

that it "shoots with remarkable accuracy," and to stop our ears to any discouraging rumours; but there is a wide field for investigation as to the quality of the ammunition, and especially of the fuses, supplied with these foreign guns.

Let us recapitulate. It has been agreed that orders to foreign countries for material of war are, in principle, illicit, and can only be justified by the considerations that the necessities of the country are exceedingly urgent, that the material offered by foreign producers is good, that equally good material cannot be procured equally quickly from home sources.

With regard to the first condition we are prepared to admit that at the time these orders were given the country was passing through a crisis sufficiently grave to necessitate an immediate supply of war material. The second condition, that the material offered by the foreign producer should be good, has not been fulfilled; for no unbiased authority could be found to say that the German field carriages are serviceable. It is absolutely certain that the axle-tree of every single carriage must be replaced, and it must be remembered that the manufacturers have no record of past successes which might inspire confidence. It is said that, in view of the failure of the material supplied to England, they have since changed and improved the design; and the present order may fairly be considered as an enormously costly experiment, carried out by the English War Office for the benefit of the Rheinische Metalwaarenfabrik. The tyro in gun-making is no more likely to escape error than the tyro in any other art; he has his trade to learn, and the reflection that this firm had never hitherto made any field material should have been sufficient at least to inspire the War Office with unusual caution.

We have been at some pains to elaborate the difference of conditions of supply, because they gravely affect the third question, as to whether the material ordered abroad could not have been equally quickly supplied at home. We have shown how this difference of condition has handicapped the English producer; and we maintain that if Woolwich or the English