will command :

1. *Second (or first) platoon—as skirmishers.*
2. *By the right and left flanks—take intervals.*
3. MARCH (or *double quick—MARCH*).

To extend intervals.

52. If skirmishers halted, captain commands :

1. *By the left (or right) flank (so many paces) extend interval.*

16. The deployment forward will be adopted when the company is behind the line on which it is to be established as skirmishers ; it will be deployed by the flank, when it finds itself already on that line.

17. Whenever a company is to be deployed as skirmishers, it will be divided into two platoons, and each platoon will be subdivided into two sections ; the comrades in battle, forming groups of four men, will be careful to know and to sustain each other. The captain will assure himself that the files in the centre of each platoon and section are designated.

18. A company may be deployed as skirmishers on its right, left, or centre file, or on any other named file whatsoever. In this manner, skirmishers may be thrown forward with the greatest possible rapidity on any ground they may be required to occupy.

19. A chain of skirmishers ought generally to preserve their alignment, but no advantages which the ground may present should be sacrificed to attain this regularity.

20. The interval between skirmishers depends on the extent of ground to be covered ; but in general, it is not proper that the groups of four men should be removed more than forty paces from each other. The habitual distance between men of the same group in open grounds will be five paces ; in no case will they lose sight of each other.

21. The front to be occupied to cover a battalion comprehends its front and the half of each interval which separates it from the battalion on its right and left. If a line, whose wings are not supported, should be covered by skirmishers, it will be necessary either to protect the flanks with skirmishers, or to extend them in front of the line so far beyond the wings as effectually to oppose any attempt which might be made by the enemy's skirmishers to disturb his flanks.

downwards, the butt resting on the ground ; in this position support the piece with the left hand at the upper band, draw cartridge with the right and load the piece, ramming the ball, if necessary, with both hands.

296. When loaded bring the piece to the front with the left hand, which holds it at the upper band ; seize it at the same time with the right hand at the small of the stock ; turn the piece, the barrel uppermost and nearly horizontal, the left elbow resting on the left thigh ; half-cock, remove the old cap and prime, rise, and return to the ranks.

297. The second man will then be taught what has just been prescribed for the first, and so on through the remainder of the squad.

