

difficulties which a raffling system, even though it be only a raffling of groups, necessarily creates? "That such a proposal should be seriously made by an able writer is sufficient evidence of the difficulty of the question."—(*Colonel Sir Lumley Graham.*) It may be truly called a desperate expedient, in itself absolutely contrary to every sound principle derived from the teaching of military experience or of common sense. *Vide* the Germans themselves: "It is the want of *appel* on the part of the men to the commands of other officers that frequently makes the mixed swarms of skirmishers so unmanageable."—(*Militar Wochenblatt.*) Yet the proposal is intentionally to change the command, and not only so but to degrade it. The suggestion is in itself almost sufficient to condemn a system the necessities of which can give birth to such truly monstrous expedients. Prussian success has made John Bull shut his eyes and open his mouth with great simplicity, but surely he will revolt at being asked to swallow this. It may suit Germans, although even this is open to grave doubt; but whether it can be made to work with them or not, it is the very antipodes of the British idea of the business of soldiering as between officers and men. For any sake, let not this nation, except of stern necessity, adopt such expedients, remembering that what "may suit the German soldier may be unsuited to the English character" (*General Macdougall*), and that "many customs that suit the German temperament would be bad, and positively dangerous, if introduced blindly among other nations."—(*Home.*) Further, let it be remembered that it has never been tried in actual war, and is therefore a mere theoretical device made in the case of a nation which, when it entered on its last great campaign, was found to have altogether failed to grasp the change which modern improvements in weapons had made on the conduct of the combat, notwithstanding that it had been engaged in war four or five years before. "We must always bear in mind that the Germans started with a system long deprecated by our best and most experienced heads," and the result was that "they got some startling lessons."—(*Colonel Gawler.*) But it was impossible to improvise a real system, and they fought the war through with "swarms," a makeshift expedient, which they now, with the same want of inventive power they showed formerly, seek to perpetuate, and in which course some endeavor to persuade us slavishly to follow them.

"Of all the mad things to do in this world it is the wildest to adopt the fighting and administrative formations of another army simply because that army has been successful."—(*Viscount Wolseley.*) If this is done it will be to the loss of all the advantage to be derived from the undoubted truth that the British nation has always had its "characteristic mode of fighting," and that by copying others the special advantages will be lost which tend to the realisation of the assertion that "the individual order will still further bring out the coolness, the self-reliance, and the courage of the British soldier."—(*Home.*) Realising that the new mode of fighting with an interval, and reinforcing up is "the development of the same idea that trusted the thin line against the heavy column" (*Colonel C. B. Brackenbury,*) if possible let a tactical detail be found, which shall not cramp but give full scope to that power of orderly fighting in a thin formation, known officers and known men working together, which has always been the pride of the British soldier, and the secret of his success.—*Colburn's Magazine.*

(To be continued.)

The New Rifle.

IT has been ruled that the rifle with which our infantry is armed is to be discarded, and a new and improved one introduced. We will briefly consider the reason why such a change was considered necessary, and offer some remarks upon the new arm. During some of the minor wars in which we have been engaged, experience has shown that the shooting of our troops was by no means good. But the exact reason of this was not easily to be ascertained. However, certain defects were at once noticeable. Men in the heat of action forgot about their back sights, and did not trouble to adjust them when the enemy came to close quarters. Another lesson was that the barrel became heated after a number of rounds had been fired in quick succession, to such an extent as to make it difficult to hold. The cartridge cases and their method of extraction were also found wanting. The results of these experiences were that a new rifle was decided on, and a different and more extended course of practice in its use. The new rifle, after a period of experiment, came into existence under the name of the "Martini-Enfield," possessing the following advantages over its predecessor, the Martini-Henry. The bore and bullet being smaller, a greater muzzle velocity was acquired with a flatter trajectory. This overcame the question of sights to a certain extent. The new rifle is supposed to fire point-blank at 450 yards. Also a longer range of fire, which involved sighting the rifle up to 2,000 yards. This is the principal difference between the Martini-Henry and the Martini-Enfield,

the difference of the boring not appearing great to the untechnical eye. But a great number of minor improvements have been introduced, most of which, however, might quite as easily have been applied to the Martini-Henry. The new rifle has found its way into the hands of the soldier, twenty-five having been issued to each regiment at home, in order to test its qualities as a practical weapon, and its behaviour when subjected to the ordinary barrack-room treatment. So that now the very important question has to be asked: "Will the new rifle do? Shall it be at once issued to all British troops?" It must be remembered that it is not only the question of expense; we must also remember that we are taking an untried weapon; that the men will require to learn its ways and doings; that it requires a different sort of ammunition, which might add to mistakes in the field.

