

uncertainty as to the enemy's disposition and strength, nothing more effective than a sudden and unexpected display of force.

We have, in the foregoing pages, only set down stray thoughts, and dealt solely with infantry tactics in European warfare. On another occasion we may be induced to extend our scope. For the present we have, we trust, written that which may induce reflection, provoke discussion, and attract to the subject that attention which it certainly requires, and which in this country has not of late been sufficiently bestowed.—*Colburn's Magazine*.

RIFLE SHOOTING IN EUROPE.

(The English Correspondent of "The Rifle.")

A wandering fit, which annually takes me as September approaches, prevented me from sending last month the communication I had in view. In the course of a round of visits to some of the chief towns of France and Belgium I have observed, especially in the former country, a remarkable change in the views of both the administrators and the people administered on military and other public subjects. Formerly it was far too much the habit of local municipalities to look to Paris for a lead. Scarcely the simplest proposition which had any novelty about it could be mooted at a municipal council board until the prefect of the department had been consulted. Now I find provincial towns, like Havre and Rouen, giving Paris the lead, and establishing popular rifle associations and organizing battalions of drilled school-boys years before Paris has thought of it. France had scarcely emerged from the troubles left behind them by the Germans, on the conclusion of the Franco-German war, when, in 1871, it founded its "*Société de Tir*," and built a "stand" on the heights of St. Adresse, which overlooked the town, costing 120,000 francs. More than once since then a company of English riflemen has paid the establishment a visit. Like the Belgians, the French notion of a "stand" differs considerably from ours. The competitors are protected from the wind and the elements by a solid construction, and they are not so much bothered as you and we are with allowances for force and direction of wind. They are, in fact, only learning the A B C of shooting, and this they admit. Their longest range is 300 metres (about 330 yards), and one of the sixteen targets erected at Havre has a range as short as 15 metres. The declared object of the association is, in fact, to teach the boys to shoot, and in no part of Europe have more effectual means been adopted for teaching rifle shooting and drill at school than at Havre. Every primary school has a miniature range, furnished with target, screens, rifles and ammunition, and the youths from 12 years of age are instructed in the art, and encouraged to become good marksmen by the offer of substantial prizes at competitions held two or three times every year. Within the last two or three years Paris and other great centres have taken up the example of Havre. At Vincennes there was held, early in September, a prize meeting, in which many hundreds of young Frenchmen and about sixty Belgians and Swiss took part for prizes of the aggregate value of 100,000 francs, and the organizer of the meeting, Mons. Paul Deroulède, has since become so popular that he is being run as a candidate for one of the *arrondissements* of Paris for the Chamber of Deputies.

In Belgium rifle shooting is pursued as a pastime and a sport, much as it is in your country and in mine. I arrived at Brussels too late to see the conclusion of the annual meeting of Belgian and foreign riflemen, among whom there was one British marksman whom you have seen at Creedmoor, Private C. F. Lowe; but I was in time to see the prizes distributed in the presence of the Belgian commander-in-chief, Gen. Maréchal, by the president of the "Tir National,"—Colonel Van Humbeck. The total number of competitors exceeded 1,000, and the number of shots fired during the fortnight's shooting was 101,523. The novelties of the meeting were the organization of a revolver competition with a range of 25 metres, to which ladies were admitted as competitors, and the trial of an elaborate system of safety screens to prevent danger to the population of the new "*quartier*," which has grown up round the "stand" since my last visit to it five years ago. The revolver competition was almost as popular as the similar competition held at Wimbledon, to which I made reference in my last communication. Of 138 competitors no fewer than 16 won prizes for scores of 20 points and over out of the 30 points possible; among this number being Madame Emilie Baar, of Antwerp, and our old friend, Private C. F. Lowe, of the Queen's Westminster Rifles.