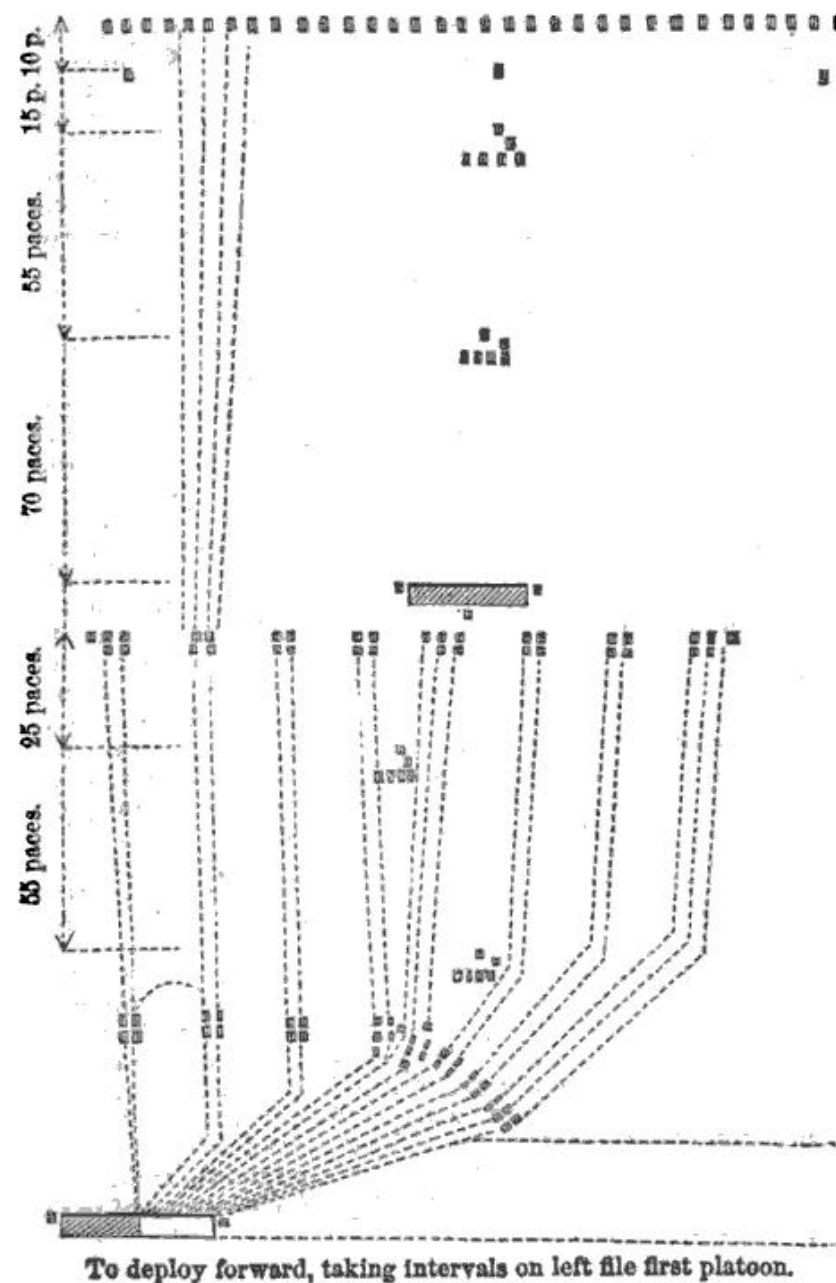


Fire and load lying
from Hardee's School of the Soldier

H.S. 298. In this exercise the squad will be in one rank and loaded ; the instruction will be given individually and without times or motions.

299. The instructor will command :
FIRE AND LOAD LYING.

INSTRUCTION FOR SKIRMISHERS.



skirmishers who arrive first will complete the lateral fronts, and the last the fourth front. The officers and sergeants will superintend the rally, and as fast as the men arrive, they will form them into two ranks, without regard to height, and cause them to face outwards.

199. The rally being effected, the commanders of the squares will profit by any interval of time the cavalry may allow for putting them in safety, either by marching upon the battalion reserve, or by seizing an advantageous position ; to this end, each of the squares will be formed into column, and march in this order ; and if threatened anew, it will halt, and again form itself into square.

200. As the companies successively arrive near the battalion—reserve, each will re-form as promptly as possible, and without regard to designation or number, take place in the column next in rear of the companies already in it.

201. The battalion reserve will also form square, if itself threatened by cavalry. In this case, the companies in marching towards it will place themselves promptly in the sectors without fire, and thus march on the squares.

[LeGal] In a battalion deployed as skirmishers, each company will have its reserve ; the rally will be made upon the same principles as for an isolated company; but, instead of forming in circle, they will form square by two ranks, and by echelon at thirty paces; the reserve will form the first front, the skirmishers who arrive first will form the lateral front, and the others the fourth front; the non-commissioned officers will direct the movement.

[LeGal] When several companies are deployed at one time, each company will deploy on the principles prescribed for an isolated company, and will align itself on the ones already deployed.

the first two files of the right and left, respectively, and opposite to the centre of the line.

29. Skirmishers should be particularly instructed to take advantage of any cover which the ground may offer, and should lie flat on the ground whenever such a movement is necessary to protect them from the fire of the enemy. Regularity in the alignment should yield to this important advantage.

30. When the movement begins, the first lieutenant will face the second platoon *about*, and march it promptly, and by the shortest line, to about one hundred and fifty paces in rear of the centre of the line. He will hold it always at this distance, unless ordered to the contrary.

31. The reserve will conform itself to all the movements of the line. *This rule is general.*

[LeGal] The reserve will be commanded by the third lieutenant, who will have with him the fourth and fifth sergeants. The third lieutenant will place himself two paces in front of it, the fourth sergeant on the left flank, and the fifth sergeant as file closer.

32. Light troops will carry their bayonets habitually in the scabbard, and this rule applies equally to the skirmishers and the reserve ; whenever bayonets are required to be fixed, a particular signal will be given. The captain will give a general superintendence to the whole deployment, and then promptly place himself about eighty paces in rear of the centre of the line. He will have with him a bugler and four men taken from the reserve.

33. The deployment may be made on the right or the centre of the platoon by same commands, substituting the indication *right* or *centre*, for that of *left* file.

34. The deployment on the right or the centre will be made according to the principles prescribed above ; in this latter case, the centre of the platoon will be marked by the

END OF INSTRUCTION FOR SKIRMISHERS.

193. If the deployment is to be made by the flank, the directing company will be moved in the same manner to the front, as soon as it is unmasked, and will then be halted and deployed by the flank on the file indicated. Each of the other companies will be marched by the flank, and when its interval is taken, will be moved on the line, halted, and deployed as soon as the company next towards the direction shall have finished its deployment.

