

IN our issue of the 29th July we have got the scores of two of the members of the Canadian team in the Kolapore competition wrong, although the grand total is correctly given, Staff-Sergt. Bell having made 29 points at 600 yards instead of 27, and a total of 90 points, and being two points ahead of any other member of any of the teams, while Pte. Kimmerly made 23 points at 600, and a total of 75, instead of 77 as printed.

MR. J. H. STEWARD, optician to the Dominion rifle association, has generously given a handsome silver cup to be competed for at the forthcoming prize meeting. The cup given by Mr. Steward last year constituted the second prize in the match open to men who had competed at Wimbledon, and was won by Capt. A. Anderson, of the retired list. The disposal to be made of this year's prize has not yet been decided.

THE accounts received from England of the success of our artillery team at Shoeburyness are most satisfactory in their nature but most disappointing in their meagreness. All we know is that, in face of great competition, our boys have been successful in securing three first prizes. So soon as we are in possession of full details we will publish some description of their achievements.

Common Sense on Parade, or Drill Without Stays.

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(Continued from page 435.)

THE doubling-up system, which the Germans fell into from the very necessity of the case, and which we adopted, is free from these defects. It does bring new life in *personnel* and *materiel* to all points of the line. But it does this at the absolute sacrifice of all tactical cohesion and order. The advancing line becomes more and more a mere mob, so far as form is concerned, commands continually changing, men of different sub-units mixed up in a confusion which it is admitted on all hands is an evil. Every degree of confusion, whether avoidable or not, is necessarily a weakening of organic unity, and every weakening of organic unity is an element of risk. "One of the weak points of our plan is the pushing in of men anyhow into the fighting line."—(Captain James.) It may make victory undecided, it may make victory unattainable, it may make defeat disaster. Its tendency to make victory undecided has been already illustrated by the great delays which took place in the last Franco-German war in recovery of tactical unity and form after engagements. What effect it would have in the case of defeat is a matter of speculation, as there is no experience to proceed upon. The Germans had an inefficient foe to contend against. "The quality of the troops opposed to us must not be overlooked; masses heaped together, without training, without efficient officers, badly equipped and fed, and therefore lacking all intrinsic worth."—(Frontal Attack of Infantry.) Therefore the same writer adds: "In general we have to guard against drawing too rapid and optimistic conclusions from the actions in the second period against the troops of the Republic."—(Ibid.) "We must guard ourselves against making too many deductions from what happened in past wars."—(Captain James.) These passages and others formerly quoted indicate how strongly our own authorities and some of the Prussians themselves concur in holding that the lessons of the German war are not altogether trustworthy instruction.

The new plan of the Germans, by which the reinforcement is pushed up in small groups of not more than sixteen men, modifies the evil of the mixing system, but does not cure it. It does not retain the cohesion of tactical sub-units, and it necessarily destroys all unity and continuance of command. The state of skilled opinion on this question of retention of tactical cohesion is a strong illustration of the "chaos" spoken of by Colonel Lonsdale Hale. Let the following passages be contrasted: "The intermixture of groups and sections is of comparatively little consequence. The great difficulty arises when the derangement extends to companies, &c."—(Colonel Sir Lumley Graham.) "The actual mixing of the larger tactical units cannot be avoided, but that of small groups can be, up to, at all events, the close ranges. . . . We must seek to prevent the mixing of small organised groups. . . . The group is the true fighting unit."—(Lieut. Mayne.) And as if to

make confusion worse confounded, on turning to the Germans, whom the latter author relies on for his views as to the tactical value of groups as the true fighting unit, the following is found in one of their very highest authorities: "The group is too small a body to count for much in the colossal battles of the present day."—(Von Boguslawski.) So serious is the difficulty regarding mixture of units and commands, and so important as it thought to minimise its evils, that expedients are suggested by the most skilled German theorists to overcome them. The very character of these expedients is at once a testimony to the consciousness of the necessity of exceptional devices, and to the difficulty of finding them, without at the same time creating fresh difficulties and disadvantages. One would suppose that if there ever was a fundamental maxim in handling troops it would be that on no account was their personal leader to be changed during the progress of the engagement. Whatever impression the proposal deliberately to change commanders during the fight may make on German minds, it certainly falls very strangely on British ears, more like a suggestion from Bedlam than a military theory gravely propounded. It goes in the very teeth of the views of those who know the British officer and soldier best. "Men will never obey the orders of anyone so completely as his in whose knowledge they confide."—(Home.) And surely their own leader, who brings them to the fight, must be that man, and not some stranger joining them afterwards. It is in this view that it is well laid down "that from the beginning to the end of the action there should be no change in the command."—(Major-General Hon. W. P. Fielding.) What was the good of "the officer always training the same men, and the same men always working together" (Colonel Sir Lumley Graham), if he is to be thrust out of his command at the very moment when his training of them will tell in his hand, and the unity established between him and them is the most likely to bear good fruit? Even the Germans themselves can be called in witness against such schemes: "The chief aim should be to retain the accustomed relations of command in the organic combinations of the troops as much as possible." (Frontal Attack of Infantry.)

But they seem to be of opinion that the exigencies of their system make it necessary to sacrifice this chief aim, and to do this at the very moment in the combat when reason would hold it most important to retain it. Their best authorities, impressed with the difficulties which must result from their mode of attack, owing to strange officers arriving on the scene during the combat, not only go the length of changing the command, but lest the commander who is superseded on reinforcement should by his mere presence be a hindrance to the operative command of the superseding officer, he is to be ordered out of the fight till its conclusion, even though the new commander be his junior in the service. This must sound almost incredible to British ears, but here are the very words, speaking of the duty of officers in the fighting line, on reinforcement arriving: "All those of the original fighting line senior to those reinforcing officers falling to the rear till tactical order is restored."—(Von Boguslawski.) What does this mean? It means that after a portion of the fighting line has borne the brunt bravely, has answered to the *appel* of its own commander, and pushed with courage to the front regardless of the losses it has suffered, ready to be led on in spite of everything, it is suddenly to find some one else—an unknown man, perhaps, or still worse, a man known to be the commander's junior, take up the command and supersede its chief. The men are to know that reinforcement means that he is no longer their leader. In the very hottest of the fight their trusted head is to be removed. And he—what is it for him? He, the senior, is to retire and become a mere target for the enemy's bullets, forbidden to rally or lead his own men, whom he has brought through the nerve-trying part of the struggle. They are to be led to victory or mishandled into defeat under his eyes, he looking on helpless and useless. They are no longer his men until the fight is over. They are his in responsibility, but not in command. He will share the misery of their failure; he can claim only half honor of their victory. And the junior is to take up command under the critical but not controlling eye of his superior, embarrassed by his presence, but unable to have his cooperation. This is the kind of thing that British officers and soldiers are asked to accept as the perfection of military wisdom by the "blind worshippers of the Prussian system." It may suit Germans, although even that is hardly credible, but the Englishman who can accept it as applicable to his race must be a very curious Englishman indeed. What the British officer and the British soldier will think of it may be easily guessed. If copying the Germans necessitates adopting this invention (!) there will be nothing for it but to give up copying them at all, which, by the way, might not be so very bad a thing. If this is the outcome of the Prussian "swarm" system, then surely not without reason is "Schwarmer" a German expression for a fanatic. But does not the very suggestion itself bring into prominent relief the consciousness on the part of the German military students of the enormous