

## CORRESPONDENCE.

**The Magazine vs. Single Shot Rifle.**

To the Editor of CANADIAN MILITARY GAZETTE:

SIR,—“The object of a magazine rifle is to enable the soldier, at a critical moment, to fire a certain number of shots without having to re-load from the pouch.” Upon this “critical moment,” which marks the turning point in every battle, may hang the fate of a nation. The great importance of a magazine arm has been practically demonstrated in nearly every important campaign since the American war between the North and the South in 1861; notably in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877 at Plevna, where the Turks, with their Winchester repeaters, mowed down the Russians by hundreds as they advanced across the open to the attack.

Nearly every civilized nation has recognized the superiority of the magazine rifle by arming its troops with a weapon of this class, but the change was not made until a long series of exhaustive trials had afforded proof that the magazine was the best weapon for military purposes.

It is therefore a matter of surprise to find the Government, with the light of the experience and example of other nations, re-arming the militia with a “single loader.” The Martini-Enfield may be all that is claimed for it by its friends, yet in the eyes of the military world, troops armed with this weapon would be considered unequally matched against those with a magazine. Of course one can easily understand the marksman, whose mental vision is bounded by the stationary target of a rifle range, and a lengthy programme of valuable money prizes, being prejudiced in favor of a “single loader,” as it is the weapon best adapted for his purpose. It is the duty of the Government, however, to place in the hands of our country's defenders the rifle best adapted for the battle-field, the Lee-Metford or a Lee-Enfield magazine.

Yours faithfully,

J. R.

**The Lee-Metford Rifle.**

To the Editor of CANADIAN MILITARY GAZETTE:

SIR,—“Mark IV,” the *nom de guerre* of one of Montreal's best known rifleshoots, has a very interesting letter in the Montreal *Star* of Feb. 1st. Besides giving much information on the Martini-Henri, the Lee-Metford and the Martini-Enfield, better known in Canada as the Martini-Metford, “Mark IV” concludes that the Martini-Enfield is, in his opinion, by far the best rifle for our Canadian volunteers.

Now, Mr. Editor, the Martini-Enfield is a good rifle, but is it wise to overlook the decisions of every European nation, not one of which has dared to leave its armies armed with a single loader?

Is it wise to overlook the fact that our neighbors are providing their militia, as well as the standing army, with the best repeating small-bore they can find?

Does not “Mark IV” look too much into the beauties of the Martini-Enfield as a target weapon, and overlook the tactical advantages of the repeater?

True it is that the mechanism of the Lee-Metford is more complicated than that of the Martini-Enfield, but does not that reserve of seven shots, withheld until the decisive moment, outweigh all other considerations?

I should imagine that in action soldiers would not find the Martini-Enfield such a rapid loader. A charge of cavalry coming down on a thin, red line, might cause nervous fingers to fumble with the cartridge, to lose precious time, when with the repeating weapon the cut-off is opened—the material for seven rapid volleys is at hand, and perchance the fate of a campaign may be settled by this magazine.

Mr. Editor, I hope that we in Canada will not set ourselves up as knowing more than the combined military theorists of Europe, and decide on the purchase of a style of arm which is as antiquated as the Snider or muzzle-loader.

If it is a question of the care of the rifle, let more time be devoted to a study of its intricacies, let a few minutes be spared from parade drill to enable every militiaman to become familiar with the mechanism of his rifle, to see that it is properly cleaned and oiled before it is placed in its cupboard; but by all means let Canada be saved from the crime of placing an inferior arm in the hands of its militia.

“CANUCK.”

Montreal, Feb. 10th, 1896.

**Annual Training.****Good Shooting and Practical Drill vs. Parade Ground Movements.**

To the Editor of CANADIAN MILITARY GAZETTE:

SIR,—Now that the time is approaching for the different infantry battalions to put in their annual training, it seems appropriate to consider how that time may be utilized to the best advantage. Every one will admit that each battalion should be made into as perfect a “fighting machine” as the thirty-six hours allowed by the Government for the training of a city corps, or the twelve days for a rural corps will permit.

The question then arises in what manner should this training be carried out in order to give the best practical results.

Can the greatest fighting efficiency be attained by devoting all the period of training to settling up drill, the manual exercise, the polishing and cleaning of accoutrements, etc., in order to pass the critical eye of the inspecting officer? This is the *modus operandi* of the present. We all know it well; the corps turns out spick and span, pipe-clay reigns, metal flashes in the sun, and the band plays. The movements in close order are steady, the rifle exercises performed with snap and vim. But the show ends there.

If the rigid inspection should require the men to move in extended order, as never happens, the corps is simply not in

it, and as for fire discipline, the section commanders never heard of it.

Far be it from me to disparage the great and lasting benefits of the setting up drill which instils into a man the “instinctive habit of obedience to a word of command as coming from one who has the right and duty to give that command, and which has to be carried into his very limbs.”

Colonel Maurice tells us that “the instinctive obedience of a rank of soldiers to the order to turn ‘Right about,’ when that order sends them back into the ground where shells are bursting and where bullets are raining has been a power of fighting too great for us ever willingly to throw away.” And Colonel Harvey, “Great precision is required in squad, company, battalion, and brigade or divisional drill, in order to thoroughly train the soldier to habits of order and implicit obedience, and to obtain from him at the critical moment the greatest development of fire under the most careful supervision and control.”

But the former also writes, “that the only practical work is that which tends to prepare men, not for the inspection of some general on a parade ground, but for actual war. An army is doing ‘practical work’ in the preparation for its real duty, that of winning battles. It is employed on mischievous theoretical work, on false theory, when it is doing ‘anything else.’”

Cleanliness may be next to godliness, but that and steadiness on parade are not the greatest *desideratum*. Instance the superb fighting qualities of the Boers, and the incomparable Turkish infantry, who, if tradition is right, are anything but immaculate.

But we cannot expect to make our volunteers, with their thirty-six hours annual training, comply with the requirements of a rigid parade ground inspection, and also fighters with a knowledge of fire discipline, and how to shoot. We must choose between the two ideals; we cannot have both.

Is it possible to have a little of each, to sacrifice a little display and accuracy of movement to practical work? Cannot we have the battalions know that at least a little work in extended formation and fire discipline is expected of them at an inspection? And as for shooting, what a terrible power a regiment of good shots would be. But a rifleman cannot be made by an expenditure of twenty rounds per annum.

Paraphrasing an eminent German authority's words on the artillery, “skirmishers must in the first place hit, in the second place hit, and in the third place hit.”

We are told that Majuba Hill was lost by the Highlanders not re-adjusting their rifle sights from the first instance, and that as the Boers gradually stalked their prey the bullets whistled harmlessly over their heads, and that at the battle of St. Privat a German sergeant had sufficient presence of mind to see that as the men ad-