194. It has been prescribed to place the reserves in echelon, in order that they may, in the event of a rally, be able to protect themselves without injuring each other ; and the reserves of the two contiguous companies have been united, in order to decrease the number of the echellons, and to increase their capacity for resisting cavalry.

195. The echellons, in the example given, descend from right to left, but they may, on an indication from the colonel to that effect, be posted on the same principle, so as to descend from left to right.

196. When the color—company is to be deployed as skirmishers, the color, without its guard, will be detached, and will remain with the battalion reserve.

The rally.

197. The colonel may cause all the various movements prescribed for a company, to be executed by the battalion, and by the same commands and the same signals. When he wishes to rally the battalion, he will cause the *rally on the battalion* to be sounded, and will so dispose his reserve to protect this movement.

198. The companies deployed as skirmishers will be rallied in squares on their respective reserves ; each reserve of two contiguous companies will form the first front of the square, throwing to the rear the sections on the flanks ; the

centres of the first and second sections of the second platoon; the fifth sergeant will place himself one pace in front of the centre of the second platoon ; the third sergeant, as soon as he can pass, will place himself on the right of the front rank of the same platoon. The captain will indicate to him the point on which he wishes him to direct his march. The chief of the first platoon will execute what has been prescribed for the chief of the second platoon, Nos. 23 and 24. The fourth sergeant will place himself on the left flank of the reserve, the first sergeant will remain on the right flank.

[LeGal] The first three sergeants will place themselves as has been directed for the deployment forward; one of them will be charged with the direction.

39. At the second command, the first and third lieutenants will place themselves two paces behind the left group of their respective sections.

40. At the command, *march*, the second platoon will face to the right and commence the movement ; the left group of fours will stand fast, but will deploy as soon as there is room on its right, conforming to what has been prescribed, No. 26 ; the third sergeant will place himself on the left of the right group, to conduct it ; the second group will halt at twenty paces from the one on its left, the third group at twenty paces from the second, and so on to the right. As the groups halt, they will face to the enemy, and deploy as has been explained for the left group.

41. The chiefs of sections will pay particular attention to the successive deployments of the groups, keeping near the group about to halt, so as to rectify any errors which may be committed. When the deployment is completed, they will place themselves thirty paces in rear of the centre of their sections, as has been heretofore prescribed. The non-commissioned officers will also place themselves as previously indicated.

its left file.

182. The captain of the fourth company will face it to the right, and the captains of the seventh and eighth companies will face the respective companies to the left.

183. At the command, *march*, the movement will commence. The platoons of the fourth and sixth companies will deploy forward ; the right guide will march on the point which will be indicated to him by the lieutenant colonel.

184. The company which has faced to the right, and also the companies which have faced to the left, will march straight forward. The fourth company will take an interval of one hundred paces counting from the left of the fifth, and its chief will deploy its first platoon on its left file. The seventh and eighth companies will each take an interval of one hundred paces, counting from the first file of the company, which is immediately on its right ; and the chiefs of these companies will afterwards deploy their first platoons on the right file.

185. The guides who conduct the files on which the deployment is made, should be careful to direct themselves towards the outer man of the neighboring company, already deployed as skirmishers ; or if the company has not finished its deployment, they will judge carefully the distance which may still be required to place all these files in line, and will march on the point thus marked out. The companies, as they arrive on the line, will align themselves on those already deployed.

186. The lieutenant colonel and adjutant will follow the deployment, the one on the right, the other on the left ; the movement concluded, they will place themselves near the colonel.

187. The reserves of the companies will be established in echelon in the following manner : the reserve of the sixth company will be placed one hundred and fifty paces in the rear of the right of this company ; the reserves of the fourth and fifth companies, united, opposite the centre of their line of

movement, holding themselves always abreast of the group which is about to halt.

49. The captain can cause the deployment to be made on any named group whatsoever ; in this case the fifth sergeant will place himself before the group indicated, and the deployment will be made according to the principles heretofore prescribed.

50. The entire company may be also deployed, according to the same principles.

To extend intervals.

51. This movement, which is employed to extend a line of skirmishers, will be executed according to the principles prescribed for deployments.

52. If it be supposed that the line of skirmishers is at a halt, and that the captain wishes to extend it to the left, he will command :

1. *By the left flank (so many paces) extend interval.*
2. *MARCH (or double quick—MARCH).*

53. At the command, *march*, the group on the right will stand fast, all the other groups will face to the left, and each group will extend its interval to the prescribed distance by the means indicated No. 40.

