

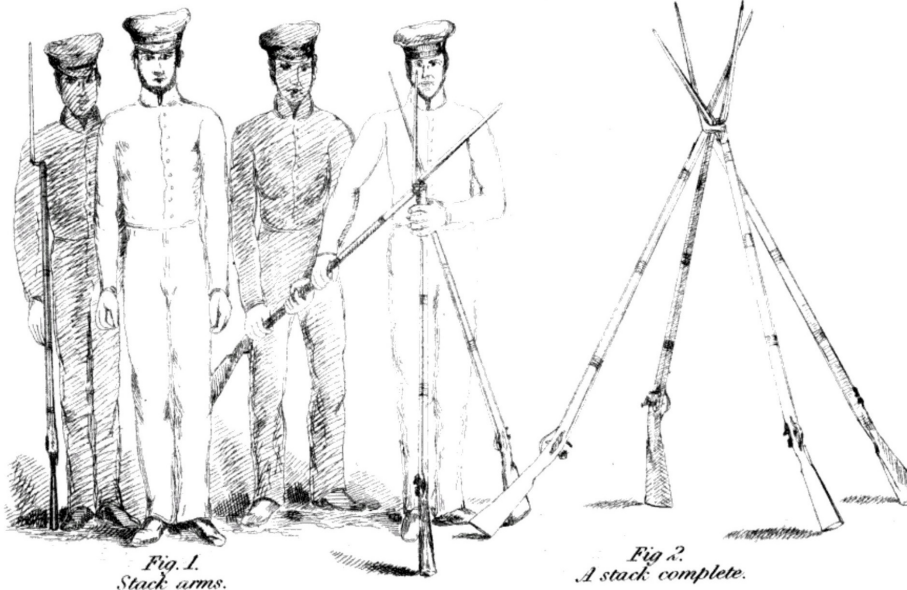
Take—ARMS!
The Progression of Methods for Resuming Arms
from
Scott, Gilham, Baxter, 1861 Us Tactics, Casey &c.
by
Mark Silas Tackitt

Your arms, perhaps, you may have stacked ;
Perhaps they're in your hand ;
And if the latter is the case,
“*Attention,*” I command.

—Rhymed Tactics, John A. Godfrey (1862)

This article compares five similar methods of unstacking muskets with triangular bayonets from the American drill manuals of Winfield Scott (1835) through Silas Casey (1862). Explored are : (1) stacking arms , (2) the differences and similarities when taking arms per text from the manuals, (3) comments about the differences and similarities, and (4) original text from all five methods plus a few more for reference. Also included are the methods of stacking and resuming arms for three ranks from Scott and one rank from Upton.

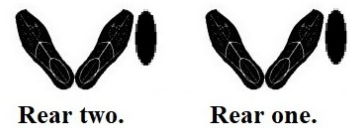
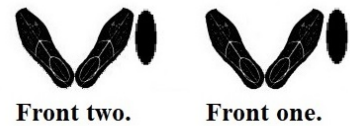
1. CREATING THE STACK



Before stacking, the squad of four stands in the position of the soldier with pieces at order arms. Stack can also be formed with the four starting at shouldered arms. Per instruction from Casey's *School of the Soldier* :

1. **Attention.** 2. **SQUAD.**

Stack—ARMS!

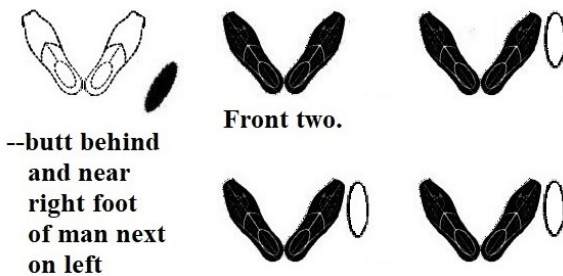


425. At the command :

Stack—ARMS,

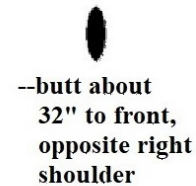
the **front-rank man of every even-numbered file** will pass his piece before him, seizing it with the left hand above the middle

band, and place the butt behind and near the right foot of the man next on the left, the barrel turned to the front.



