

and we cannot help doubting whether that is what really commends his proposal to himself. He rather writes, we apprehend, in the interests of the retired officers. Now the economical question is not a very important one. The public can well afford to give a captain's pay to an officer engaged in instructing a Volunteer battalion, and we think that, on the whole, Colonel Bird is right, and that it is better to stick to the present arrangement than to give Volunteer Adjutancies as a sort of consolation prizes to those who are compulsorily retired from active service."

The reports which are now being prepared by the Infantry battalions at home stations with reference to the new magazine rifle for the British army state that the rifle stands exposure very well, and there is hardly any recoil. The shooting capacity of the new rifle is found to be good, the increased velocity and low trajectory compensating for difficulties with cross winds. The pistol grip is largely approved, and it is found that the rifle can be brought well on to the shoulder; but some volunteer marksmen who have tried the weapon believe that the grip with the left hand, as now arranged, is too far forward. In some cases the cartridge-extraction mechanism is spoken of as unsatisfactory, the ejector spring being found weak and unreliable. It is also suggested that the hand-guard is not sufficient protection in long-continued firing, the barrel becoming so heated as to be difficult to hold. The magazine is the subject of considerable comment. Without it the rifle is found easy of manipulation, but with it drilling is in several reports considered difficult. The provision of a "half-cock" has been suggested to prevent danger when the magazine is full. The spring inside the magazine has not in all cases been approved, it occasionally getting out of order and the cartridges jamming when filling the magazine and firing from it. One serious matter dealt with is the difficulty and delay caused by detaching an exhausted magazine and replacing it by the spare one, and it is stated that in these circumstances ten rounds can be fired more rapidly from the Martini-Henry than from the magazine rifle. Little fault is found with the sighting, and the back-sight arrangement for short distances has generally worked well. The dial-sight, however, through its exposure, is considered by some to be liable to injury. The bayonet is the subject of some adverse remarks, it being mostly regarded as too short and of little use for cutting or entrenching purposes. The trials are still going on at home and abroad, and will continue some time before the whole of the reports can be collected for examination.

Battle Tactics of the Day.

(United Service Gazette.)

Sir Archibald Alison has recently issued two orders, both of them of more importance than may appear upon a casual reading.

That the occurrence of "casualties" among superior officers in battle shall be provided for by practising officers and non-commissioned officers on divisional field days in duties beyond their rank, and at the same time accustoming the men in such emergencies to receive commands from other than their own officers. When what may be called the "casualty" command or order is given as to senior officers of any rank, the officers of the next rank must be ready to take their seniors' duties immediately. Some idea may be formed of the great value of such an order when we consider the position in which officers are placed by the new conditions of battle forced upon us by the long range and rapid fire of modern rifles and cannon. The battle tactics of the future will throw upon officers of all grades greatly increased responsibilities, and try to the utmost their powers of perception and readiness of resource. No man is so capable of keeping his head and of retaining his coolness and inspiring confidence in others during trying moments as the one who has learned his duty, only as a man can learn it, from calm and careful practice at times and under circumstances in which he could centre all his thoughts and energies upon what he was learning. British soldiers, officers and men have earned from foe and friend credit for possessing qualities such as coolness, individual self-reliance and stubborn endurance, which should make the conditions of modern battle fall in their favor, as those conditions demand more than ever the exercise of those very qualities. The mere possession, however, of these qualities is not suffi-

cient. They need in all ranks to be cultivated by a system of training which shall admit of their full play, and an amount of practice which shall develop them to the utmost. Such a training is doubly necessary with the present generation of our Regulars and Auxiliaries, as we have to break with past traditions and habituate our men to formations and movements inconsistent with nearly all they have learnt, and with most of the drill in which they have been so sedulously practised up to this day.

This remark, however, applies to foreign troops with far greater force than to our own. To men trained to fight in column, even when under fire, the new style is a *revolution*; but to our men, able to fight in line, it is at the most a *change*. The extended order—necessary now under fire—is literally an extension, or an expansion of the line; but as the men lose the "touch," and, until thoroughly habituated to the new order of things, the confidence inspired by "shoulder to shoulder," they will, during the transition period, need more than usual constant training. It must not, however, be forgotten that the chief ingredient in giving the British soldier the same confidence under the new conditions as he had under the old is *the making him thorough master of his weapon*.

2. That the troops shall commence the practice of operations by night. The orders are for portions of the troops to take up positions covered by outposts, to repel attacks made under cover of the darkness, and none but Infantry battalions are to be used in the manoeuvres.

This order will no doubt cause astonishment in many minds, as students of military history and strategy know that night operations are not as a rule regarded favourably by great military writers; but in military affairs as in other affairs of life, "the old order changeth." Sir A. Alison is wise in thoroughly appreciating his responsibility for the efficiency of the men under his charge, and that it is his duty to prepare them as far as he can for every contingency. It is, perhaps, a truism to say that the most successful military leaders are those who can best adapt themselves to the circumstances in which they are placed. A man in Sir A. Alison's position has to consider that a night attack when successful is almost invariable demoralising and disastrous to the defeated Army, and that, notwithstanding precepts to the contrary, there are commanders who would not hesitate to risk such an attack if they knew that their enemy had never been trained to meet it.

Magazine and Small-bore Rifles.

(The Times, 4th September.)

An interesting document has been written by Colonel Slade, vice-president of the Small Arms Committee, and printed by order of that body. It may be regarded as an official report on the history of magazine and small-bore rifles and a statement of the present attitude and intentions of the War Office with regard to those weapons. How important information on this subject is, can be gathered from the fact that in the report occurs the following passage, which may be taken as the deliberate official opinion of the technical advisers of the War Office:—"It may be taken for granted that the single breechloader will soon be as obsolete a weapon for military purposes as the muzzle-loader. How slow is the process of maturing ideas connected with military inventions is shown by the fact that in military museums are to be found some curious old military magazine guns at least 200 years old. It may here be mentioned for the information of the uninitiated that a magazine rifle is not necessarily a repeater, though, "practically speaking, all magazine rifles worthy of consideration are repeaters," which contain in their magazines from four to ten cartridges, according to the system.

How necessary it is that no undue or avoidable delay should occur in the issue of repeating rifles to the British army is proved by the almost universal adoption by continental powers of such a weapon. All the continental powers, Russia alone excepted, have either already adopted a magazine rifle or are taking steps to procure one.

Repeating rifles were first used by soldiers in the American civil war of 1861-64, the cavalry on both sides being provided with the Winchester and Spenser repeaters. In the Russo-Turkish war of 1877 the Turkish cavalry possessed large quantities of Winchester repeaters. In 1878 the French supplied their navy with the Kropatschek repeater. In 1885 some French battalions in Tonquin were three times repulsed by a body of Chinese who were provided with a Lee detachable magazine rifle. In the same year, at the conquest of Tunis, and again in 1885-86 in Madagascar, the French used magazine rifles. We do not learn that during any of the above-mentioned occasions magazine rifles proved themselves to be impressively formidable weapons. They were successful enough, however, to convince soldiers and inventors that with improvements in the arm, and practice in the use of it, great things might reasonably be expected.

Following the alphabetical arrangement of Colonel Slade's report, we will now briefly show how far the question has progressed on the continent. In 1886 the Austrians adopted the Mannlicher magazine