

THE STANDARD OF MARKSMANSHIP.

We re-printed last week a remarkable article from the *Pall Mall Gazette* on the accuracy of small bore military rifles. In the article in question the results obtained, as it were incidentally, at the recent mitrailleuse trials at Shoeburyness by the Martini Henry, in the hands of picked Infantry soldiers, were clearly set forth, and the very obvious but very useful morals deduced, that good shots, armed with a rifle with which it was shown to be possible to disable fourteen enemies in two minutes at a distance of 1200 yards, would be able to inflict severe loss upon troops any less well armed that may venture to approach them: and, when lying under cover, would be so secure from any fire that they would be able to take aim without disturbance. We have for many years before this practical proof was given at the School of Gunnery, enunciated almost week by week the same doctrines, and we are glad to find that they have some chance of being generally received and acted upon. The old theories of the valuelessness of accurate weapons and scientific training in their use have been happily gradually exploded, and we may hope ere long to see the British Infantry, both Regular and Volunteer, armed with the best rifle in the world, and able to use it satisfactorily. At present, whatever may be the defects of the arm in actual use, and whatever may be the practical difficulties in the way of giving our soldiers really practical instruction, we believe that those who have the government of our armies are alive to the real value of accurate shooting power for Infantry, and that efforts, very praiseworthy and very great, are being made to impress upon the troops the vital necessity of learning to use their weapons properly.

But we are not sure that all those efforts are made in the best manner, and we believe that there is still room for some practical suggestions as to the mode in which the admirable weapons which we shall soon possess may be utilized as they ought to be. As it is, the Regular soldiers and Militia are, every Volunteer crack shot will agree, debarred, as a rule, from even making the best of their present rifles. The test of "marksmanship," not by any means too low for the small reward connected with it in the Regular service, would be simply laughed at as a prize-winning test at Wimbledon. We venture to believe that there is nothing to prevent our Regular troops from equalling the Volunteers in their shooting power, or even surpassing them. It seems indeed wonderful that, considering the opportunities at the command of the professional forces, the results of Wimbledon should not have been, long ere this time, turned to practical account. The Volunteer rifleman shoots when he has time to lose, the Regular Infantry soldier has nothing but soldiering to do, and there seems no reason why he should not spend some considerable part of this time in learning to use the weapon to the practical employment of which all his other training can only be a means, with at least as much effect as his amateur comrade. But, as we have often pointed out, although the virtue of musketry instruction is admitted, matters are so ordered, even up to the present time, that the instruction is in effect only a collateral part of

his education. And as long as it is conducted under the present system, there can be but little hope that it will be anything else. We have no hesitation in saying that at least half the time now devoted to barrack yard drill and the minutiae of military foppishness, ought to be spent before the targets or in direct preparation for them. The Englishman of all classes is, as the experience of the past eleven years has shown, a born rifle shot. From earl down to artizán everyone takes to it naturally, and there is in Great Britain scarcely a company of Volunteers which does not contain several crack shots, and many others who only want more leisure to become such. Of all people in the world, why, one may surely ask, are the professional soldiers the only ones who cannot compete on equal terms with civilians in what it would appear ought to be their own speciality? The answer, of course, is simple enough, that they have neither ammunition to practice with, nor any but the most meager rewards to shoot for, and that their time is so taken up with learning to march past a General in the numerous modes laid down in the Red Book, that a few weeks at the most in the year is the utmost time that can be devoted to the abhorred musketry. For strange as it may appear, this art of rifle shooting, so fascinating to the civilian, has been made positively distasteful to the soldier. The Volunteers, certainly the finest marksmen in the world, have found by experience that eternal position drill, and lectures on the trajectory and the laws of projectiles, are not what gives them prizes at Wimbledon. Give the soldier equal opportunities of practice, and inducements, which may be humble enough, to shoot, and we may depend upon it that the latent gifts of a sufficient proportion of the Army will be soon sufficiently developed to give us a body of marksmen really fit to be entrusted with the best rifle in the world.

