

**OPERATION ORDERS,
FIELD ARTILLERY: A
STUDY IN THE TECHNIQUE
OF BATTLE ORDERS**

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Operation Orders, Field Artillery: A Study in the Technique of Battle Orders by H. G. Bishop

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H. G. BISHOP

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OPERATION ORDERS

FIELD ARTILLERY

A Study in the Technique of Battle Orders

BY

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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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PREFACE

This work was suggested by the publication, "Battle Orders," by Captain von Kiesling of the German Army, a book which has been used with great success at the Army Service Schools. Von Kiesling's work, however, deals with German units on a difficult foreign map and relates almost wholly to infantry.

The situations herein presented have been worked out repeatedly by officers of all grades during the past two years at Fort Sill in postgraduate school work, target practice, actual maneuvers with troops and in examinations for promotion. They therefore represent the best thought of a large number of officers and it seemed well to put the result of their efforts at the disposal of the field artillery at large.

With "estimates of the situation" and "decisions" this paper has nothing to do. That is a separate study in itself. The decision having been made, this study takes up the work of executing it. Whatever the decision, good, bad, or indifferent, it must be carried out and can only be so carried out by the issue of proper orders all down the line.

In the execution of decisions, this work follows the principles and the technique laid down in the new Drill and Service Regulations for Field Artillery recently prepared by the Field Artillery Board. Units are taken with the organization laid down in the Tables of Organization for the U. S. Army, 1914.

In the preparation of this matter, the writer is indebted to many of the officers of the 5th Field Artillery for valuable suggestion and criticism and to Lieut.-Col. Edward F. McGlachlin, 5th Field Artillery, and Capt. Fox Connor, Field Artillery, for a careful review of the manuscript.

Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

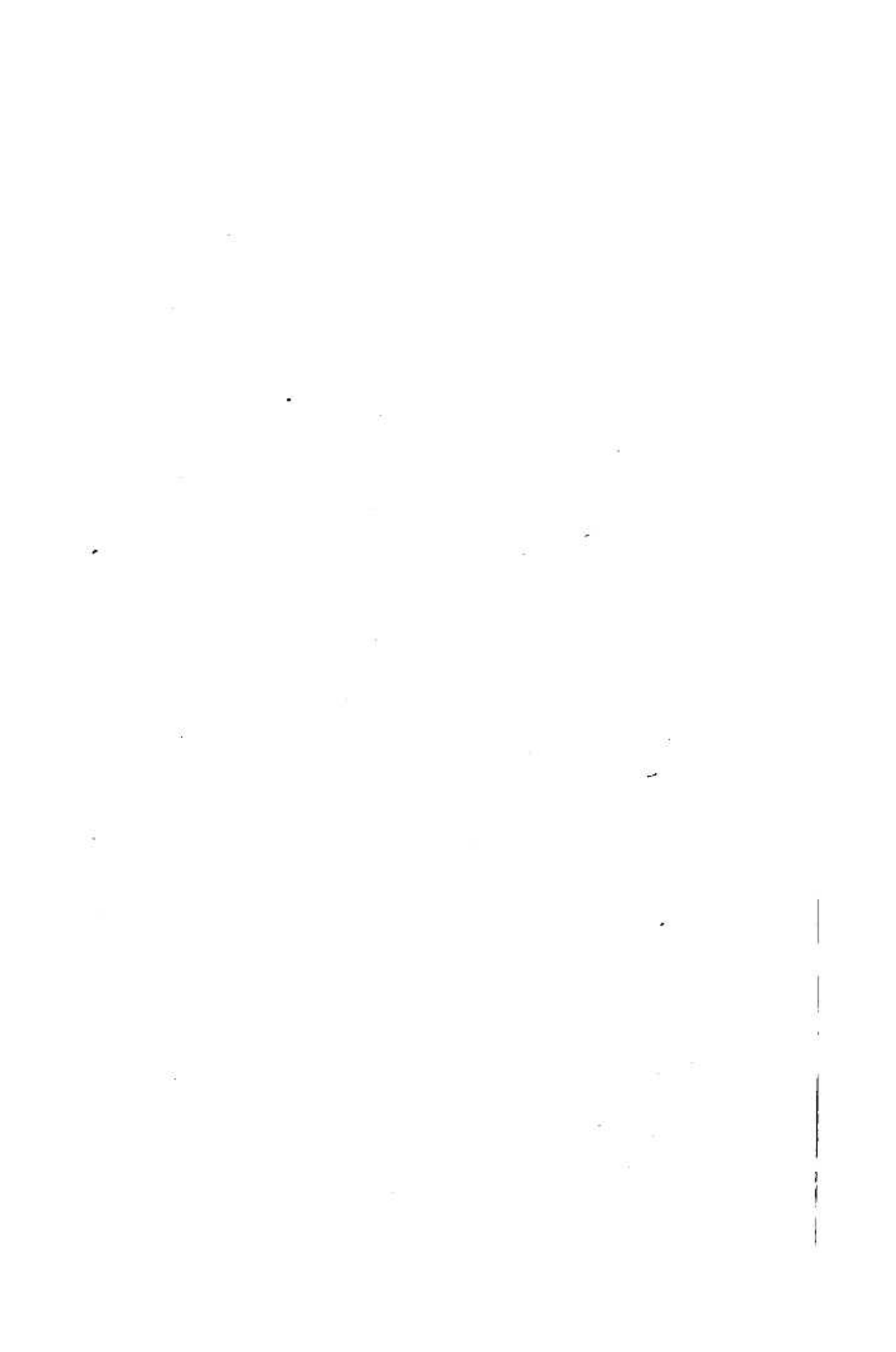
H. G. B.