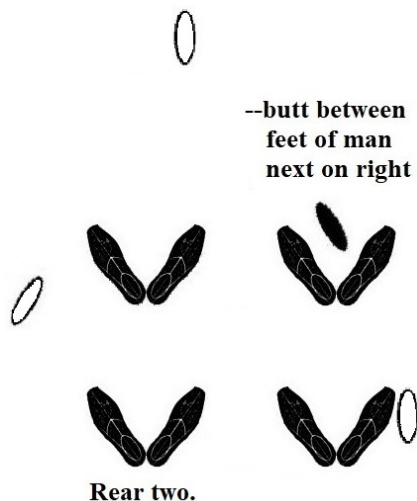
At the same time the **front-rank man of every odd-numbered file** will pass his piece before him, seizing it with the left hand below the middle band, and hand it

to the man next on the left; the latter will receive it with the right hand two inches above the middle band, throw the butt about thirty-two inches to the front, opposite to his right shoulder, inclining the muzzle toward him, and lock the shanks of the two bayonets : the lock of this second piece toward the right, and its shank above that of the first piece.

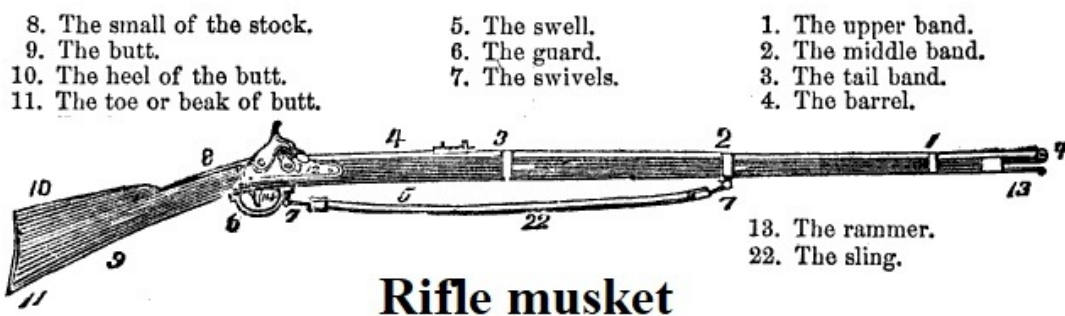


The **rear-rank man of every even file** will project his bayonet forward, and introduce it (using both hands) between

and under the shanks of the two other bayonets. He will then abandon the piece to his file leader, who will receive it with the right hand under the middle band, bring the butt to the front, holding up his own piece and the stack with the left hand, and place the butt of this third piece between the feet of the man next on the right, the S plate to the rear.



The stack thus formed, the rear-rank man of every odd file will pass his piece into his left hand, the barrel turned to the front, and sloping the bayonet forward, rest it on the stack.



2. RESUMING ARMS WITH ALL METHODS INSERTED ONTO CASEY.

427. Both ranks being re-formed in rear of their stacks on a signal, the instructor will command :

Take—ARMS.

428. At this command, the rear-rank man of every odd-numbered file will (*withdraw / remove*) his piece from the stack ; the front-rank man of every even file will seize his own piece with *his / the* left hand and that of the man on his right with *his / the* right hand, both

(above the lower band - cg / below the middle bands - b) [not in Scott] ;

the rear-rank man of the even file will seize his piece with the right hand

(below the lower band - cg61 / at the middle band - s / below the middle band - b)

(if the rifle musket be used the piece will be seized *at the middle band - c*) ;

— b: (*will advance the hollow of his right foot towards the right heel of his file leader,*)

