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ASSAULT TRAINING.

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ASSAULT TRAINING.

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THE SPIRIT OF THE OFFENSIVE.

EXTRACTS FROM FIELD SERVICE REGULATIONS (PART I).

"THE essence of infantry tactics consists in breaking down the enemy's resistance by the weight and direction of its fire, and then completing his overthrow by assault. Although the enemy may not await the assault, infantry must be constantly animated with the desire to close with him. To drive an enemy from the field, assault, or the immediate threat of it, is almost always necessary." Sec. 6 (2).

"Decisive success in battle can be gained only by a vigorous offensive." Sec. 99 (1).

"The advance of the firing line must be characterised by the determination to press forward at all costs." Sec. 105 (4).

"Half-hearted measures never attain success in war and the ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{Leach} of determination is the most fruitful source of defeat." Sec. 99 (2).

ASSAULT TRAINING.

CHAPTER I.

PRINCIPLES OF TRAINING.

1. CONCENTRATION.

To teach the soldier to apply on the battlefield the lessons he has learnt on the training ground is the essence and aim of all training.

It is by continued concentration only that any form of training can be so impressed as to become second nature.

If such training has been adequate the soldier in moments of excitement and tension will automatically apply what he has learnt.

2. VITALITY.

Vitality of mind and body is essential to prevent staleness and monotony. Without vitality training is of little value.

All work should be done in short, sharp bursts and be as intense as possible.

3. THE OFFENSIVE SPIRIT.

Every form of battle training must be founded on the offensive spirit.

The chief duty and thought of all should be to kill as many of the enemy as possible, and during periods of training the aggressive spirit and the desire to kill should be impressed on all ranks.

No pains should be spared by instructors to cultivate this spirit and to emphasise its importance in a vivid manner.

All training devices such as dummy figures or targets for bullets, bomb or bayonet should be regarded as representing a real enemy whom it is the soldier's duty to kill in as expeditious a manner as possible with the weapon most suited to the purpose.

4. BULLET AND BAYONET.

The bullet and the bayonet belong to the same parent, the rifle, which is still the deciding factor on the battlefield. One must work with the other.

It is the spirit of the bayonet that captures the position, and of the bullet that holds it.

The bullet also shatters the counter attack, and kills outside bayonet distance.

Bayonet training and musketry training are therefore complementary to one another and must be taught as one subject.

The bomb is valuable for clearing small lengths of trench and for close fighting after a trench has been stormed. It is, however, a weapon quite secondary to the rifle and the bayonet.

5. FIRE AND MOVEMENT.

Fire and movement are inseparable in the attack. Ground is gained by a body of troops advancing while supported by the fire of another body of troops.

This principle of fire and movement should be known to all ranks, and the one object of every advance, namely, to close with the enemy should be emphasised on all occasions.

6. ASSAULT TRAINING.

Assault training may be divided into three stages:—

First Stage.—The training of the individual soldier in the combination of rifle fire and bayonet work in the assault and counter charge. (Chapter II.)

Second Stage.—The training of the individual soldier in bullet, bayonet and bomb with the idea of teaching him to use the weapon appropriate to the situation in which he may find himself. (Chapter III.)

Third Stage.—The collective training of the platoon or company in the employment of all infantry weapons by means of a tactical exercise. (Chapter IV.)

CHAPTER II.

FIRST STAGE.

7. This stage is devoted to training the individual soldier in the combination of rifle fire and bayonet work in the assault and counter-charge. When the class assembles every man should have explained to him the relation between bayonet and bullet in the assault. The principles of the assault and counter-charge should also be made clear. Throughout the training the instructors should foster the fighting spirit and encourage the desire to kill.

8. The practices during this stage are divided into

- Bayonet Practices.
- Firing Practices.
- The Counter-Charge.

The exercises to be carried out on each day should be selected according to the proficiency of those under training. Exercises of an

elementary nature should be used until the class is familiar with the rifle and the bayonet. Later, the more advanced exercises should be undertaken to perfect the combination of bullet and bayonet. They should be carried out in the sequence (i) Assault, (ii) Bayonet, (iii) Bullet, the natural sequence of an assault.

9. BAYONET PRACTICES.

(*Bayonet Training, 1916.*)

(a) *Pointing.*

- (i) By word of command. Long and short point with plenty of movement and vim.
- (ii) Hand indication. Long and short point.
- (iii) Target practice with "blob" or ring-stick. All points.