It will, however, we fear, take some time before any Government we may have will have sufficient boldness to carry out any comprehensive scheme of the nature indicated. Such a scheme would involve not only a considerable expenditure for ammunition and prize money, but an entire redistribution of the soldier's duties and the wholesale excision of all those not absolutely essential, to give time for rifle practice for those who showed any aptitude for it. Even now, however, the Volunteers may, if permitted, lead the way in a direction which sooner or later must be taken by all Infantry. The shooting capabilities of the Volunteers are, it is admitted, far in advance of the regulation tests applied to them. Let us avail ourselves of this to show what can be done by military riflemen, to whom the ordinary class firing is mere child's play. Give honors to those marksmen, and to them only, who show that they have really attained to that high standard of shooting with which in prize shooting we are so familiar, and who combine it with a thorough knowledge of military duties. The test can hardly be too searching, but every man who is capable of making such scores as we see winning prizes at Wimbledon should not be left to be what I termed a mere shooting man, but should be earmarked as a real marksman, fit to check an advancing column or pick off the gunners of a field battery with a Martini-Henry long before he himself can be even seen distinctly by the enemy. The "three stars" are coveted eagerly enough, and still higher honors would be still more zealously sought for, and every battalion of Volunteer Infantry would soon have in her ranks a body of picked shots, really fit to take the respon-

sible places in which the late Col. Browster used to place his so-called "marksmen," whom Colonel Eyre, of Nottingham, is now trying to revive. We would in no way interfere with the present system of class firing, which, if carried fairly out, results in the Volunteers at least, in the training of a large number of men to some use of their weapons, but we would allow the great shots of the force to obtain "honors" at the targets, which would end in the production of a large class of trained riflemen, who could be trusted to do everything their rifles could do, and whose mere existence might probably induce our rulers to extend the scheme to the regiments of the line. We are no favourers of *corps d'élite*, but the picking out and encouragement of at least a few of the latent Rosses and Camerons of Her Majesty's Army is in no way open to objection. But we much fear that for the present, the performance of intricate manoeuvres never to be used in the field will occupy generals and colonels to the exclusion of all such trifles as the use of the rifle in anything like a really scientific manner.—*Volunteer Service Gazette*.

THE EARTHQUAKE IN NEW YORK CITY.

The New York newspapers of Friday teem with accounts of the earthquake which on Thursday forenoon shook and frightened Gotham, as it did other places of lesser note and lesser wickedness. The printing offices seem to have come in for more than their full share of the shaking, and some of them were on the point of getting material for a sensation at their own expense. The New York *World* prides itself on having experienced more vibrations than any other journal, save the *Clipper*, a paper whose disappearance would have been no loss to the morals of the community.

The *World* tells its story as follows:

The earthquake which yesterday amid the gloomy rain of the forenoon, thrilled the city, was very sensibly felt in the *World* building. At about 11:10 one of the gentlemen upon the *World* staff, while standing by a large table containing the morning papers, and bending over one of the city journals, became aware of a momentary dizziness, accompanied by a sensation as if about to fall, which at the time made the impression upon him that he was assailed by a slight vertigo. Immediately thereafter came several distinct, heavy, dull sounds, like those produced by the jar of very ponderous machinery, a deep tremor throughout the building following each sound. At the same time as this testimony is afforded from the *World* rooms on the upper floor of the building, there was observed in the editorial apartments of the *Turf, Field, and Farm*, on the floor below, a heavy tremor in the building, which was discussed as occasioned in the language of a statement published this morning from one of the editors of that publication—"possible falling of a weight, that had jarred the building or the landing of some heavy presses in the *World* building." In the *Commercial Advertiser* office almost exactly the same opinion was superinduced by the earthquake, that paper stating that in the upper story of the *Commercial* office the sensation was as if an immense press in the lower stories of the premises was working at a tremendous rate."

Mr. Lachance, a worthy descendant of the enterprising pioneers who, of old, explored this continent from the St. Lawrence to the Pacific, has just returned to