

The general adoption of repeating rifles has caused the War Office to stay its hands; and as Herr J. Schultze, whose invention (lately tried at Vienna) is pronounced by competent judges to be far superior to any one existing, has recently given evidence in London before the committee on small arms on the value of magazine guns, we may infer that the issue of repeating rifles to our infantry can be but a question of time.

Recruiting during the past year has been exceptionally good, and a better class of men has been obtained, both in physique and chest-measurement. Pessimists—their name is legion—place this flow of recruits to the credit of the labor market, and contend that, as hunger drives the wolf from the woods, so poverty, through lack of work, has impelled a large percentage of our starving population to enter the ranks, and that all such are serving Her Majesty, not with good-will and cheerfulness, but through dire necessity. We are unwilling to adopt this view in its entirety, and consider that it admits of being liberally discounted. The altered state of service, the greater inducements held out to recruits, and the strenuous exertions made to provide employment for them on returning to civil life, have all tended to make the position of the soldier more attractive, while the liberal bestowal of commissions on deserving warrant officers has greatly helped the cause of recruiting. On this subject we trust that no diminution in this direction may be experienced during the present year. On the other side of the account, we regret to read that desertions show an increase, while fraudulent enlistment has not fallen off. Under the latter head occur many cases of men passed to the reserve unable to find employment, and we recently pointed out that some provision should be made—and made forthwith—to facilitate men rejoining the colors, on the broad principle of commonsense which dictates that it is better to support a soldier in the ranks than a prisoner in gaol. On this subject we referred to an able speech made towards the close of 1886 by Major-General the Hon. P. R. B. Feilding, commanding the south-eastern district.

Our auxiliary forces have been very favorably reported upon, but on examination it will be found that any efficiency they may present is based on a somewhat low standard, and mainly depends on reports from inspecting officers of their ability to march past in more or less unbroken order; to appear clean on parade, with buttons polished, rifles clean and bayonets furnished. So long as these requirements are fulfilled we may confidently expect our auxiliaries to improve year by year. The military critic, however, is forced to confess that militia, yeomanry and volunteers are practically useless save for parade purposes. In this assertion it must be granted that the fault lies not with those branches of the service themselves, but with those set in authority over them. To begin with the militia. We notice that they presented a larger muster last year than in 1885, yet we regret to say that in many battalions the numbers absent from the annual training showed an abnormal proportion. It is also worthy of remark the disproportion of militia officers, compared with volunteer officers, who have passed a school of instruction or passed in tactics. Scant encouragement is given to militia officers to do more than the humdrum routine of regimental duty. We have for years past called attention to the fact, but hitherto without success. Again, many territorial regiments remain, as in 1881, without the formation of a fourth battalion; while (we somewhat tire of repeating) the K.O.B.'s has not even a third. The shooting of the militia is lamentable, and the vicious habit remains, although to a curtailed extent, of quartering men in billets in towns where rifle ranges are non-existent, in place of sending them to camp. The yeomanry have mustered fairly well, and done possibly as much hard work as could be crowded into the short space of eight days. The volunteers, on their part, have done excellently well. More men than ever, in 1886, went under canvas, and regiments at Aldershot associated with the regulars proved that a few weeks of embodiment would turn them into valuable troops. The shooting at Wimbledon last year was above the average, but the false impression still exists, because some hundreds of trained shots from the volunteers surpass probably the best marksmen in the world, that the whole of the force is expert with the rifle. This is a most mischievous *non sequitur*. It is notorious from the musketry drill and practice returns that many (far too many) of our volunteers are but third-class shots. On this subject it is obvious that increased range accommodation must be provided for them. This is not a matter to be taken up by each individual officer commanding a volunteer corps. It is practically a state question, and the onus of finding suitable ranges for the volunteers passes into the province of the Secretary of State for War. With the ever-increasing area of London the speculative builder will soon jostle out all the ranges existent within a moderate radius of Charing Cross, and it becomes the duty of the authorities to protect those now in force, so that with the aid of the safety shed (successfully tried at Wormwood Scrubbs) classes can be fired without entailing a trip into the country with its concomitant expense.