Quickening practices should be carried out at the end of every individual practice with the class drawn up in a circle, first facing the instructor, later with backs to him.

(b) *Parrying.*

The principles of offensive parrying should be explained and each man should be tested both in and out of a trench in the following :—

- (i) "On Guard" with rifle, to parry attack made with stick.
- (ii) "On Guard" with stick, to parry attack made with rifle; attack to be made while advancing slowly.
- (iii) "On Guard" with rifle, to parry attack made with stick from short point position.
- (iv) "On Guard" with rifle, to parry cut made with stick used as a sword.
- (v) With rifle at "jab" position, to fend off attack made with stick.

(c) *Disarming and disabling.*

- (i) Method of "knocking out" an enemy when an attack has been parried.
- (ii) Method of dealing with enemy when the rifle has been seized, the bayonet broken or come off the rifle.
- (iii) Method of disarming. To be practised at first with sticks.

Quickening practices should be carried out at the end of each individual practice. The class should be drawn up in a circle and practised in making a point and butt stroke, parry, fending off an attack, disarming, &c..

(d) *Assaulting.*

The class should be exercised in the following practices :—

- (i) Pointing at dummies on gallows or on the ground, first at a walk, and then with the pace quickened.

- (ii) Method of getting out of a deep trench. Agility in jumping in, out and over a trench.
 - (iii) Pointing at dummy when jumping into a trench.
 - (iv) Continuous assault over course, combined with rapid fire.
- It should be pointed out that the high port is only adopted when actually preparing to assault. At other times the rifle is carried at the slope or trail or slung according to circumstances.

10. FIRING PRACTICES.

(Firing practices to be dovetailed in with bayonet practices.)

In all practices the necessity of fixing the sights on the rifle at any required range should be emphasised. In the heat of action this is apt to be overlooked.

(a) Application of Fire.

Class in single rank and opened out (*see* para. 16 of "Bayonet Training, 1916").

The instructor explains that each man is to practise quick application of fire at the eye of the man opposite in the spirit and with the same enthusiasm as when using the bayonet. The man's eye should be about one yard from the muzzle of the rifle of the man aiming at him. The muscles and mind must be braced up with the determination to hit every time the trigger is pressed, care being taken that the trigger is not snatched. Opposite numbers should note if the aim is as "declared."

Odd numbers "Rest."

"At the left (right) eye of the opposite number, 5 rounds, Fire."

Accuracy of aim and correct trigger pressing must never be sacrificed. The instructor should check faulty positions, lack of grip, trigger snatching and slackness in reloading after firing. The instructor should carry an eye disc and check the aim of a few men. The standing position will be used in this practice only when the ground is unsuitable for the prone position. Odd numbers will be exercised in a similar manner.

(b) Rapidity and Accuracy in Alteration of Aim and Reloading.

The odd numbers of the class act as targets for the even numbers and *vice versa*. The two ranks are extended to four paces interval and are 50 yards apart.

On the command "Load" both ranks assume the prone position and load. The odd (or even) numbers remain steady while the even (or odd) numbers take their orders from the instructor, *i.e.*, "at the right hand man (second from the left or any named man), ("number of rounds"), Fire." The ranks work for periods of two or three minutes alternately.

Single shots are fired with a view to developing quickness in handling the rifle, grip, change of aim, &c. Direction of rifles and faulty trigger pressing will be observed and checked.

(c) *Development of Power of Command.*

The instructor orders the soldier to aim and fire at parts of his body, clothing, &c., &c.

Method as for (b), except that every few minutes one of the soldiers takes the place of the instructor, gives the necessary orders, and so develops in himself the power of command.

(d) *To Train the Eye and Brain to Work Together.*

Half the class takes up a position in a trench and watches the front for appearances of the remainder posted at 100 yards distance and behind cover if possible. On the given signal the men behind cover take snapshots at those in the trench. Both ranks act independently taking a shot whenever the men opposite expose themselves. After 8 or 10 exposures the men behind cover assault the trench, advancing at the high port in quick time. During the last 30 or 40 yards before reaching the trench the line will break into a steady double finishing up the last 10 yards with a rush and jump into the trench. The defenders will deliver rapid fire until the attackers are within 50 yards of the trench, when they will spring out and wait "On guard" until the order "Charge" is given, each rank passing through the other and assuming positions from which fire could be opened at a retreating enemy. The point of aim at an advancing enemy under 100 yards is normally the waist line. The instructor will discuss each man's actions and the ranks will then change over and repeat the practice. The instructor should be careful to see that men do not get into a careless way of holding their rifles when delivering rapid fire. Unless this point is emphasised rapid fire is unlikely to be effective.