54. The men of the same group will continue to preserve between each other the distance of five paces, unless the nature of the ground should render it necessary that they should close nearer, in order to keep in sight of each other. The intervals refer to the spaces between the groups, and not to the distances between the men in each group. The intervals will be taken from the right or left man of the neighboring group.

55. If the line of skirmishers be marching to the front, and the captain should wish to extend it to the right, he will

on the reserve, will command :

Assemble on the reserve.

171. At this command, the skirmishers will assemble by groups of fours ; the front rank men will place themselves behind their rear rank men ; and each group of fours will direct itself on the reserve, where each will take its proper place in the ranks. When the company is re-formed, it will rejoin the battalion to which it belongs.

[LeGal] The reserve will be formed in the order in which it was before the deployment; the skirmishers will assemble upon it, and each will resume his place in his rank.

172. It may be also proper to assemble the skirmishers on the centre, or on the right or left of the line, either marching or at a halt.

173. If the captain should wish to assemble them on the centre while marching, he will command :

Assemble on the centre.

174. At this command, the centre guide will continue to march directly to the front on the point indicated ; the front rank man of the directing file will follow the guide, and be covered by his rear rank man ; the other two comrades of this group, and likewise those on their left will march diagonally, advancing the left shoulder and accelerating the gait, so as to reform the groups while drawing nearer and nearer the directing file ; the men of the right section will unite in the same manner into groups, and then upon the directing file, throwing forward the right shoulder. As they successively unite on the centre, the men will bring their pieces to the right shoulder.

175. To assemble on the right or left file will be executed according to the same principles.

176. The assembly of a line marching in retreat will also be executed according to the same principles, the front rank men marching behind their rear rank men.

63. The left group, conducted by the guide, will continue to move on in the direction previously indicated ; the other groups, advancing the right shoulder, will close to the left, until the intervals are reduced to the prescribed distance.

64. Intervals may be closed on the right, or on the centre, according to the same principles.

65. When intervals are to be closed up, in order to reinforce a line of skirmishers, so as to cause two companies to cover the ground which had been previously occupied by one, the new company will deploy so as to finish its movement at twenty paces in rear of the line it is to occupy, and the men will successively move upon that line, as they shall be unmasked by the men of the old company. The reserves of the two companies will unite behind the centre of the line.

To relieve a company deployed as skirmishers.

66. When a company of skirmishers is to be relieved, the captain will be advised of the intention, which he will immediately communicate to the first and second lieutenants.

67. The new company will execute its deployment forward, so as to finish the movement at about twenty paces in rear of the line.

68. Arrived at this distance, the men of the new company, by command of their captain, will advance rapidly a few paces beyond the old line and halt ; the new line being established, the old company will assemble on its reserve, taking care not to get into groups of fours until they are beyond the fire of the enemy.

69. If the skirmishers to be relieved are marching in retreat, the company thrown out to relieve them will deploy by the flank, as prescribed, No. 38 and following. The old skirmishers will continue to retire with order, and having passed the new line, they will form upon the reserve.

the means above stated, and halted after passing some steps beyond the alignment of the first platoon ; the deployment will then be made by the flank according to the principles prescribed.

160. When one or more platoons are deployed as skirmishers, and the captain should wish to rally them on the battalion, he will command :

Rally on the battalion.

161. At this command, the skirmishers and the reserve, no matter what position the company to which they belong may occupy in order of battle, will rapidly unmask the front of the battalion, directing themselves in a run towards its nearest flank, and then form in its rear.

[LeGal] When the rally is made on the battalion, each platoon and the reserve will unmask the battalion by directing themselves, in a run, towards the nearest flank, and then form in its rear.

162. As soon as the skirmishers have passed beyond the line of file closers, the men will take the quick step, and the chief of each platoon or section will reform his subdivision, and place it in column behind the wing on which it is rallied, and at ten paces from the rank of the file closers. These subdivisions will not be moved except by order of the commander of the battalion, who may, if he thinks proper, throw them into line of battle at the extremities of the line, or in the intervals between the battalions.

163. If many platoons should be united behind the same wing of a battalion, or behind any shelter whatsoever, they should be formed always into close column, or into column at half distance.

164. When the battalion, covered by a company of skirmishers, shall be formed into square, the platoons and sections of the covering company will be directed by their chiefs to the rear of the square which will be opened at the

76. The captain will give a general superintendence to the movement.

77. When he shall wish to halt the skirmishers, he will command :

HALT.