Lieut. Talbot, 90th Batt., is going to take a short course at the school of mounted infantry.

A German Officer on Infantry Tactics.

By Col. W. W. Knollys, in Colburn's.

WE now come to the critical moment: i.e., that of the charge. Our author assumes that this will be made from a distance of from 300 to 200 metres, evidently preferring the latter. He lays it down as his opinion that during this charge, which should be executed at racing speed, the men should not fire. It hardly needs argument to prove that in this contention he is wright. If the men while charging were allowed to fire some would stop to discharge their rifles whilst others would continue their rush. Thus, not only would there be a loss of combined impetus, but the bolder spirits would be exposed to the danger of being hit by their comrades in the rear.

We now, however, come to a most difficult subject. It is contrary to experience, alike in battle and at manoeuvres, and to common sense to suppose that a line of tirailleurs already fatigued by their previous exertions and heavily weighted could charge at any speed and in reasonably good order over so broad a zone as 300 to 200 metres. We have ourselves seen the attempt made at French manoeuvres, and the result was that the run slowed down to a walk when two-thirds of the distance had been accomplished. Either a volley must be fired and the tirailleurs must advance at a swift walk under cover of the smoke till they arrive within 100 yards, when they should break into a run, or else the firing line must be somehow brought up to within 100 or 120 yards of the enemy before making the final dash. With a resolute enemy under natural cover or in shelter trenches the first alternative would be equivalent to destruction. How, then, can the other alternative plan be carried out? We can only imagine one way, and that is the following: The tirailleurs should be brought up to a line 200 yards distant from the enemy in the manner above described. Then a furious and rapid fire should be opened for, say, a minute, when from each flank the men should crawl forward successively a few yards at a time till they occupied a line of which the flanks should be 100 yards and the centre 150 yards from the enemy. At this moment the bugles should sound the charge, and every man should run at top speed towards the foe.

As to the little supports—consisting in the German army of a platoon, or one-third of a company—our author lays it down that the distances in rear of the tirailleurs should be gradually reduced from 100 or 200 metres, till at the moment of the assault they should be either in, or close in rear of, the firing line. We prefer a reinforcing of the firing line before the last halt previous to the charge shall have been made, for the firing line needs the impetus of a reinforcement to bring it up to the last halting place.

The second echelon of supports in the German army consists of a line of company columns which it may be sometimes necessary to deploy under stress of fire. As a rule, these companies advance at the ordinary step. We cannot approve of company columns under the effective fire of either rifles or artillery, especially the latter. A single shrapnel shell bursting at the right time would make but one mouthful of an entire company in such a formation. To our mind, the supporting companies should, when under effective fire, advance in line with loosened files, and should take part in the final charge either by following closely the firing line, by filling a gap in the latter, or even by mixing itself up with the men of the firing line immediately in front of it. We would, in addition, point out that in rear of the firing line the small supports and the supporting companies should follow entire battalions, who, drawing closer and closer as the enemy is nearer, should, as soon as the charge has been successfully delivered, take up the pursuit. With reference to the latter we cannot do better than imitate the German system. When they have carried a position, they do not, as most troops are at least apt to do, run after the foe with the bayonet, but halt and open fire. It is obvious that a routed body of troops will get over the ground faster than a body which seeks to retain its order. If a flying foe be followed up with the bayonet, at most a few of the hindmost will be caught and slain, while a steady fire will produce an effect lasting over some time. When the foe shall have got over 400 yards of ground, then they may with advantage be followed up, and some of the pursuers may even double a couple of hundred yards. Even then a portion of the victors should remain halted and continuing to fire.

Capt. Von Mirbach in treating of the retreat justly observes that the soldier having been taught the principles of attack and defence, requires very little special instruction for the combat in retreat. This, however, unless undertaken *before* the respective firing lines shall have come into close contact is one of the most delicate and difficult of operations. Even when it is a part of the general's plan to withdraw his troops as soon as the enemy appears in sight, much skill, steadiness, and discipline are essential to success. When, however, the retreat is forced by stress of fire upon an army which originally intended either to assume the offensive, or even to maintain the defensive, the operation is full of