

OUR SERVICE CONTEMPORARIES.

There is no finality in gun construction, but improvements and modifications are, as a rule, along fixed lines. A Swedish engineer, however, is credited with taking quite a new departure, for, to diminish, if not entirely to prevent, erosion, he proposes to make the gun as well as the projectile revolve. Holding that it is the wasted gases of combustion which escape between the projectile and the bore of the gun that are the principal cause of deterioration, his suggestion is to give up rifling and revert to smooth bores. This method will, he contends, enable us not only to dispense with the cost of rifling, but to fit the projectile with gas checks, which will render it impossible for any gases to rush past them. Recognising, however, that it is necessary to make the projectile revolve, he has invented a mechanical arrangement which, at the instant of firing, will give the gun itself an axial rotatory motion, the shot or shell receiving its motion from the gun. Moreover he asserts that as he can either make his motion constant or increasing at will, the effect produced will be the same as that given by a constant or increasing twist in the rifling of a gun. The advantages claimed for the new method are improved accuracy of fire, reducing the cost of ordnance by one-half, and an increase in the life of the gun equal to 100 per cent. It seems to be a novel idea, but there are two points which make it appear of doubtful value—first, the question of whether the projectile will revolve with the gun; and secondly, whether the machinery for revolving the gun will not be very complicated and liable to get out of order in action.

M. Ulric de Civry has published in the *Echo de l'Armée* a deeply interesting article upon the French general officers, survivors of the war of 1870. Of those who then held the rank of general of division or brigade, and still live mostly in retirement, he gives a list, and some may be surprised to learn how many of these veterans have been spared. They number 83 in all, and are ranked in the second section of the general staff (reserve and retired), with the exception of Marshal Canrobert and Generals de Ladmirault and d'Exéa, who are maintained on the Active List hors cadre, because they commanded in chief before the enemy, and of Generals Saussier, de Galliffet, Billot, Viel d'Espouilles, and Prince Murat (the last named in disponibilité since the fall of the Empire), who appear still upon the list for active service. The doyen of these gallant soldiers is General Euzenou de Kersalaun, now of the age of 91, who, as Governor of Verdun, defended that place against the invaders. Marshal Canrobert, at the age of 85, is the last survivor of his rank, and with his departure the Marshals of France will have come to an end. Among the more famous or better known names are those of General Bourbaki, who commanded the Imperial Guard and the Army of the East (now aged 78); General Trochu, the defender of Paris (79); General du Barail, commander of the Chasseurs d'Afrique and afterwards of the cavalry of the 6th

Corps (74); General du Preuil, who commanded the cavalry of the Imperial Guard (75); and General d'Auvergne, Chief of the Staff of the Imperial Guard (81). In regard to age, it is interesting to learn that two of these general officers are over 90, four between 86 and 90, 22 between 81 and 85, 24 between 76 and 80, 21 between 71 and 75, seven between 66 and 70, and nine between 60 and 65. It is understood that upon the outbreak of war General Saussier would become commander-in-chief of the French armies, and that Generals de Galliffet and Billot would receive chief commands.