If possible this practice should begin from a further distance, say 300 yards, and two or three advances by alternate sections covered by the fire of the other should be made to get within assaulting distance.

During this time, i.e., before assaulting distance is reached, control should be exercised and the principles of fire and movement illustrated.

(e) *Improvised Range Practices.**(An improvised range of 30 yards.)*

Practice.	Target.	Method of Conducting.
1. Application ... , ...	Bayonet fighting disc. (To represent a German head.)	From cover.
2. Falling Targets ...	Improvised from tins, cartridge cases, &c., at 1 ft. intervals.	From cover.
3. Bayonet and bullet in attack.	Bayonet fighting discs. (To represent a German head.)	Class in extended order, 50 yards from targets. On the command "Fire" men snap 5 rounds, after which the instructor signals "Advance" when each man advances at top speed, bayoneting two prone dummies (sacks) on the way. On arrival at the final position rifles will be loaded and 5 rounds fired. Individual or collective fire will be used according to safety conditions.

These practices will be varied according to the men's proficiency. They are also suitable for competitions and suggested standards are as follows:—

- Practice 1. Rifle to be unloaded. Time to load and fire 60 secs.
 „ 2. Rifle unloaded. Time, 25 secs.
 „ 3. Time from the command "advance" to last shot, 50 secs.

11. THE COUNTER-CHARGE.

In order to prevent being taken at a disadvantage, the holders of a position if without ammunition, must make a controlled and well-timed counter assault and push it home with all the vigour, dash and determination of fresh men against an enemy who has been subjected to an advance under trying circumstances.

Two lines advancing against one another with the bayonet will seldom meet. The one stimulated with the greater fury and confidence, by the force of its determination to conquer, will cause the other line to waver and turn.

When carrying out the exercises described below, the following qualities should be developed:—

- (a) *Determination.*—Each man as he advances must select an individual opponent to kill, and must concentrate all his thoughts upon that determination. He must keep his eyes upon the selected victim and upon him alone, and not upon the advancing lines as a whole.
- (b) *Fury and Dash.*—Every man must shout "charge" as he rushes in upon his opponent.
- (c) *Control.*—While still keeping his eyes upon his victim, each man must develop a "collective sense" which enables him to keep touch to right and left.

First Exercise.

Advance and charge towards the instructor in single rank with scabbards on bayonets. Length of advance and charge from 80 to 100 yards.

Points to be emphasised.

- (a) Control while advancing slowly at the high port.
- (b) Dash and fury during the last 20 yards.
- (c) Resumption of control and opening of fire after completion of charge.

Second Exercise.

To be practised after the principles of an assault have been grasped.

Two lines about 80 to 100 yards apart extended at two paces interval to advance and charge through one another passing right arm to right arm.

Points to be observed as in the first exercise.

Third Exercise.

One or more waves of several lines extended at two paces interval to charge through similar waves.

Waves about 80 to 100 yards apart. Distance between lines about 40 to 50 yards.

Points to be observed as in first and second exercises.

Fourth Exercise.

Attack and counter-attack.

Attackers.

- (a) Begin advance at the trail at about 150 yards from the position, to be assaulted. (Firing from hip can be practised.)
- (b) Begin assault at the high port.
- (c) When within 20 yards of the enemy, charge.

Defenders.

- (a) Lying in the open or in a trench. Fire until no more ammunition is left.
- (b) Advance to front of position without loss of time, come on guard and
- (c) Charge the enemy.

Points to be emphasised.

Before launching a counter bayonet attack endeavour to induce the attacking force to continue its advance as long as possible so that it may become disorganised and exhausted.

Judge the right moment for defenders to leave cover and allow just sufficient time for their charge to develop.

12. At Bullecourt a trench had been taken by two companies of infantry who had run out of bombs and ammunition. Four lines of Germans attacked this trench.