— s: (*advancing for the purpose the hollow of his right foot as far as the right heel of his file leader*) ;

(*these two / both*) men will

(raise up the stack to loosen the rammers, or shanks of the bayonets. - c)

(raise up the stack to loosen the rammers or bayonets. - g)

(raise up the stack to loosen the rammers ; - 61)

(raise up the stack to loosen the shanks - s)

(raise the stack, close together, turn the knuckles in, which movement unlocks the

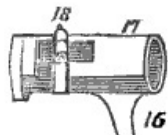
bayonets readily - b)

The front-rank man (*of every odd file - cg61*)

(will facilitate the disengagement of the rammers, if necessary, by drawing them out slightly with the left hand, and - cg61)

*(will receive his piece from the hand of the man next on the left - csg61) ;
(will pass the piece in his right hand over to the man on his right - b) ;*

(the four men will retake / all taking - b) the position (of the soldier - csg61) at (order / ordered) arms.



- 15. The blade of bayonet.
- 16. The shank of bayonet.
- 17. The socket.
- 18. The clasp.

Triangular bayonet

3. COMMENTS ABOUT DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES IN TAKING ARMS

a. Differences Without Distinction

While most instruction from one manual to another is identical, the writers sometimes use different words and phrases. Some use shorter sentences with periods while others use longer sentences with semicolons. Many are differences without distinction. They are :

he / the,
odd file / odd-numbered file
these two / both,
withdraw / remove,
raise / raise up, and
above the lower band / below the middle band.

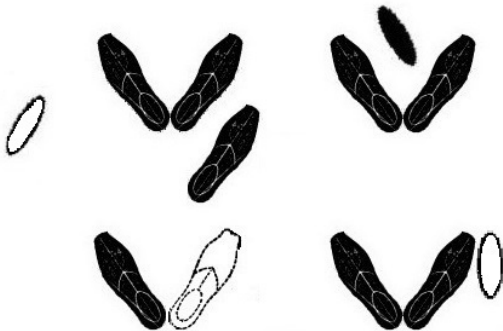
Wait. With an eleven inch space between the lower and middle bands on an 1861 Springfield rifle musket, placing the hand above the lower or below the middle seems like a big difference. Relatively speaking, no. First, Scott provided no instruction about where the twos place their hands on the weapons. Second, instruction does not say, “at

the lower” or “*at the middle*” band. One says “*above*” while the other “*below*.” Placing a hand anywhere between the lower and middle bands technically conforms to the instruction for either. While different, the distinction is minimal.



Not in Casey or Gilham :
Rear two advances hollow of right foot as far as right heel of file leader.

b. A Difference with Distinction : don’t advance the right foot for Civil War



Rear two.

The rear-rank two assists the front-rank two in raising the stack. For the rear-rank two to reach the stack easier, Scott instructed him to advance the hollow of his right foot toward the right heel of his file leader. Baxter also included this instruction to advance the right foot. Not for Gilham, the 1861 Tactics, or Casey. They removed instruction about advancing the foot. For these Civil War manuals, the right foot stays in place.

c. An Exception to the Difference with Distinction : middle band for Casey musket

For the Civil War manuals—foot *not* advanced—the rear-rank two seizes his weapon “below the *lower* band.” In Casey, this instruction only applies if the weapon is the shorter rifle. For the longer rifle musket, he specifically instructs that the weapon be seized “*at the middle band*” as in Scott and Baxter. But don’t advance that right foot!

d. Where does Rear-Rank One place the butt?

None of the manuals provide instruction for where the rear-rank one places the butt when leaning his weapon onto the stack.

e. A Publishing Error : Rear-rank, not front!

Text published in the manuals isn’t always correct. This is one of those times.

Per Baxter, “the *front rank* man of every odd file will remove his piece from the stack.” No, it’s actually the *rear* rank, not the *front*, one who commences the process.