78. At this command, briskly repeated, the line will halt. The chiefs of sections will promptly rectify any irregularity in the alignment and intervals, and after taking every possible advantage which the ground may offer for protecting the men, they, with the three sergeants in the line, will retire to their proper places in rear.

[LeGal] The three sergeants will throw themselves on the line : the first on the right, the second on the left, and the third in the centre. They will retake their places in line of battle, as soon as the line will be halted.

79. The captain, wishing to march the skirmishers in retreat, will command :

1. *In retreat.* 2. MARCH (or *double quick*—MARCH).

80. At the first command, the three sergeants will move on the line as prescribed, No. 73.

81. At the command, *march*, the skirmishers will face about individually, and march to the rear, conforming to the principles prescribed, No. 74.

82. The officers and sergeants will use every exertion to preserve order.

83. To halt the skirmishers, marching in retreat, the captain will command :

HALT.

84. At this command, the skirmishers will halt, and immediately face to the front.

85. The chiefs of sections and the three guides will each conform himself to what is prescribed, No. 78.

146. At the command, *march*, the column will immediately face by the rear rank, and move off in the opposite direction. As soon as the column is in motion, the captain will command :

3. *Guide right (or left)*.

147. He will indicate the direction to the leading guide; the guides will march at their proper distances, and the men will keep aligned.

148. If again threatened by cavalry, the captain will command :

1. *Form square*. 2. MARCH.

149. At the command, *march*, the column will halt ; the first platoon will face about briskly, and the outer half sections of each platoon will be thrown perpendicularly to the rear, so as to form the second and third fronts of the square. The officers and sergeants will promptly rectify any irregularities which may be committed.

150. If he should wish to march the column in advance, the captain will command :

1. *Form column*. 2. MARCH.

151. Which will be executed as prescribed, No. 144.

152. The column being formed, the captain will command :

1. *Forward*.

2. MARCH (or *double quick*—MARCH).

3. *Guide left (or right)*.

153. At the second command, the column will move forward, and at the third command, the men will take the touch of elbows to the side of the guide.

154. If the captain should wish the column to gain ground to the right or left, he will do so by rapid wheels to the side opposite the guide, and for this purpose, will change the guide whenever it may be necessary.

[LeGal] When there will not be time to rally on the

change direction by the same means, and by the same commands, as a line marching in advance ; for example, if the captain should wish to reverse his left, now become the right, he will command :

1. *Left wheel*. 2. MARCH.

At the command, *halt*, the skirmishers will face to the enemy.

95. But if ; instead of halting the line, the captain should wish to continue to march it in retreat, he will, when he judges the line has wheeled sufficiently, command :

1. *In retreat*. 2. MARCH.

To march by the flank.

96. The captain, wishing the skirmishers to march by the right flank, will command :

1. *By the right flank*.

2. MARCH (or *double quick*—MARCH).

97. At the first command, the three sergeants will place themselves on the line.

98. At the command, *march*, the skirmishers will face to the right and move off ; the right guide will place himself by the side of the leading man on the right to conduct him, and will march on the point indicated ; each skirmisher will take care to follow exactly in the direction of the one immediately preceding him, and to preserve his distance.

[LeGal] The right or the left guide will place himself by the side of the man on the right or on the left, to conduct the line.

99. The skirmishers may be marched by the left flank, according to the same principles, and by the same commands, substituting *left* for *right* ; the left guide will place himself by the side of the leading man to conduct him.

100. If the skirmishers be marching by the flank, and

135. If the reserve should be threatened, it will form into a circle around its chief.

136. If the captain, or commander of a line of skirmishers formed of many platoons, should judge that the rally by section does not offer sufficient resistance, he will cause the rally by platoons to be executed, and for this purpose, will command :

Rally by platoons.

137. This movement will be executed according to the same principles, and by the same means, as the rally by sections. The chiefs of platoon will conform to what has been prescribed for the chiefs of section.

138. The captain wishing to rally the skirmishers on the reserve, will command :

Rally on the reserve.

139. At this command, the captain will move briskly on the reserve ; the officer who commands it will take immediate steps to form square ; for this purpose, he will cause the half sections on the flanks to be thrown perpendicularly to the rear ; he will order the men to come to a ready.

