

TRIAL OF CENTRAL-FIRE REVOLVERS.

On Saturday a trial was made in the covered rifle-ground at the Crystal Palace of improved Colt's revolvers, the improvement being one which has long been desired, and which has been under the consideration of inventors for two or three years. Since the six-chamber "Colt" was first introduced to the notice of Englishmen at the Great Exhibition of 1851 it has maintained its supremacy as an accurate shooter, though the name of its rivals is legion. But it has been surpassed by all of them in mechanical adaptability and handiness of use; and it was a dangerous way of being gradually superseded and rendered obsolete, till the plan of making it a central-fire pistol was perfected. The old revolver, made on the ordinary cap and nipple pattern, which was general with fire-arms of every kind before the system of breechloading began rapidly to tend towards the universal adoption of central-fire cartridges, can at a cost of 20s be converted to the new and approved form. There are about 17,000 Colt's revolvers in the service of English Government; and it is therefore of some national importance whether, instead of re-arming our men, it would not be wiser to improve the weapons with which they are already provided. With those weapons it is perfectly well known that better practice can be made, at a greater number of paces, than with any other kind of revolving pistol. In the matter of rapidity some of the repeating breechloaders may appear still to have an advantage over the "Colt," even in its improved shape. But the merits in this respect are balanced by the facility with which exploded cartridges are ejected from the new central fire pistol bearing the redoubtable American colonel's name. It is an unquestionable recommendation of the improved "Colt" that its empty cartridges can be readily got rid of, in the simplest manner, without aid of the lever ramrod. This appliance is used in loading just as it was used with the capped chambers of the old-fashioned pistol. That is to say, the central-fire cartridge is not inserted at the breech of the chamber, but is rammed home; and the pistol is then discharged in the usual way. The empty shells are removed by cocking and snapping the hammer, an operation which, with a little practice, can be performed in an astonishingly short space of time. Another valuable quality of the improved pistol or of its ammunition rather, is the saving of the metallic cases or shells, which can be reloaded again and again. An interchangeable nipple cylinder is supplied with these pistols, which can thus be loaded with loose powder and ball, a matter of no small importance in countries where made-up ammunition is not easily procurable. The trials on Saturday were, without the smallest exception, satisfactory. So far from accuracy and penetration having suffered by the change of cartridge and the addition of the extracting apparatus, it was found that, if anything, the pistols were improved in these respects, as they are unquestionably improved in all others.—*Telegraph* (London).

The workmen in overhauling the old fort at St. Augustine, Fla., recently, discovered several subterranean cells, each of which contained a long iron upright box and a human skeleton in irons. It is supposed that these were refractory Spanish soldiers, or perhaps prisoners of war, who were incarcerated in these sweat-boxes and left there to die hundreds of years ago.

A NEW GERMAN PORT.

The opening of a Prussian naval harbour in the North Sea has excited no little jealousy in Russia, and the newspapers of St. Petersburg express great alarm at the increasing power of their German neighbour. A remarkable article on this subject appears in the *Gloss* of the 1st inst. "After seizing Kiel and the Bay of Labdo," it says, "Prussia has constructed in that Bay the naval port of Hoppens, and thus at once becomes a Naval Power and a dangerous rival to us in the Baltic. When the canal between the Baltic and the North Sea, the construction of which is already seriously contemplated at Berlin, is completed, the naval power of Prussia, which formerly only existed in the dreams of Prussian patriots, will become an accomplished fact." The *Gloss*, after accusing Prussia of false dealing in her relations with Russia, proceeds: "Our commercial legislation has been such that if the Prussian Minister of Commerce had been asked for his advice he could not have invented anything more advantageous for Prussian interests. The sliding scale of Customs tariffs which has been recently abolished, and the obstacles created by our bureaucracy, have drawn nearly all the Northern maritime commerce into Prussian harbours. The Crimean war, and the construction of our railway communication between our Western Provinces and Königsburg, have made that port the headquarters of our Northern trade. . . . Moreover, the mercantile marine of North Germany increases yearly, while merchant ships under the Russian flag are scarcely ever seen on foreign waters." "If France," the *Gloss* significantly adds, "does not think proper to put a stop to Prussian impetuosity, that power will in a few years absorb the whole of Germany, or, in other words, become the arbiter of Europe."