The question of screens has been as troublesome at Brussels as in London, the stronger charges and higher velocities now got from the improved Comblain rifle (the national military weapon) have led to dangerous ricochets and frequent complaints from alarmed residents, and, at a very considerable cost, a system of screens has been devised,

for a description of which I am indebted to Capt. Jean Robyt, the president of the executive committee of the "Tir National." As at Havre, the firing takes place from a covered building, but here only a short portion of the ranges lie within the building, the remainder being open overhead, though enclosed at the boundaries by high walls of masonry. At about 33 feet in front of the firing points a low stone wall has been built up, and in front of this, about 20 inches from it, a wooden partition is erected, thick enough to resist or absorb the splinters of any low shots which may be intercepted by the wall. The marksman fires through an embrasure about 18 inches high and 5 inches wide, faced with wood, the prolongation of which is a wooden tube of about 16 feet in length, open at the bottom but closed in at the top, and having at its mouth a stout steel plate, which deflects high shots into the ground. At the butts the ground in front of the targets is at a considerably lower level, so as to intercept any low shot which might have escaped the earlier obstacles, and it is scraped off in a way to prevent a shot from rising after once striking the ground. If a shot escapes all these obstacles it is a fairly good one, and must find its way to the targets, which are of paper, and behind which a sufficient mound of earth is built up to absorb all the force of the ball.

The president, at the distribution of prizes, referred to these structural arrangements as satisfactory from the point of view of their security, but unsatisfactory so far as the education of the marksmen was concerned, and also from the point of view of the spectator. As at Wimbledon, a considerable revenue is derived from the gate money of the Brussels "Tir National," but the diminution of interest to the spectator is deplored in Belgium for a higher reason. In shooting matters, as well as in all matters which concern the municipal guards, who form the great majority of the competitors, the officers take the people into their confidence, and in some respects there appears to be even more of solidarity, or perhaps I should say less possibility of isolation, for a purely military movement in the relations between the *Garde Civique* of the Belgian people than in those between the British volunteer force and the British people.

One other point I ought to notice before leaving the subject of the Belgian "Tir National." What is called the *Prix d'honneur*, the most important prize of a very extensive series, was won this year by a young marksman with a remarkable score. Private Charles Spruyt has done but little shooting of a remarkable character except during the last season or two, and has never before taken any very prominent position in the National prize list. But this year he was one of a large party of Belgian municipal guards who accepted the invitation of Mons. Deroulède to compete at Vincennes, where young Spruyt came out second best.

On the last day of the competition at Brussels Spruyt was one of the best forty entitled to compete for the *Prix d'honneur*. This, after three successive stages, he carried off, but with a score of 57 points out of a possible 60 at 250 yards off-hand—a score exceeding by 14 points the corresponding victorious score of last year, and far higher than has ever before been obtained. This improvement appears to be chiefly due to the improvements made in the new rifle which has lately been served out to the *Garde Civique*—the improved Comblain.

With respect to the question of targets the volunteer contributor of the *Weekly Times and Echo* noticing the correspondence on the subject appearing in *The Rifle*, makes a proposal which he thinks will pave the way to the adoption of a standard target as acceptable on this side of the water as on yours. He quotes from Mr. H. P. Miller's "Guide to the Queen's Sixty" (9th edition) the numbers of disappointed Wimbledon candidates who, in the meeting of 1883, made a prize-winning score, but failed to get a prize through being counted out on "ties." They numbered 273, or about ten per cent. of the competitors.

The only cure for the evil is believed to be a target with finer divisions than those at present in use at Wimbledon, and the writer recommends that an effort should be made to get a vote on the subject of a standard target from the British Rifle Associations simultaneously with the proposed vote which you are organizing, and, if possible, in conjunction with you. The agreement in essential points between the proposals of Mr. Hinman and Mr. W. M. Farrow are pointed out, and the main points of both are retained in a target to be proposed here, the principal suggestion being that the dividing line between the count of 4 points and 3 points should be drawn between that of the Creedmoor target and that of the Wimbledon third-class target, the diameter of the ring being 25 inches in place of 24 inches as in our Wimbledon target, and 26 inches as in the Creedmoor target. The 10-ring is proposed to be 3 inches in diameter, with rings counting 9, 8 and 7 within the present 8-inch bull's-eye, the rings increasing in area progressively in nearly the proportion suggested by Mr. Hinman, but leaving the spaces for 3 and 2 intact, as suggested by Mr. W. M. Farrow. It is