



*Manoeuvres at Turfan.
Rifle fire.*

Then a manoeuvre was carried out. 5 horsemen with large flags represented bandits fighting with the advancing or retreating troops. The latter formed platoons in order of reserve columns. At a sign from the shaoguan, the leading platoon in each company fired and then took the place of the last platoon at the double. The next platoon advanced at the double at a signal from the shaoguan's stick and fired a volley and so on. The robbers galloped about in despair, almost running down the leading line.

Firing in company of column (the companies consisted of a platoon) was carried out in the same style with the length of the front as the range. The place of the leading company was taken up at the double, a volley was fired almost immediately and the place at the rear was taken up.

They then formed a square, firing in four directions at the unkillable robbers who galloped in a circle. The platoons at the back advanced at the double through a passage in the middle of each side of the square, took up position and fired at a signal from the platoon flag and so on interminably. The lines were re-formed again opposite each other and at a given signal the flagbearers rushed forward with flags lowered towards each other. There was a short engagement and they retired at the double.

Ignoring all that is childish in these exercises with their theatrical effects, some good qualities in the Chinese soldier must be conceded. The evolutions are performed with precision and all that is necessary according to Chinese ideas is carried out very exactly without words of command, but exclusively by signals, which shows that each man knows what he has to do. Running fire along the front is carried out with almost mathematical precision. Although the detachment consists to a large extent of old men and opium smokers the march at the double is very elastic. Intervals and distances are calculated with Chinese precision even during evolutions performed at the double. There is complete silence among the men during evolutions.

The target practice, which I watched, was beneath criticism. The range was 175 paces