

THE ADVANTAGES OF COVER IN WAR

(By Lieut. Burton)

Much of what was written and included in the training manuals before the outbreak of the war now raging requires drastic revision in the light of experience of the latest and the most up to date methods of fighting. At the same time, there are certain broad principles that apply today with the same force as in the South African war. If we exclude the fighting that has taken place on the Indian frontier, the African war was the first in which was actually demonstrated the conditions in the field brought into being by the use of long range weapons. It is certainly not too much to say that it was the experience gained in that war that brought sharply into prominence the vital necessity of visual training and skilled distance training.

It must be borne in mind that the fire of the modern magazine rifle is intensely destructive, and that the aim of the higher command, therefore, is (a) in attack, to bring fire to bear at decisive ranges and to maintain a sufficient number of firers in the front line to gain and keep superiority of fire until the attack can be driven home, while in defense, the end sought is to prevent the enemy from attaining that superiority by breaking up the attacking line before it can be sufficiently densely established. In both cases, attack and defense, the ultimate object can only be achieved by the infliction of casualties. The object of musketry training is to enable soldiers to hit the service target. It is one thing to acquire such technical skill in the way of correct aiming, sighting and control so as to enable one to hit a range target. It is quite another to hit a small and indistinct object, only visible with any degree of certainty when in rapid motion and only exposed for a few seconds at a time. Efforts are made to demonstrate this difficulty in the course of musketry training by demonstrations known as "aiming at the ground," by lessons in cover and in visual training.

What the trained soldier has to do is to know the best means by which he can so take advantage of the formation of the ground and the occurrence of natural features as to preserve himself uninjured for as long a time as possible without sacrificing his efficiency as an offensive fighting

unit. He must always bear in mind that the very last thing that cover of whatsoever nature is intended to do is to enable him merely to secure protection from personal injury. While under cover, he must still be able to effectively use his rifle. This may be taken as the first general rule governing the use of cover—it must afford free use of his rifle.

Cover is of two kinds; it may afford protection from fire or merely protection from view. The principal example of the former is furnished by entrenchments, which are, from their nature, purely defensive. Cover from view may be of many kinds besides grass, brush, irregularities of ground, and so on. It cannot be too greatly emphasised that there is quite another cover from view that necessitates the intervention of no object whatever between the firer and the enemy—the kind of cover that is afforded by the selection of a suitable background to favor invisibility, combined with the absence of unnecessary movement. Given such a background, a man may, to all intents and purposes, be invisible at any range over 250 yards, so that, provided the extension is sufficient, quite a large body of troops can enjoy comparative immunity at a distance from their enemy at which, when the time arrives, they can open a very destructive fire. As an example of this, at the beginning of the war a battalion of the London Scottish reached a rendezvous four hours ahead of the time fixed for an operation in which

Funland !

—FOR—

Sports and Pastime

Come once you will come again. Free Admission, Rifle Range attached. A PRIZE every evening of 2/6 for the best shot.....

Bramshott & Witley