

MUSKETRY.

BETTER INSTRUCTION NEEDED.

Editor MILITARY GAZETTE:

SIR,—Under modern conditions of warfare, the loss inflicted within a given time by the destructive weapons now in the hands of all armies is so great that the formations under which the armies of the past moved into action and fought under the orders of their commanders are no longer possible.

It is certain that the "thin red line," the fighting formation of the British infantry in the past, can no longer be used in actual fighting against troops armed with modern weapons unless in purely defensive positions.

The experience of modern wars affords convincing proof that good shooting and movements tending to give to good shooting and good weapons the greatest possible advantage are the factors which command success.

The question may, therefore, be in order: Is the present mode of training our infantry calculated to fit them for the duty of soldiers, that of winning battles? Judged from the standpoint of modern experience, the work carried on in our drill halls and camps of instruction, etc., tends to prepare men more for the spectacular movements of a holiday review than for actual war.

A great portion of the time now spent on the showy manoeuvres of the barrack square could be more profitably devoted to work at the "butts," and to teaching fire discipline. The troops that shall be found most in the hands of the commander in the matter of fire will, other things being equal, be invincible, but this state of efficiency can never be attained until every instructor, from the highest to the lowest, is determined that every parade should consist largely of fire-control drill, and that no man should leave a parade without having gained something in fire discipline.

Our infantry battalions are about to be armed with one of the best weapons the world has been able to produce, but it will require more than the annual grant of twenty cartridges to give a man the requisite confidence and skill to handle the weapon with effect. It is, therefore, essentially necessary that the ammunition grant be increased and every facility afforded for practice.

Battalions out for training should be encamped on, or in close proximity to, a rifle range, and exercised under competent instructors in such drills and practices as tend to promote efficiency. The services of the best shots should be utilized as group or section leaders. It is of vital importance that officers and N.C. officers should be familiar with the range and power of the rifle, as this knowledge would enable them with confidence to take advantage of every situation where the weapon could be used with effect.

No commander can secure, or is worthy of, the confidence of his men unless he is a capable leader and has a knowledge of his duties.

J.R.

TARGET PRACTICE.

A MATTER that is agitating the authorities in Great Britain is the seeming indifference that is shown with regard to rifle shooting. It might well be applied to our own force, for it is a fact which cannot be got over that too much attention is paid to the various battalion and company movements. This is a splendid thing in itself, but the precision with which a rifle can be taken from the order to the slope would be of little account at the front. The drill that was given a first place would have to go second, and the handling of a rifle would take the first place. As it is at present, only two or three represent the shooting men in each of the companies. This is all very well at the annual prize meetings, but it would be of little account in warfare. Many a young volunteer, when asked if he does any shooting, invariably replies, "What is the use? The crack shots pick everything." This remark is an old one, and is handed down to each succeeding man as he joins the regiment. The men should have to put in so much target practice every year. Once get a young volunteer interested in rifle shooting, and he will go straight ahead into it. It is the getting them to the target that seems to be the great drawback. Officers of companies should take an interest in rifle shooting themselves and endeavor to get their men out along with them. Everyone cannot be a Queen's prizeman, no more can everyone be a great artist, but if not a prize-winner, they can at least gain a knowledge of handling the rifle and the art of shooting, which cannot be found on the parade ground.

CORNWALL RIFLE ASSOCIATION.

At a meeting of Cornwall Rifle Association Lieut.-Col. Bredin, Maj. R. R. MacLennan, M.P., and S. Greenwood were elected hon. presidents; president, J. F. Smart; vice-presidents, Lieuts. J. L. Miller and G. W. Runions; sec.-treas., Pte. G. S. Copeland; range officer, Sergt. R. Corrigan; captain League team, Sergt. J. F. Abbott; committee, Lieut. Runions, Bugler Porteous and Pte. Shaw. The association did great things last year at all the matches where they were represented. In the Martini series at the R. M. R. League they had second place, and Lieuts. J. L. Miller and R. W. Runions are expected to be on the Bisley team.

BADAJOZ.

ON another page we give a reproduction of R. Caton Woodville's famous painting, "The Storming of Badajoz."* Napier, in his "History of the Peninsula," says:

"The French, confiding in Phillipon's direful skill, watched from their lofty station the approach of enemies whom they had twice before baffled, and now hoped to drive a third time blasted and ruined from the walls. The British, standing in deep columns, were as eager to meet that fiery destruction as the others were to pour it down, and both were alike terrible for their strength, their discipline and the passions awakened in their resolute hearts. The possession of Badajoz had become a point of personal honor with

the soldiers of each nation, but the desire for glory with the British was dashed by a hatred of the citizens on an old grudge; and recent toil and hardship, with much spilling of blood, had made many incredibly savage.

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"As the troops approached the breaches, the latter seemed buried in darkness. The hay packs were flung into the ditch and the stormers of the light division—500 chosen men—leaped downward without opposition, when suddenly a bright flame shot upward showed all the terrors of the scene. On one side the yawning breaches, and the ramparts on each side bristling with steel bayonets and dark with French uniforms; on the other, the scarlet columns of the British, deep and broad, and coming on like streams of lava.

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"Now a multitude bounded up the great breach as if driven by a whirlwind, but across the top glittered a range of sword blades, sharp-pointed, keen-edged on both sides and firmly fixed in ponderous beams chained together and set deep in the ruins; and for ten feet in front the ascent was covered with loose planks studded with sharp iron points, on which feet being set, the planks moved and the unhappy soldiers, falling forward on the spikes, rolled down upon the ranks behind.

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"Once and again the assailants rushed up the breaches, but always the sword-blades, immovable and impassable, stopped their charge, and the hissing shells and thundering powder barrels exploded unceasingly. Hundreds of men had fallen, hundreds more were dropping, still the heroic officers called aloud for new trials and ascended the ruins; and so furious were the men themselves that in one of these charges the rear strove to push the foremost on to the sword-blades, willing even to make a bridge of their writhing bodies. Officers of all ranks, followed more or less numerously by the men, were seen to start out as if struck with sudden madness and rush into the breach, which, yawning and glittering with steel, seemed like the mouth of a huge dragon, belching forth smoke and flame.

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"Five thousand men and officers fell in this siege, and of these, including seven hundred Portuguese, three thousand five hundred had been stricken in the assault, sixty officers and more than seven hundred men being slain on this spot. Let it be considered that this frightful carnage took place in a space of less than a hundred yards square. No age, no nation, ever sent forth braver troops to battle than those who stormed Badajoz.

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"When Lord Wellington saw the havoc of the night the firmness of his nature gave way for a moment, and the pride of conquest yielded to a passionate burst of grief for the loss of his gallant soldiers.

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"Amongst the foremost in the escalade was John McLaughlin, the regimental piper, who, the instant he mounted the castle wall, began playing "The Campbells Are Comin'," as coolly as if on a common parade, until his music was stopped by a shot through the bag. He was afterwards seen by an officer, seated on a gun carriage, quietly repairing the damage, while the shot was still flying about him; he then went on playing his tune."

* Published by Henry Graves & Co., London, Eng. for sale by Matthews Bros & Co., Toronto.