Proof. For all the manuals, the first piece to be removed from the stack is last weapon place upon the stack aka “*the leaner*.” The soldier who placed it there was the rear-rank one, not the front-rank one. Per the last sentence of stacking arms in Baxter :

“Every odd numbered file of the *rear rank* will pass his piece into his left hand, barrel turned to the front, and place it against the stack, advancing his left foot for that purpose.”

The text in this article notes that the *rear rank* one removes his piece, not the *front rank* one.

f. *Leaning vs. Raising and Raising Then Withdrawing*

Frustrated with shanks not unlocking readily, reenactors have resorted to two similar variations to unlock the bayonets. One is for the stack - on the ground - to be leaned forward and then unlocked by reversing the steps used to create the stack. The other is for both twos : (1) to raise the stack and (2) for the rear-rank two to withdraw his musket which unlocks the shanks for front-rank two.

Both methods unlock the stack and allow the front to pass the weapon in his right hand to the man on his right. Unlocking occurs by doing, *in reverse*, the steps used to lock the shanks. These are : (1) remove leaner, (2) withdraw rear-rank two, (3) pass to front-rank one, and (4) order arms. While reversing the steps is an effective way to unlock the shanks, no manual instructs the rear-rank two to perform any task other than raise the stack.

The first variation, leaving the stack on the ground and leaning it forward, clearly contravenes the explicit instruction to *raise up* the stack. Also, the timing is off. In the manuals, the twos commence the action together. Here, the rear-rank two waits for his file partner to perform three tasks before he touches his musket : (1) leaning the stack forward, (2) clearing the musket from the feet of front-rank one, and (3) making it available for rear-rank two. Then rear-rank two performs two more tasks to unlock the shanks : (4) he seizes his weapon and (5) withdraws his bayonet to unlock the shanks.

The second variation, raising the stack then withdrawing the rear-rank bayonet, seems closer to the intent of all instruction. It is raised, right? Yes, but, no manual instructs the rear-rank two to raise the stack *and* withdraw his bayonet. Raising the stack *causes* shanks to unlock. A strict construction of Casey shows how this can occur.

There are three important factors : (1) the front-rank two seizes low ; (2) the rear-rank two seizes high ; and (3) the rear-rank two maintains the space between him and the front rank by not stepping forward. The reach of the rear-rank man stops while his file partner in the front rank still has room to continue reaching. In theory, the front-rank two's reach extends beyond the length of the rear rank's bayonet.

To enhance the process, the rear-rank two will inevitably withdraw his bayonet

before his front-rank file partner has extended fully his reach. Withdrawing the rear-rank bayonet means reversing the steps used to lock the shanks.

g. Through or Around the Stack?

None of the manuals instruct whether the front-rank two reaches his arm *through* the stack or *around* the stack.

For example, all the manuals instruct the front-rank two to “*seize his own piece with the left hand and that of the man on his right with his right hand.*” No help. Next, the rear-rank two seizes “*his piece with the right hand.*” Still, no help. As noted, hand placement on the weapons may vary depending upon manual and type of weapon. Still waiting for that help...

Four of the five manuals use similar wording to accomplish raising of the stack, but none say *how* the shanks unlock :

(raise up the stack to loosen the shanks - s)

(raise up the stack to loosen the rammers - 61)

(raise up the stack to loosen the rammers or bayonets - g)

(raise up the stack to loosen the rammers, or shanks of the bayonets - c)

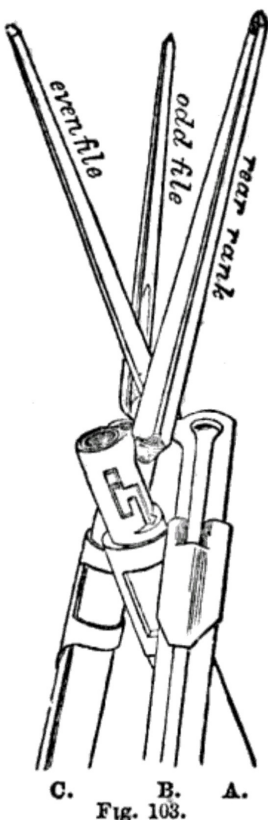
As noted in the last section, this instruction implies that the shanks are unlocked by the mere act of raising the stack. Baxter’s 1861 manual adds instruction stating *how* the shanks become unlocked :

“...raise the stack, close together, turn the knuckles in, which movement unlocks the bayonets readily.”