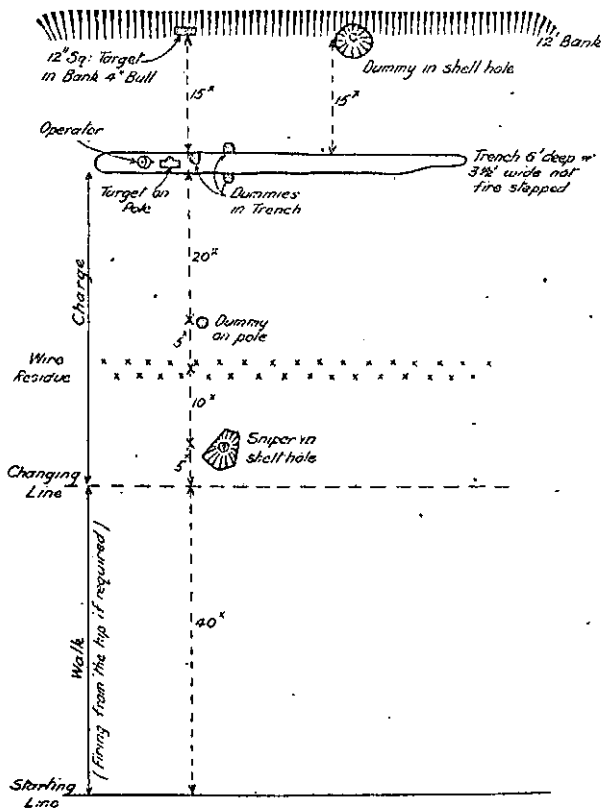
When the leading German line was about 200 yards distant our infantry came out with their bayonets. The enemy hesitated, thinking the infantry would surrender, but as they did not do so the Germans continued slowly to advance.

The infantry then charged with the bayonet, breaking the first two German lines and causing the other two to run away. A satisfactory feature of their flight was that they became entangled in their own wire and were then annihilated by the fire of our guns.

CHAPTER III.

SECOND STAGE.

13. A specimen exercise which can be varied to suit local conditions and considerations of safety is given below. It is to be looked upon as a guide rather than as a stereotyped exercise and is designed to make the individual soldier realise that he should be able to use his three weapons, rifle, bomb and bayonet, with equal facility and to counteract any tendency to regard himself merely as a specialist in his section weapon.



Exercise.

(a) The soldier leaves the starting line as the barrage lifts, and walks at a steady pace to the charging line. Firing from the hip may be practised during this stage if considered desirable.

On reaching the charging line a whistle is blown and he breaks into a double. Then he sees a sniper hiding in a shell hole, bayonets him and proceeds to get through the obstacle.

When accomplished, he is met by a German represented by a dummy whom he at once bayonets. Whilst he is still engaged with this dummy, another German climbs on the parapet and is about to shoot him. The soldier turns immediately and puts a bullet through the target which is held up by an operator in the trench at this moment.

He then charges the trench with a shout and bayonets three dummies in the trench.

As soon as he gets into the trench, he finds he is being bombed from a shell hole beyond, locates the shell hole and throws two bombs into it. He then recharges his magazine and, finding he cannot shoot over the parapets, he overcomes this difficulty by making a firestep. As soon as this is complete he fires five rounds rapid at the target on the bank.

If the man be a rifle bomber, he can be made to carry his cup attachment in his bomb carrier until he arrives in the objective trench when he should be made to employ rifle bombs against a suitable target.

(b) The materials required are

Five sack dummies.

Figure targets.

One target on a pole representing a German shooting.

A twelve foot bank.

Two shell holes which can be made by exploding a couple of 2 inch Trench Mortar Bombs.

(c) The exercise should be carried out at first using blank ammunition for all firing before entering the trench, and bombs unloaded but fuzed.

Later on the exercise should be carried out with live ammunition, including bombs and firing from the hip.

CHAPTER IV.

THIRD STAGE.

14. A specimen exercise which can be varied to suit local conditions and considerations of safety is in Appendix III to Army Council Instruction 1230 of 1917 and in Appendix XIII C. of S.S. 152. "Instructions for the Training of the British Armies in France." It is reproduced here.

FIELD PRACTICE (MUSKETRY AND BAYONET-FIGHTING).

(a) This practice is designed to impress on the minds of all ranks

(i) The necessity for the ready use of rifles.

(ii) The combination of fire and movement.

(iii) The co-operation between the bayonet and the bullet.

The practice may be carried out by sections, platoons, companies, or battalions, according to the ground and facilities available.