BRITISH SUBJECTS.

The law at present declares as British subjects all persons of British parentage born abroad, down we suppose, to the latest generations. Is there anything so preposterous as to meet a French youth who has never seen England, and who knows not a word of English an Englishman, simply because his great grandfather was a British subject? The Royal Commissioners propose that the transmission of British nationality in families settled abroad shall henceforth be limited to the first generation, and more specifically, that every child born out of the dominion of the Crown, whose father at the time of the birth was a British subject shall be regarded by British law as by birth a British subject, provided the father were born within the dominion of the Crown, but not otherwise. But that any such person who, according to the law of a foreign country is a subject or citizen of that country, and who has never exercised or claimed any right or privilege as a British subject should, in the administration of British criminal law, be treated as a subject of the country in which he was born. In other words, we still claim the son of a British subject, but we will not undertake to protect him against any misdeeds he may commit in the country in which he is born and where he lives. But what will be the use to him of his British nationality under such circumstances? Such an anomalous position is certain to entail troubles. Let the same rules which have been suggested as regarded the nationality of the parents regulate the nationality of the child, and the

difficulty, if anywhere will be greatly diminished. Let a child of a British father born in a foreign country within ten years of his residence therein, be accounted British; and a child of a British father, born after he resided for ten years out of the dominion of the Crown, or after he has become naturalised in a foreign country, be considered an alien.—*Saint Pauls*.

It seems that the order for the seizure of the Spanish gunboats emanated from high official sources, and that Marshal Barlow was only doing as he was told. It entails no loss upon the contractors engaged in either constructing the hulls of the vessels or making the machinery. The Spanish Government has been most liberal, even lavish in its disbursements. A million dollars in gold arrived in New York some two months ago, in the hands of a trusted emissary, to pay the installments agreed upon as the work progressed. According to this contract \$400,000 have been paid over every twenty days during progress, which sum fully indemnifies the contractors for the work done up to the present moment, so that no feeling of pecuniary loss comes on to mar the higher feeling inherent in the breasts of all American citizens at seeing that an undertaking, designed to overthrow or crush the aspirations and struggles of a brave people after liberty, has been brought to naught. The contract for arming these vessels was held by a firm at Cold Springs, but to all inquiries whether the seizure of the war material then ready and in course of preparation for the arming of the vessels was included in the order for the seizure of the vessels themselves, it was impossible to get a positive reply. The Spanish authorities are so crestfallen and cast down as the opposing Junta are jubilant and elated.—*Boston Post*.

The *Broad Arrow* says the second report of the Courts-Martial Commissioners, now before the public, recommends a very important reform. Henceforth the practice of reassembling the court to consider the verdict and sentence is to be discontinued, and the finding is to be at once announced in open court. If the verdict be "Not guilty," the prisoner is to be immediately discharged; if "Guilty," however, it is not to take effect until confirmed by the confirming officer, who will be empowered to mitigate or commute the sentence, but not to increase it. The Commissioners further propose that "paper interrogatories" shall be dispensed with whenever the services of a shorthand writer can be procured. The Mutiny Act and the Articles of War are to be redrawn and simplified—a reform which has been long felt to be desirable, but which has always been postponed in order to avoid discussions in Parliament upon the prerogatives of the Crown, and the respective authority of the Horse Guards and the War Office. Some minor recommendations are contained in the report to which we may refer hereafter.

It is related of Mouravieff, the famous Russian general, that once when in command of a camp, having discovered an alarming diminution in his candles, and having detected thirteen Cossacks in the act of stealing them, he adopted a novel method of curing their thieving propensity. At nightfall the Cossacks were ranged in front of the general's tent, stripped stark naked, compelled to stand erect, with their heads thrown back, and obliged to use their mouth for candlesticks. By the glare of the lighted candles so held, the general and his staff indulged in their grog, and the whole army was permitted to see the ludicrous sight and chaff the poor candles ticks.