Raise, close and turn.

Before raising, shanks are locked and bayonets are opened as in Fig. 103 from Baxter. (View is from front and would be the same for all five methods.) If any one of the bayonets is opened as in Fig. 103, then the shanks will maintain some degree of cohesion.

Inserting an arm into the stack obstructs the closing and keeps one or more bayonets opened. The remedy is applying force to unlock the shanks. Reaching around and raising the stack closes the bayonets and allows the knuckles to be turned for the ready unlocking of the shanks. No force necessary.



The question becomes whether Baxter's method conforms to the unspecified intent of the other manuals or whether it is a method distinct and different than the other manuals.

The only downside to the reach around is that the handoff of the front-rank one's weapon is not as clean as reaching through the stack.

h. Rammers and Shanks

Scott contains no instruction for using rammers when stacking or taking arms. For taking arms, Scott states to "raise up the stack to *loosen the shanks*." Hardee's Light Infantry Tactics of 1855 employed the shorter rifle with sword bayonet rather than the longer musket with triangular bayonet and shank. Lacking a shank, instruction in the 1855 manual said to, "raise up the stack to *loosen the rammers*." The 1861 Tactics kept this phrase. Gilham extended it to, "*loosen the rammers or bayonets*." Casey threw it all in with, "*loosen the rammers, or shanks of the bayonets*."

4. THE MANUALS CONSULTED

For easier reading these large paragraphs, a hard return and tab have been inserted to better identify which man performs which task and when.

i. Winfield Scott / Two Ranks / Musket / New York : George Dearborn. (1835)

416. To break ranks, and to resume arms, the same commands will be given in this, as in the preceding case ; but at the command, take arms, the rear rank man of every odd file will withdraw his piece from the stack ;

the front rank man of every even file will seize his own piece with the left hand, and that of the man on his right with the right hand ;

the rear rank man of every even file will seize his piece with the right hand at the middle band, advancing for the purpose the hollow of his right foot as far as the right heel of his file leader ;

these two men will raise up the stack to loosen the shanks ;

the front rank man of every odd file will receive his piece from the hand of the man next on the left, and

the four men will retake the position of the soldier at ordered arms.

j. Baxter / Musket / Philadelphia : King & Baird, 607 Sansom St. (1861)

At this command the [rear] rank man of every odd file will remove his piece from the stack—

the front rank man of every even file will seize his own piece with his left hand, and that of the man on his right with his right hand, both below the middle bands.

The rear rank man of every even file will advance the hollow of his right foot towards the right heel of his file leader, and with his right hand seize his own piece below the middle band—

both men will raise the stack, close together, turn the knuckles in, which movement unlocks the bayonets readily—

the front rank man will pass the piece in his right hand over to the man on his right, and

all taking the position of ordered arms.

k. Gilham / Musket / Richmond, Va. West & Johnson, 145 Main St. (1861)

224. At this command, the rear rank man of every odd numbered file will withdraw his piece from the stack ;

the front rank man of every even file will seize his own piece with the left hand, and that of the man on his right with his right hand, both above the lower band ;

the rear rank man of the even file will seize his piece with the right hand below the lower band ;

these two men will raise up the stack to loosen the rammers or bayonets ;

the front rank man of every odd file will facilitate the disengagement of the rammers, if necessary, by drawing them out slightly with the left hand, and will receive his piece from the hand of the man next on his left ;

the four men will retake the position of the soldier at order arms.