So let us carefully inquire into the performances of the new rifle, and consider if we may safely answer these questions in the affirmative. We find, first of all, on handling the rifle that it is considerably heavier than our old one. This is objectionable, as it not only adds to the weight to be carried on the march, but also makes a steady aim from the shoulder more tiring and difficult. The chief cause of this is the thicker barrel. But the Martini-Henry barrel has borne the brunt of years of practical wear without showing much damage; why, then, is it necessary to make the new barrel so much thicker? It is true that it is much less protected by wood than the former pattern, so that it would be more liable to be dented. The object of this separating the wooden stock from the barrel seems to be for the purpose of cleaning, as the old pattern was supposed to get rusty where the barrel laid against the wood. But surely this could be prevented by other means than this disunion, which gives weakness to both barrel and stock. Then, again, at the point where the rifle is held by the left hand a wooden covering is placed to prevent the heated barrel from burning the hand. But this seems an awkward arrangement, as the covering must be made removable; a much better and simpler covering may be made of leather, as was done in the Soudan. Another objection is the new method of fixing on the sword bayonet. This is placed under the rifle instead of at the side, which, it is true, should be more conducive to accurate aiming; but the cleaning rod is retained in the same old place, just under the barrel, so that the bayonet has to be fixed on outside the cleaning rod, and this means some distance from the barrel, which forms its support. The result is that it is practically impossible to fix the bayonet rigidly. Of course we cannot say from experience if a shaky bayonet is really objectionable in practice, but it certainly strikes one on handling the rifle as an unsatisfactory arrangement. There is attached to the new rifle a "safety" bolt arrangement, so that the soldier is able to load his gun and yet not liable to fire it off by accident. Now this again adds complication to the machine. It involves several metal pieces and a spring, and our scientific recruit must have the object and use of it drummed into him. It forms a projection from the side of the lock, liable to damage if roughly used, and if it broke off at safety would make the rifle useless; and after all how often will it be used? The rifle can be so very quickly loaded when necessary, and when loaded is not very liable to be pulled off accidentally. And if a soldier is suddenly ordered to fire when loaded, and with the safety "on," he would be very apt to forget it, take aim, and then pull away for some time before he remembers to "turn off" his safety action. Then the old index of the Martini-Henry is discarded. So that now it is impossible to tell by looking at a rifle whether it is cocked or not. This has serious objections, especially when used on the practice ranges, when a man often forgets to unload when the danger flag is up, but the careful officer or non-commissioned officer at once looks to the indexes of the men firing and detects any that are cocked. Now, on taking up the rifle to have a shot one finds on it three different backsights, and it will take Master Tommy Atkins some time to learn which he is to use. Surely the principle of the old backsight was sufficient—first, with flap down, then with the flap down but slide pushed to the end, and third, with the flap raised and the slide adjusted. But it is on firing off this new rifle that one comes to the climax of "objectionableness." There can be no doubt that one of the chief causes of that bad shooting of our army which we are so anxious to overcome is due to the fact that the soldier is afraid of his rifle. Many a man can take a good steady aim till the moment comes when he has to pull the trigger. He knows that then there will be a tremendous explosion, the rifle will jump back, probably hitting him a nasty blow on the shoulder or cheek. He then shuts his eyes, screws up his courage, leans forward to meet the shock, and jerks off the trigger. The result is obvious. How can we expect our youths to fire steadily when we see some old steady sergeants, accustomed to fire their hundreds of rounds with unerring skill, standing dismayed, rubbing their shoulders, and looking with a surprised gaze at their new arm of precision, whilst the miss flag is being wildly waved from the butts. Yet such is the case, for the new weapon has a tremendous recoil, notwithstanding its smaller bore.