

PREFACE

xxi

"Could you give me any exact statistics as to the increased rapidity of fire?"

"Certainly," said M. Bloch. "That is to say, I can give you particulars up to a comparatively recent time, but the progress of the science of firearms is so rapid that no one can say but that my statistics may be old before you print your report of this talk. The ordinary soldier will fire twelve times as many shots per minute as he was able to do in 1870, and even this is likely to be rapidly improved upon. But you may take it that what with increased rapidity of fire, greater penetrative power, and the greater precision that the gun which the soldier will carry into the battle will possess, the rifle of to-morrow will be forty times as effective as the chassepot was in the Franco-Prussian war. Even the present gun is five times as deadly."

"But do not you think that with this rapid firing a soldier will spend all his ammunition and have none left?"

"There, again," said M. Bloch, "the improvement in firearms has enormously increased the number of cartridges which each man can carry into action. In 1877, when we went to war with Turkey, our soldiers could only carry 84 cartridges into action. When the calibre of the rifle was reduced to 5 mm. the number which each soldier was furnished with rose to 270. With a bullet of 4 mm. he will carry 380, and when we have a rifle of 3 mm. calibre he will be able to take 575 into action, and not have to carry any more weight than that which burdened him when he carried 84, twenty years ago. At present he carries 170 of the 7.62 mm."

"But we are a long way off 3 mm. calibre, are we not, M. Bloch?"