l. 1861 US Tactics / Rifle / Philadelphia : J.B. Lipincott & Co. (1861)

413. At this command, the rear rank man of every odd numbered file will withdraw his piece from the stack ;

the front rank man of every even file will seize his own piece with the left hand and that of the man on his right with his right hand, both above the lower band ;

the rear rank man of the even file will seize his piece with the right hand below the lower band ;

these two men will raise up the stack to loosen the rammers ;

the front rank man of every odd file will facilitate the disengagement of the rammers, if necessary, by drawing them out slightly with the left hand, and will receive his piece from the hand of the man next on his left ;

the four men will retake the position of the soldier at order arms.

m. Casey / Rifle and Rifle Musket / New York : D. Van Nostrand, 192 Broadway. (1862)

428. At this command, the rear-rank man of every odd-numbered file will withdraw his piece from the stack ;

the front-rank man of every even file will seize his own piece with the left hand and that of the man on his right with his right hand, both above the lower band ;

the rear-rank man of the even file will seize his piece with the right hand below the lower band (if the rifle musket be used the piece will be seized at the middle band) ;

these two men will raise up the stack to loosen the rammers, or shanks of the bayonets.

The front-rank man of every odd file will facilitate the disengagement of the rammers, if necessary, by drawing them out slightly with the left hand, and will receive his piece from the hand of the man next on his left ;

the four men will retake the position of the soldier at order arms.

- n. Upton / Two Ranks / Musket / New York : D. Appleton & Co., 443 & 445 Broadway. (1868)

TAKE - ARMS.

Two times and two motions.

429. (*First motion.*) At the command *take*, the odd number of the rear rank will take his piece from the stack, and resume the order arms ;

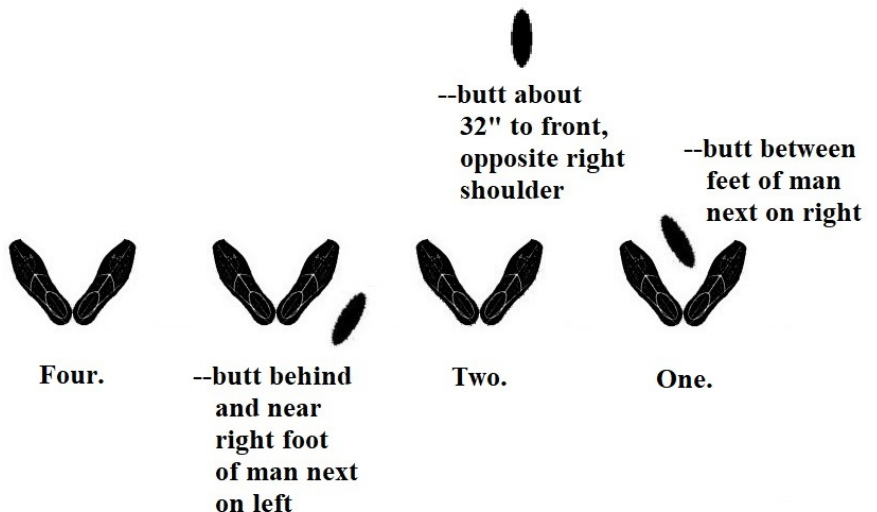
the even number of the front rank will seize his own piece with the left and the piece of his rear-rank man with the right hand, both hands below the middle band ;

the odd number of the front rank will at the same time seize his own piece with his left hand below the middle band.

430. (*Second motion.*) At the command *arms*, raise and break the stack, and return the pieces to the order arms.

- o. Emory Upton / One Rank / Musket / New York : D. Appleton & Co., 443 & 445 Broadway. (1868)

431. If in single rank, number two of each four will make the stack, and at the command, *stack*, will take the piece of number three with the left hand below the middle band, and use it as explained for the piece of the even number when in two ranks ; his own piece he will place as explained for the piece of the even-numbered rear-rank man; the stack will be completed



as in two ranks, after which the piece of number four will be passed to the right and placed upon the stack.