- (b) The action of a platoon is taken as an example :—
- (i) Dress.—Fighting dress (S.S. 135, Section XXXI).
 - (ii) Formation.—Platoon in line or in column of sections.
 - (iii) The objective is pointed out.
 - (iv) The platoon advances towards the objective in artillery formation of sections, preceded by scouts.
 - (v) A surprise target appears (out of range of rifle bombs). It is signalled by scouts.
 - (vi) The target is engaged by rifle fire of the scouts.
 - (vii) The target is engaged by rifle fire of the platoon.
 - (viii) The platoon advances by alternate rushes of sections.
 - (ix) The target disappears.
 - (x) A target appears (out of range of rifle bombs) some few minutes later on the original objective.
 - (xi) The platoon deals with the target in the same way as in (vii) and (viii).
 - (xii) When within assaulting distance, the platoon delivers the assault.
- For this purpose, if possible, a bayonet-fighting course should be provided; if this is not possible, some sacks to represent the enemy will suffice, but correct bayonet-fighting methods must be insisted on.*
- (xiii) The objective is gained, patrols pushed out, sentries posted, and consolidation begun.
 - (xiv) A surprise target is shown and rapid fire opened.

(c) The practice can be carried out over any distance from a 30 yards' range upwards, but naturally the more nearly the distance over which this practice is carried out approaches that which would obtain in battle, the better.

It should be carried out, whenever possible, over rough ground and with ball ammunition.

In order to bring about the primary object of the practice, namely the use of the rifle, no other weapons but the rifle should be used at first. At a later stage, when all ranks are proficient with the rifle and bayonet, the use of Lewis guns, rifle bombs, and bombs may be introduced.

NOTES ON CARRYING OUT THIS EXERCISE.

15. An exercise of this kind requires ingenuity and forethought to prevent it becoming a musketry range exercise instead of a practical fighting exercise as intended.

16. Effort should be made to give life to the proceedings and to interest the men in their task.

This can be done by ensuring that the schemes are interesting and varied, by explaining the conditions at the beginning, by discussing the execution at the end and by letting the men see the results of their work.

Unless the interest of the men is aroused the results will not be satisfactory.

17. Details of any scheme cannot be laid down. They depend entirely on the military common sense of the officer responsible for its preparation, and on the ground available.

Principles, however, can be enunciated and are already set out in the text books.

18. There are three participants in any scheme who must all understand that their functions are quite distinct and cannot overlap.

- (a) The commander and his fighting men.
- (b) The director and his assistants or umpires.
- (c) The spectators.

19. As regards the spectators it is only necessary to say that, whatever be their rank, they may not interfere in any way with the exercise, and are to be kept clear of the fighting men and the umpires.

The exercise should always be explained beforehand to the spectators.

20. As regards the other two participants, the distinction between commanding a unit and directing a scheme cannot be too clearly emphasised.

(a) An officer commanding a unit should not attempt to command, and at the same time to direct operations.

(b) Those whose duty it is to direct must be so dressed that the fighting troops recognise them as such and cannot confuse them with those who exercise command.

(c) Section 550 of Musketry Regulations, Part I, lays stress on the principle that no criticism or interference should take place except for safety purposes, until the exercise is concluded.

Unless a commander is given a free hand to carry out an exercise which has been set to him, he is bound to lose interest and so will his men when their attention is distracted by outside interference.

21. Thus, should it be desired to carry out an exercise with a platoon, the platoon commander would be set the scheme by his company commander, or if so desired by the battalion commander, or by an officer specially selected for the purpose.

The officer who sets the scheme, and who therefore cannot be the platoon commander, acts as director and has to assist him anyone he requires, the fewer the better. The director and his assistants wear a distinctive mark or dress.

The musketry officer might be one of the assistant directors and any men required to work the appliances are also assistants. These are all under the orders of the director and of no other authority.

The director and his assistants must deal with any emergency of danger or safety, but cannot give any other orders to the fighting troops except through the platoon commander. The fighting troops

must understand this and not be inconvenienced or allowed to feel that they are under two masters.

During the exercise it is wrong for a battalion commander or officer of any rank to interfere by giving orders or advice unless he is acting as a director or assistant director and the troops know him as such.

22. This system is well understood by all who play games. There is a close analogy between cricket and an exercise of this kind.

(a) The players play the game under the agreed laws, and under the orders of their Captain. These are the fighting men and their Captain is the platoon commander.

(b) The umpires and ground men intervene under conditions well recognised by the players. They do not tell the batsman how to bat or the bowler how to bowl, nor get in the way of the players. They also wear distinctive dress. These are the director and his assistants.

(c) The spectators have their allotted places, keep away from the pitch and do not interfere with their advice or by their presence.

23. Finally the measure of success of the scheme is the measure of interest taken in it by the men.

Time and trouble spent in designing a realistic scheme are seldom wasted, and will bear good fruit on the battlefield.

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