The feeling of hesitation on the part of the French before engaging in too extensive an adventure in Madagascar, a feeling to which intensity is given by the death of the Czar, has found loud and unequivocal expression in the columns of the *Figaro*. M. Francis Magnier, who directs the political views of that paper, and whose prudence and moderation have gained for him wide influence, makes the following curious remarks:—"In the course of this week," he says, "the Chamber will have to pronounce upon the expedition to Madagascar. It is not likely to express disapproval of it. Nobody feels any desire or need to take possession of that island, the possession of which we have very well managed to do without until November, 1894. We know perfectly well that we shall not go there, that our children will not go there, nor our investments, that it is simply a place manufactory, a land of exotic banks, and railways that have no passengers and no traffic. Unfortunately these truths, of which everyone in private is convinced, are forgotten in an artificial enthusiasm the moment that our isolated objections find themselves grouped in the Chamber, in a club, or even a café. This expedition is a very serious thing (I admit, for the sake of argument, that it is necessary). Will the Government admit its seriousness at once? Will it have the courage to mention the necessary sums, not for beginning the campaign, which is a well-known trick, but for its inevitable development? I cannot say; but in any case it is well to give a helping hand." M. Magnier then proceeds to quote a letter received from an officer who has made a careful study of the whole question of the Madagascar campaign, in which the conclusion is come to that the only possible place where the troops can be disembarked is Majunga, which is 450 kilometres from Antananarivo, the goal of the expedition. There is no road by this route, only a path which is almost impracticable to foot soldiers. The first 100 kilometres lie through the fever district. The route is entirely destitute of all supplies, so that the troops would have to be continually provisioned from the rear. The expeditionary corps would have therefore to build a road supplying it with hospital stations and stores guarded by well entrenched posts. The keeping up of the communications with the rear would alone require a force of at least 3,000 men. In the absence of all means of transport the advance could hardly be more rapid than at the rate of four kilometres a day, so that it would take from three to four months to reach Antananarivo. The resistance of this town to attack is likely to be serious, for it is provided with 102 guns, and its position is very strong. At least 15,000 men and several batteries would be needed to take it, and this would bring the total numbers of the expedition to at least 20,000 men. "These things," adds M. Magnier, "are known to specialists, and ought not be hidden from the public which pays, and which is flattered with illusions, not to say lies. The disastrous souvenir of Tonkin, and the carelessness with which the preparations were made for the Dahomey expedition, give us the right to ascertain what the new colonial adventure will cost, and what it will bring in."

News of the Service.

NOTE.—Our readers are respectfully requested to contribute to this department all items of Military News affecting their own corps, districts or friends, coming under their notice. Without we are assisted in this way we cannot make this department as complete as we would desire. Remember that all the doings of every corps are of general interest throughout the entire militia force. You can mail a large package of manuscript, so long as not enclosed in an envelope, for one cent. At any rate, forward copies of your local papers with all references to your corps and your comrades. Address.

EDITOR, CANADIAN MILITARY GAZETTE
P.O. Box, 387, Montreal, Que.

Kingston.

KINGSTON, Dec. 10.—Major-General Cameron, commandant of the Royal Military College, was interviewed recently regarding the plea advanced in the *Toronto News* by the father of ex-Cadet Plummer, in justification of the action of the latter in leaving the college without leave, rather than submit to be hazed by his comrades. The commandant said: "I most emphatically object to the statement that Cadet Plummer was justified in leaving the college as he did, and regarding the statements (made by Mr. Plummer, sr., on the authority, apparently, of his son) in the *Toronto News*, I must say that there is no recognized system of initiation or fagging in the college.

When Plummer was asked by a member of the college staff to state his grievances, he stolidly declined to give me any information whatever. He had already armed himself with a revolver and ammunition as stated by his father to meet the possibility of any attempt being made to cane him. It is impossible for me to regard Cadet Plummer's conduct otherwise than as the result of childish inexperience which, under other circumstances, could be looked upon only as a gross contempt of authority and lack of a proper sense of duty."

The officers of the 14th Battalion P.W. O.R., held their annual meeting on the evening of Wednesday, Nov. 29th. There were present Lt.-Col. Henry Smith, Majors Shannon and Gallaway; Captains, Hora, White, Dupuis, Kent, Sinclair; Lieutenants, Skinner, MacNee, Sutherland, C. M. Strange, E. O. S. Strange, Cartwright, and Surgeon Garrett.

It was decided that in future the corps shall put in the spring drill between March 15th and May 24th, and the autumn drill between September 15th and thanksgiving day, each year. The recruit classes will open on the first day of each period.

Cpts. Kent and White were appointed auditors, and were thanked for past services in that capacity. Majors Skinner and Gallaway and Surgeon Garrett were re-elected to compose the band committee, and Majors Shannon and Gallaway, Cpts. Sinclair and Kent, and Lieut. MacNee were elected as regimental committee.

A vote of thanks was given to Captain Sinclair for his efficient services as paymaster during 1894.

The 14th Club held its annual meeting