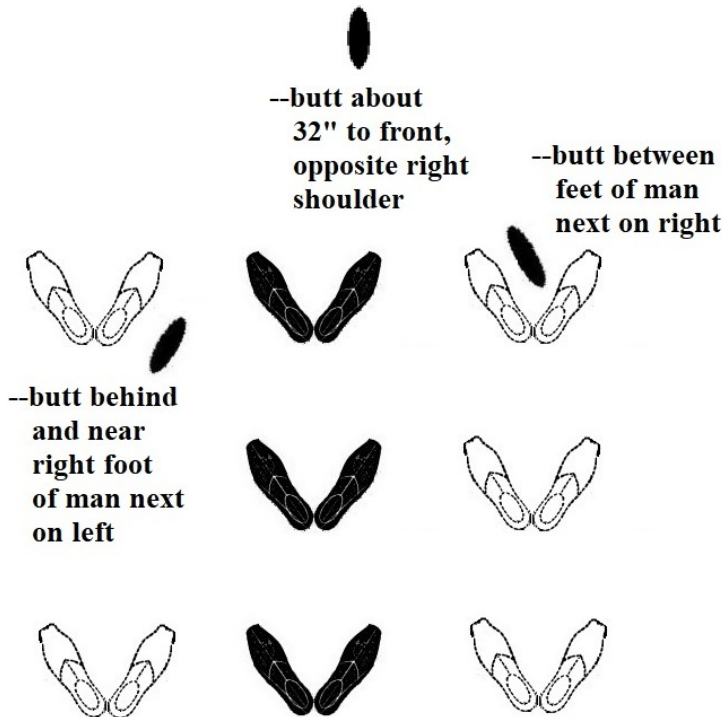
432. In breaking the stack, the piece of number four will first be passed to him ; the stack will then be broken as when in two ranks, except that number two will seize his own piece with the right and the piece of number three with the left hand.

p. Winfield Scott / Three Ranks / Musket / New York : George Dearborn. (1835)

409. The squad being formed in three ranks, the instructor will cause it to order arms, and then command :

Stack—ARMS.

410. At this, the front rank man of every file will pass his piece before him, seizing it with the left hand above the middle band, and place the butt near the right foot of the next man on the left, the barrel turned to the front.



At the same time each centre rank man will hand his piece to his file leader ; the latter will receive it with the right hand two inches above the middle band, throw the butt about thirty-two inches to the front, opposite to his right shoulder, inclining the muzzle towards him and lock the shanks of the two bayonets ; the lock of this second piece towards the right, and [95] the shank above that of the first piece.

The rear rank man of each file will hand his piece to his centre rank man, who will receive it with the right hand above the tail band, project the bayonet forward, and introduce it (using both hands) between and under the shanks of the two other bayonets.

He will then abandon the piece to his file leader,

who will receive it with the right

hand under the middle band, bring the butt to the front, holding up his own piece and the stack with the left hand, and place the butt of this third piece between the feet of the next men on the right, the S plate to the rear.

411. The squad having taken the position of the soldier without arms, the instructor will command :

1. *Break ranks.* 2. MARCH.

412. The squad, on a signal, being re-formed in three ranks, the instructor will

command :

Take—ARMS.

413. At this, the front rank man of every file will seize his own piece with the left hand, and that of his centre rank man with the right hand, each piece above the middle band.

Each centre rank man will carry the right foot forward, place the hollow opposite to the right heel of his file leader, with the right hand above the middle band :

at the same instant, the front and [96] centre rank men will raise up the stack to loosen the shanks ;

the centre rank man will hand the piece of the rear rank man to its owner ;

the front rank man will do the same in respect to the centre rank man, and the three ranks will retake the position of the soldier at ordered arms.