140. The skirmishers of each section, taking the run, will form rapidly into groups, and upon that man of each group who is nearest the centre of the section. These groups will direct themselves diagonally towards each other, and in such manner as to form into sections with the greatest possible rapidity while moving to the rear ; the officers and sergeants will see that this formation is made in proper order, and the chiefs will direct their sections upon the reserve, taking care to unmask it to the right and left. As the skirmishers arrive, they will continue and complete the formation of the square begun by the reserve, closing in rapidly upon the latter, without regard to their places in line ; they will come to a ready without command, and fire upon the enemy ; which will also

To fire at a halt.

107. To cause this fire to be executed, the captain will command :

Commence—FIRING.

108. At this command, briskly repeated, the men of the front rank will commence firing ; they will reload rapidly, and hold themselves in readiness to fire again. During this time the men of the rear rank will come to a ready, and as soon as their respective file leaders have loaded, they will also fire and reload. The men of each file will thus continue the firing, conforming to this principle, that the one or the other shall always have his piece loaded.

109. Light troops should be always calm, so as to aim with accuracy ; they should, moreover, endeavor to estimate correctly the distances between themselves and the enemy to be hit, and thus be enabled to deliver their fire with the greater certainty of success.

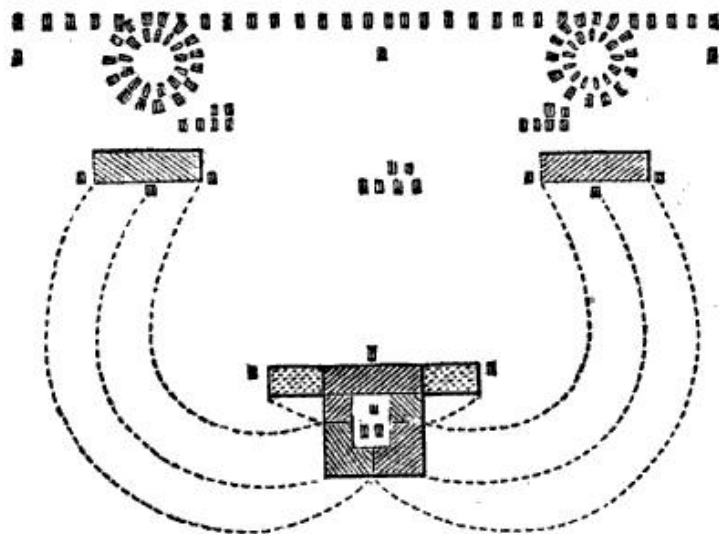
110. Skirmishers will not remain in the same place whilst reloading, unless protected by accidents in the ground.

To fire marching.

111. This fire will be executed by the same commands as the fire at a halt.

112. At the command, *commence firing*, if the line be advancing, the front rank man of every file will halt, fire, and reload before throwing himself forward. The rear rank man of the same file will continue to march, and after passing ten or twelve paces beyond his front rank man will halt, come to a ready, select his object, and fire when his front rank man has loaded ; the fire will thus continue to be executed by each file; the skirmishers will keep united, and endeavor, as much as possible, to preserve the general direction of the alignment.

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To rally by fours, by sections, by platoons, and on the reserve.

front. Those men whose pieces have been discharged, will remain in their places to load them before moving forward, and the firing will be continued agreeably to the principles prescribed above.

118. If the line be firing either at a halt, advancing, or whilst marching by the flank, at the command,

In retreat—MARCH,

the men whose pieces are loaded will remain faced to the enemy, and will fire in this position ; the men whose pieces are discharged will retreat loading them, and the fire will be continued agreeably to principles prescribed, No. 112.

119. If the line of skirmishers be firing either at a halt, advancing, or in retreat, at the command,

By the right (or left) flank—MARCH.

The men whose pieces are loaded will step one pace out of the general alignment, face to the enemy, and fire in this position ; the men whose pieces are unloaded will face to the right (or left) and march in the direction indicated. The men who stepped out of the ranks will place themselves, immediately after firing, upon the general direction, and in rear of their front or rear rank men, as the case may be. The fire will be continued according to the principles prescribed for firing when marching by a flank.

120. Skirmishers will be habituated to load their pieces whilst marching ; but they will be enjoined to halt always an instant, when in the act of charging cartridge, and priming.

121. They should be practiced to fire and load kneeling, lying down, and sitting, and much liberty should be allowed in these exercises, in order that they may be executed in the manner found to be most convenient. [See, Appendix A.] Skirmishers should be cautioned not to forget that, in whatever position they may load, it is important that the piece should be placed upright before ramming, in order that the entire charge of powder may reach the bottom of the bore.