June 10, 1916.

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PART I—FIELD ORDERS

THE DECISION

Upon receipt of an order from superior authority and more frequently due to certain circumstances or a combination of circumstances, every officer and non-commissioned officer is confronted with the necessity of making an estimate of the situation and a decision. This decision must be communicated to subordinates with a statement of their duties and it is then their duty to carry out the decision in the manner ordered, departing therefrom only when conditions are found to so differ from those considered by the superior or when such circumstances arise that compliance is inadvisable.

Decisions are not always perfect. Frequently we will be confronted with bad or faulty decisions, decisions with which we do not agree, and for this reason some poor decisions have been purposely introduced into this study. If the decision is not the best, it is all the more reason that its weakness should be remedied, if possible, by perfect execution which primarily requires accurate orders by subordinates. It would be difficult to say which were worse; an excellent decision with faulty orders and correspondingly faulty execution, or a poor decision with excellent orders. In my opinion, success will more often be attained under a faulty decision, decisively announced and unwaveringly carried out by clear and positive orders, than under an excellent decision that fails of execution by reason of faulty orders.

THE ORDER

The following remarks from the preface of Von Kiesling's book "Battle Orders" are applicable to our service—in fact our officers are notoriously weak in this important subject of giving orders.

I have noticed that in all our applicatory work the battle order is less studied than any other. Among our young officers who study tactics at all seriously, there are few who find any difficulty in issuing orders to set a

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division on the march or place it in cantonments; but there are not so many who can give battle orders quickly, from the saddle.

The management of an army grows constantly more complicated, through the introduction of new and improved articles of equipment. To give proper and timely orders for the use of all these things is no easy task; to forget nothing important, and at the same time to keep the orders clear and concise, requires practice. This is what I mean by the expression "technique of orders,"—skill and certainty in giving orders, acquired by deep reflection and constant practice. This must come from one's own experience,—from a carefully formed style, from cultivation of the intellect, from strengthening the will.

According to the field Service Regulations, battle orders must not be hampered by any form. Orders should be given verbally or in writing, according to circumstances,—provided only that they distinctly express the commanding officer's will, assume full responsibility, and overlook no part of the command. The orders will then necessarily be good; excellent, if expressed in emphatic, brief, military language.

While it is essential that subordinates make their minor decisions and issue orders to carry out strictly and loyally the orders of their superiors, the latter owe it to their subordinates to allow them *time* for proper estimation and decision and the issue of orders. Too often the regimental or battalion commander takes his time in formulating his own decision, then hurriedly issues a heterogeneous mass of instructions and becomes impatient if the wheels do not turn at once. Due allowance must be made for time consumed in the transmission of orders, and organizations should be regularly practiced in this work. It is also of the greatest importance that organizations be oriented and kept oriented during a tactical exercise. If this is habitually done, much time may be saved when it becomes necessary to give an order. Without orientation, subordinate leaders can only blindly obey the letter of their orders and coöperation becomes a negligible quantity.

There are many expressions and words in our language which have come to have a technical military meaning, frequently very different from their dictionary meaning. It is essential that they be used and understood in their technical military sense. The following historical example illustrates the dire results from failure to observe three cardinal principles in the giving of field orders: