

NEW METHODS IN WAR DESCRIBED BY BARTLETT

Foremost War Correspondent Says Untrained Soldiers Are Helpless and Worthless—Infantry Compared With Artillery.

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Those who knew the great continental armies of the pre-war days would hardly recognize them now. Everything has changed—uniforms, weapons, methods, tactics. Experience has shown that almost all our preconceived ideas were wrong. All armies have worked incessantly to perfect the giant revolution that has taken place. Woe betide the self-satisfied people who enter on a campaign against a modern army with old-fashioned, obsolete arms and with the same ideas in their heads as Europe possessed three years ago.

The fate of Roumania should be a warning to all untried armies, and inexperienced chiefs. Roumania should have played a decisive role in the Near East. The entire course of the war might have been dramatically changed had her intervention been directed into sound strategic channels and had her chiefs studied carefully the lessons of the last three years.

Instead, a headstrong people, brave and determined, but who, like the Bourbons, in the words of Napoleon, "had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing," were allowed to go their own way to disaster and ruin. This crowning lesson was needed to shake off the lethargy and "laissez faire" of the Allied War Council. Mere numbers count but little against skill and iron. The Roumanian army met the fate that always awaits those who will not learn or profit from the experience of the past.

How far has the United States army kept pace with the changes in weapons and tactics? It would be interesting to know.

TRENCH WARFARE BLOW TO CAVALRY.

Cavalry have played no role on the western front for nearly two years. Yet it would be absurd to say that the days of cavalry are numbered. Trench warfare has pushed them out of the limelight for a long period, and the best of the cavalry generals have

resigned their commands in despair and are now commanding infantry divisions and corps.

Field artillery—that is to say, the famous Gernch 75's, the German 7's and the British 18-pounders—has had to be reinforced by new giant artillery, which alone can smash the fortified positions. Nevertheless, the lighter pieces make the most formidable rapid barrage fire during an attack, and if the armies leave their trenches the light guns are essential in great numbers to accompany the rapid-moving infantry.

It is in the infantry itself that you see the greatest changes. The average person's idea of an infantry battalion is that of a thousand men armed with rifles and bayonets who have little to do on their own responsibility except to obey orders of their officers and carry a ghastly weight long distances on their backs to be prepared to face every form of unpleasantness and to lose their lives cheerfully in charging trenches and barbed wire whenever their general considers "the moment" has arrived to capture and hold an enemy's position. This is what an infantry battalion was before the war, but it bears no resemblance to a true picture these days.

Every infantryman is now a highly trained specialist who has a particular job to perform in attack and defense, and who requires at least a year's hard training to perfect him in the use of the particular arm for which he has shown an especial adaptability.

And the irony of modern war is this: After you have selected your man and spent a year's energy in perfecting his physical, moral and technical education, a very high percentage are killed or wounded before they are able to turn their skill and science to account.

At the end of 1915 all the great continental armies began to feel the shortage of men except the British, who had hardly yet touched their reserves of man power. It became obvious that the tactics which involved throwing masses of men in close formation against fortified positions must be abandoned. Otherwise it would soon be impossible to hold the extended fronts. Therefore, from the end of 1915 the new infantry tactics may be said to have been introduced into all the continental armies.

The Allies have gained enormously by the employment of new weapons and methods, most of which were introduced into modern warfare by the Germans. These new tactics and new weapons allow the employment of a

minimum of men with a maximum display of individual initiative and intelligence, which the average English and French soldier possesses in higher degree than the German common soldier.

This is the secret of the success of all the recent allied attacks on the Somme and the failure of the Germans' counter attacks to regain the lost ground. We have laid down certain rules for attack and defense which our men are capable of carrying through to the smallest detail, whereas the Germans, with rules that are doubtless as carefully framed, find their men lacking in that special initiative and individuality which are necessary. It is the individual fighter who counts on the western front today, not the serried ranks advancing "en masse." To the German the system is everything. He is therefore handicapped in facing a foe that now has system plus individuality and initiative.

The French infantry today have reached the highest point of tactical efficiency of any troops engaged in the war. That is to say, they have brought the science of employing each individual to the greatest possible advantage, with a minimum loss. Their losses on the Somme and in the later attacks on Verdun have been extremely small.

STRENGTH OF KAISER'S BATTALIONS REDUCED.

As with the Germans, the gradual reduction after two years of war in the available reserves has led to the increased substitution of material for men, and has allowed of a reduction in the strength of battalions which, instead of weakening their fighting power, has materially increased it.

Every French army has now a special school established behind the lines in which instruction is given in the new tactics and in the employment of new weapons. Officers and men are sent from battalions at the front for a three months' course at one of these schools. The calm, methodical manner in which their education is completed in the midst of war is a remarkable example of the thoroughness and efficiency of the French nation. The result has been a revolution in the fighting efficiency of the French infantry.

At first every French battalion consisted of roughly a thousand men, all armed with rifles and bayonets, divided into four companies with a mitrailleuse section of two guns. Now less than 50 per cent of the men in a French infantry battalion even carry rifles. The remainder are trained to use special weapons more effective than rifles.

NEW ORGANIZATION OF FRENCH ORGANIZATION.

Each battalion now consists of three companies of infantry and one machine-gun company with eight mitrailleuses. Each company is divided into four platoons, which are in turn divided into four sections. Some of the men carry automatic rifles, others hand grenades, others machine grenades and the rest rifles. But all the men who still carry rifles are also specialists in the use of one of the other weapons, and they drop their rifles and take the place of the men who fall during an attack. Each section is under a specially trained noncommissioned officer.

Each battalion also carries a small 1½-inch gun which can be mounted by four men or dragged on a light carriage. This weapon (one-half the size of the American field artillery gun) has been found extremely effective in dealing with the German machine guns during an attack when the infantry have approached so close to the enemy that the heavier artillery behind the infantry can not safely be used. The lighter gun then knocks out hidden nests of enemy machine guns. It is extremely accurate up to 500 yards, and can fire twenty shots a minute.

A French battalion advances to the attack in extremely open formation in successive waves. The formation naturally depends on the ground, but usually the bomb throwers and the men carrying the automatic rifles march in the first wave. Behind them come more bomb throwers and the men armed with the machine grenades or rifle-firing bombs. This ingenious weapon consists of a kind of iron cup fitted on to the end of an ordinary rifle. The grenade is placed in this and the rifle fired in the ordinary manner.

The gases of the discharge hurl the bomb 150 yards, while the bullet, passing through the center of the grenade, releases the spring which causes it to explode.

The men who are armed with rifles march behind and are sent forward as gaps occur in the first waves. Thus, if a bomb thrower falls, an expert in this line is sent forward to take his place.

If a man carrying an automatic rifle falls, another trained in the use of this weapon is always at hand, and so the machinery of war is always manned.

SPECIAL GRENADES TO CLEAR DUGOUTS.

There are special men who carry what is known as incendiary grenades. This is a kind of a patent cleaner of enemy dugouts and subterranean passages. On exploding it burns fiercely, letting out vast quantities of sulphurous smoke, suffocating in its effects, but otherwise harmless. No one can endure it. The enemy is thus forced into the open, where he must fight, surrender or die.

The tactics of a battalion in defense have changed as drastically as

in attack. If the enemy now assaults a French position this is what he must pass through. The curtain of fire of artillery to start with. If the range becomes shorter he meets rifle fire and the machine guns, each firing 500 shots a minute. Then, at 150 yards from the trench, he is met by a second barrage fire of bombs from the rifle grenades. If there be any survivors they are met at 40 yards by bombs thrown by hand, by close rifle fire and machine guns that spray bullets as a hose sprays water. If any reach their objective they face bayonets. The whole attack is under dense white smoke of hundreds of exploding bombs.

It will be seen how carefully trained and organized an infantry must be. Each man has his specified job and his particular weapon, in the use of which he has been found to display a special aptitude. Each man has a responsibility which never fell to the share of the individual infantryman in the old-fashioned attack. This gives the men an interest in their work and allows them that initiative and intelligence for which the individual French soldier is so justly renowned.