

CORRESPONDENCE.

ARMY RIFLES.

To the Editor of THE VOLUNTEER REVIEW.

DEAR SIR:—As you have been so kind, hitherto, as to insert, and even speak favorably of my communications, I am tempted to try again, particularly as I wish to add a few words about my last paper and your comments thereon.

There are three noticeable points of difference between the long and short Enfield rifle, viz: six or seven inches difference in length of barrel; a tight and loose sling respectively; the facings of the one, such as the shoulder-plate, trigger-guard, and nose-cap, are of brass, of the other, of blued steel. And I might add as another difference, that the former affixes the bayonet, the latter the sword.

Now, let us discuss these points briefly, and I think I can give several reasons which, although they may be unimportant separately, are, when taken collectively, sufficient to give a decided preference to the short Enfield. First, the rifle just mentioned, is naturally the lighter and handier of the two, especially in loading and firing, the weight being nearer the supporting arm. The shooting of the short Enfield, also, is not at all inferior to that of its long rival; indeed, the former was sighted 100 yards further than the latter. I speak of the late muzzle loaders. Now for the sling. The loose sling has the following advantages: it admits of the rifle being slung, which is an easy way of carrying it, indeed, this is the only use of the sling, and if tight it serves no really useful purpose. But not only this; it allows the rifle to be firmly grasped by the stock, thus facilitating many—I may say all—movements, but particularly the "Slope" from the "Order," in which case the tight sling of the long rifle prevents it slipping up freely in the third motion, the ripe clay besides being rubbed off the sling on to the tunic. The sling also becomes dirty with handling, especially in the platoon exercise. The third point I may dismiss very shortly. The brass work of the long rifle looks very well when clean and bright, but as it is a needless trouble to keep it so, I think the other superior in this respect also. With respect to bayonets: when fixed, the long rifle perhaps has the advantage in being a little lighter towards the end, although otherwise they are of the same weight I believe.

This advantage is at least partly counterbalanced, however, by the ease with which the sword is fixed and unfixed, and in the latter case being used as a sword.

The Prussian army is armed with a considerably longer and heavier rifle than the Enfield, and uses the sword-bayonet, but whether they found it the best weapon for

sticking Austrians with in the late war, I don't know.

There are several military weapons of much smaller bore than that used by our army, among the number, the "Spencer," and other American rifles, and notably the "Chassepot," which in its recent use has been proved to inflict very few fatal wounds in consequence. This is rather to be desired than otherwise, for as a general thing a man wounded is "hors de combat" as much as if killed. Although the Snider-Enfield, throwing as it does a heavy ball, and consequently having a greater range, would undoubtedly have the advantage in skirmishing or general firing at long distances; yet it is a question if at a moderate range a lighter rifle would not be superior to it, the men being able to carry a proportionately larger number of rounds, and thus not requiring to be relieved so often. The recoil with small bores, also, being less, would tend to improve the shooting.

At the same time I have seen it stated that in the late war in Europe, the Prussians never exhausted the ammunition in their pouches, two or three rapid volleys being generally sufficient; this was against muzzle-loaders however.

With regard to your comments on my paper on National Uniforms which appeared in the Review (Vol. 2 No. 11), I still think that a distinct uniform would be preferable, not that I am ashamed to wear the British uniform—far from it—I do wear it, and, as you say, am proud of it; but it is from the fact of the Volunteers being often taken for Regulars by foreigners, particularly Americans, which, I think, considering that Militia cannot equal regular troops in any respect, is derogatory to the British Army. A distinct uniform would distinguish the two forces. This is the case with the English Volunteers. The Regulations for the English Volunteer Force, allow Corps to choose their own uniform, arms and accoutrements, subject to the approval of the Lord Lieutenant of the County; provided that the color of the cloth is in accordance with one of the sealed patterns deposited at the Royal Army Clothing Depot. The colors compose scarlet, white, blue and green, of cloth, and grey of cloth or tweed. Respecting the accoutrements, my object was to make the outfit as light as possible; to this end dispensing with a knapsack. I certainly afterwards forgot it, but upon looking over the list, I saw nothing that could well be dispensed with except the mess tin, which is unnecessary. In the event of war, our troops would, of course, act mainly on the defensive, but there might be opportunities for reprisal, as occurred in the war of 1812-15, when the force would, in consequence of the small number of British troops, require to be partly Militia. In any event, the ever varying position and movements of an army in the field, would not, I think, admit of any lighter equipment.

ESSEX.

VOLUNTEERS AND MILITIA.

Continued.

To the Editor of THE VOLUNTEER REVIEW.

SIR,—The duties of a Commanding Officer are so varied and responsible, that it is almost as difficult to enumerate, as define them. As much of the good spirit, comfort, and general welfare of the Battalion depends upon his knowledge and tact, while he and his men are engaged in their ordinary everyday avocation; as its efficiency and value, when on active service, depends upon his knowledge of drill, field duty and interior economy. We are told by the Queen's Regulations, our rule and guide, that the authority of a Commanding Officer is paramount in every situation in camp, or garrison, in the mess room or upon parade. Well, the authority of the Commanding Officer of a Volunteer Corps is paramount too, but *at times only*. Not always, and probably at the time, he would need his power the most, he finds his authority lacking and his hands tied. How far then can we assimilate the duties of this combination of citizen and soldier represented by the Lieut. Col. of a Volunteer Militia Regiment with those of a Line Regiment? How much of the absolute power possessed by the latter would we be safe in conceding to the former? And, when not in active service how much power do they, and should they possess? Section 22 of the amended Act for Volunteer Militia, and the sections numbering from 83 to 90 of the Act of 1863, are the penal clauses, neutralized altogether, I believe, by section 97 of the same Act, when applied to officers or to the men of isolated or Independent Companies, but even assuming them to be valid, there is not, as far as I am aware, any law of arrest, by which a Commanding Officer can at once suspend a Regimental Officer, for neglect of duty, or for disobedience of orders, or any other offence committed when the Regiment is not upon duty. Nor any path open for preventing, correcting or punishing irregularities among officers, except reporting the delinquent through the Brigade Major. The law then, as I understand it, works in this way, an officer is reported by his Captain for disobedience of orders when on drill. The Colonel is away at Headquarters, and forwards the Captain's report as soon as received, to the Brigade Major. The Brigade Major then sends it to the Assistant Adjutant-General, and he may probably think it necessary before taking action, to bring the matter to the notice of the Adjutant-General himself. In the meantime, what is going on in the company. The men know that one of the officers has been reported for an offence, for the commission of which, they are liable to be sharply punished, but they see this officer upon parade the same as usual, or it is such a long time before any action is taken upon the report, that the original