

**A CATECHISM ON  
SKIRMISHING AND  
OUTPOST DUTY**

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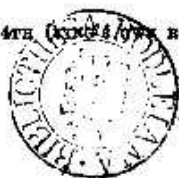
**W. G. CAMERON**

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A  
CATECHISM  
OF  
SKIRMISHING AND OUTPOST DUTY.

BY  
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## PREFACE

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THIS Catechism on Skirmishing and Outpost duties was prepared by me for the use of my own Battalion at our frequent examinations of officers, non-commissioned officers, and men, in these and other subjects, and as the best means of ensuring a thorough theoretical knowledge, on the part of all ranks, preparatory to subsequent practice, when suitable ground could be obtained.

As the work may possibly be useful to others—especially to young officers preparing for promotion—I have been induced to offer it for general circulation.

From a tolerably long experience as permanent President of an Examination Board at Aldershot, and in the Southern District, on candidates for promotion, I think I may affirm that there is nothing in the following pages at variance with our "Field Exercise," to many of the general rules in which, only a rather more extended application has been given.

W. G. CAMERON,

Colonel, Commanding 1st Battalion 4th  
(King's Own Royal) Regiment.

*Gibraltar*, 1876.





## SKIRMISHING.

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N.B.—Words given by the Instructor of the drill are in capital letters; those given by the Captain or Section-commanders, in *italics*.

### FIELD EXERCISE. PART I.—THE SQUAD.

Q. 1.—What is the object of moving in extended order?

A.—To admit of the enemy's fire passing harmlessly through the intervals,—to enable each individual soldier to move with ease, and take advantage of cover when engaged with the enemy, and thus inflict the greatest loss on him with the least amount of danger and exposure to himself,—to shake and damage the enemy as much as possible, and enable the reserves to come up in comparative safety and complete his defeat.

<sup>1</sup> This is not so easy as it reads, but requires a good deal of practice. It is of the greatest importance, as general clumsiness or delay in this respect, when skirmishers are at close quarters with the enemy, would (even if not entailing defeat) be attended with great and unnecessary loss of life.

Q. 2.—What has the recruit to be instructed in and accustomed to, in order to teach him how to use cover and avoid unnecessary exposure?

A.—How to avail himself of the slightest inequality of ground or smallest patch of cover—running or creeping up to, or falling back on such cover, when firing advancing or retiring, without unnecessary exposure. He must also be accustomed to throw himself flat on the ground, and rise again with the greatest agility and rapidity.<sup>2</sup>

\* To ensure this, however, don't teach the recruit to be always nervously watching the next directing file, for fear of losing his distance for a moment.

This practice (too often the habit of drill sergeants) only leads to the very thing to be avoided, when it comes to skirmishing on broken ground.

One man closing unnecessarily, causes the men on the outer flank to do the same; then they have to ease off and get forward, and the men sway uncertainly hither and thither.

On the contrary, — especially when advancing in short rushes, — the recruit should be taught to advance very much on the same principle as in 'marching with intervals' (Part I. Sec. 10, last para.), viz.: taking a point to his front and advancing on it. He will see after a step or two if he is out in his reckoning, and will easily rectify his mistake. But by drilling recruits as first mentioned you teach them to be always looking at their neighbours instead of at the enemy, and thus check their proper freedom of action and rapidity of movement.

Q. 3.—What has at the same time to be impressed on the recruit, when acting with a line of skirmishers?

A.—That he must keep his interval\* and the general alignment, as much as possible—only taking advantage of cover in his immediate front and rear.

## Q. 4.—Why?

A.—Because, otherwise, the skirmishers get *clubbed* and crowded, are in each other's way when firing, and are exposed to heavier losses from the enemy's artillery.

\* It is considered of the utmost importance in well-trained armies to impress the recruit with certain useful doctrines—to make him self-possessed and less liable to panic.

Q. 5.—What should be impressed upon recruits and young soldiers, as regards the danger to be apprehended from artillery fire?

A.—That they need have little or no fear of artillery, when they are in extended order and do not crowd; but, on the contrary, can always capture guns, if unsupported by infantry.

Q. 6.—What other necessary maxims should be impressed on all recruits?

A.—That they have nothing to fear from cavalry, which can easily be beaten back. That, if attacked by infantry, they must remain perfectly steady, and keep up the fire till the enemy is close to the muzzles of their rifles. That, whether attacking or defending, he who turns his back on the breechloader is lost.

Q. 7.—How are recruits best taught skirmishing, when they have made sufficient progress in the mere drill?

A.—By opposing two squads of recruits at 500 or 600 yards apart and ordering them to attack each other, moving first in quick time, and, as they get nearer, in double time. The "Halt" is sounded every 30 or 40 paces, when suitable positions are reached, and the men are allowed a few seconds to get under cover within 5 or 10 paces from where they are halted.

When all have placed themselves, the instructors of each squad go round—noting every