

The barracks are fairly large, very clean and all have a big, open and level courtyard for exercises. The large gymnastic apparatus which you see in the courtyard of every new barracks is a deservedly striking feature. The whole thing is surrounded by a wall, 3—4 metres in height, of pounded clay. The gates are guarded by two men with fixed bayonets. Chinese are not allowed to enter without a special permit, but Europeans have no difficulty, at any rate here in Si-an-fu. When sentinels are relieved, the whole guard turns out. The sentinels change places in the presence of the captain of the guard with a great deal of ceremony and strictly according to the rules, but without exchanging a word. — When an in marches out with solemn, measured step for drill, the officer on duty takes up his position next to one of the sentinels at the gate and the detachment marches past the guard, while mutual presenting of arms and salutes are exchanged. Before starting the drill and at the end of it the detachment forms up and presents arms, including the commanding officer, to some point of the compass or, perhaps, to the spirits of the air or some other power imperceptible to an ordinary observer. Altogether it looks as though the weakness of the old Chinese troops for parades and shows had been inherited by the new ones.

Drill is carried out punctually twice a day, at 4.30 in the morning and afternoon. Each time it lasts one or two hours. The gunners have a daily oral lesson besides. In the morning handling arms, physical exercises, marching and formations are practised, in the afternoon the same with the addition of gymnastics with apparatus. The latter is also done frequently in the morning. The artillery perform drill with their guns every morning. — The drill of the infantry is irreproachable, i.e., those exercises that are carried out. Alignment during marching and wheeling are above praise. The latter is always done at the double. Altogether double-quick marching is employed very often in all kinds of evolutions. Two speeds are used in marching, a high step at a very slow pace, the knee being almost at right angles to the body and the foot being brought down with a heavy thud, and an easy step for field-marching. The former is used throughout almost the whole drill, even the officer in command usually marching in goose-step. The body is mostly bent slightly backwards, but not equally. The right arm is swung far forward with an easy movement, though almost without raising it. The «field» step appears slow in comparison with European infantry. — Rifles are handled by a large detachment as if it were one man. Formations and evolutions are good with absolute silence in the ranks. The officers and N.C.O's take a great deal of trouble. They always take up their positions after an evolution at the double.

I saw 3 «in» at drill. They handled their rifles and performed evolutions without a moment's rest for a whole hour in the hottest sunshine, very often marching in double-quick time. The easy step was entirely taboo. When marching at the double the alignment was also irreproachable and the distance between the files unaltered. Only close formations were used, except when marching round the courtyard, when columns of platoons (of 14 files) were used. Imaginary shooting also proceeded in reserve column or else it was re-formed into a broad front of 2 or 4 lines in depth, each reserve platoon being behind the wings at a slight distance and a further reserve of, I think, 2 platoons a little further behind the middle of the front line. — Target shooting is said to have been neglected