

brought up in rear of the guns and the teams removed, this would allow of two other echelons, of two waggons each, to come up afterwards and permit the early despatch of the first echelon when empty to the divisional reserve.

RESULTS OF THE PRACTICE.

The results are sufficiently explained by the accompanying tables, and I will only draw your attention to a few of the most striking points.

If you consider the results of fire against artillery in gun-pits and against artillery in the open you will see that the former has suffered a greater percentage of loss than the latter, and the explanation of this phenomenon illustrates in a very striking manner the value of concealment behind natural features of the ground.

In most cases targets representing artillery in the open were placed so as to take full advantage of the natural features of the ground, the majority of the targets being withdrawn about 200 to 300 yards from the crest of their position, and, in many cases, having deep hollows before and behind them. The ranging was thus rendered extremely difficult, and the effects obtained were often very small; indeed, in the case of guns in the position known as "the Bluff" the ranging is so difficult that Colonel Murdoch told me that he could not recall a case of a battery ever making good practice at them.

In the case of artillery in pits it was argued that if natural cover did not exist then artificial cover must be provided, and, therefore, the pits were generally more or less in full view from the battery, and, therefore, comparatively easy to range upon, thus, in spite of the protection afforded by the earthwork, their detachments suffered more severely than those of guns which were concealed rather than protected.

In the case of the infantry in shelter-trenches, these were so placed that they profited by the concealment of the ground as well as by the protection of the earthwork, the percentage of loss is, therefore, in a marked degree less than that of infantry in the open.

Another curious result is that of time shrapnel fire as compared with that of percussion shrapnel fire, showing an immense improvement in the handling of time shell over last year.

You must remember that at battery service practice fire is stopped just when it begins to get effective, and during almost the whole time it is going on it is slow fire for ranging purposes, also that the targets are comparatively small; the time and effect are, therefore, not what they would be under actual service conditions.

THE MAGAZINE RIFLE.

(United Service Gazette.)

The House of Commons having decided, after a careful hearing, that Mr. Stanhope should have a fair field with the new rifle, the reasonable course would be to assist as far as possible in its development and establishment in the Service with ammunition that will show it at its best. It must have been plain to our readers that its manufacture and issue were hurried, and the ammunition more or less a makeshift. These conditions handicapped the weapon and left the doors open to the attacks of its numerous rivals. It is true that the ammunition is in preparation, and also practice cartridges for instruction in magazine fire, so that before long these necessary adjuncts to the rifle will be supplied to the troops. We do not cavil at the delay. We know that cordite power, which we hope to see issued soon, must first be carefully tested in hot and cold climates, our conditions of service being different to those of other Powers. Those who attacked the War Office and the rifle were careful to evade the unfair conditions under which the latter was placed.

At Enfield the new rifle was tested with smokeless powder and beat all rivals. At Bucharest last summer a most important contest of eight rival magazine rifles took place before the Ordnance Committee of the Roumanian Army, when the English rifle was the only one to reach the rifle range, the remaining seven having broken down in the other tests.

Germany and Austria were represented in the competition; but the British Army rifle beat its two rivals hollow. The Austrian rifle blew up its magazine. It is a remarkable fact that the bolt, so long an object of attack in our rifle, should have stood so well. To test it the Roumanian committee cut three cartridge cases through with a file so that the explosion came out to the rear. Here the Austrian and others blew up their magazines, but our rifle stood the test. The committee were so impressed that they cut through seven more cartridges, so that our rifle had ten explosions to the rear, and stood the lot perfectly; indeed, we are informed the particular rifle used is still in perfect order. It is to be regretted that Colonel Nolan did not appear aware of this important trial, for he would doubtless have brought it to the notice of the House in his able speech.

They copied some points of our rifle on the Continent. The Germans and Austrians both copied the position of the magazine, for instance, and it is said they are now busy copying our means to prevent their magazines blowing up. Yet their numerous friends in England are never tired of impressing in season and out of season, in the House, War Office, and in the press, that these foreign copyists have a better weapon than we have. One member in the House of Commons read a letter from the wife of the Minister of War in Roumania, saying her husband had told her that the English rifle would not enter the Roumanian service. That may be so for many reasons; but it is most satisfactory to know that the rifle beat all others before the committee, and that it is thus established before the King of Roumania, who is an expert, as by far the best rifle submitted to His Majesty's committee. We think it a pity that a lady's name should have been read out to the House in a matter of rival rifles, but we only allude to the circumstance to warn our military readers of the heat which has led to such proceedings to damage the rifle they will have to use in the field; it is very important, and will enable them to weigh justly the objections they have heard. We should further inform those readers that the practice before the Roumanian committee was carried out with smokeless powder, and when our regiments have smokeless powder issued to them the rifle will then give the fullest satisfaction.

The practice cartridges now under selection by the War Office are also exceedingly important. They enable the magazine to be used at all practice firing, and, if we are not mistaken, will lead to some very smart snap-shooting in the ranks at short ranges, of which sort of shooting our soldiers had considerable experience in the last campaigns. We trust that the use of these practice cartridges and of dummies may put a stop to the working of the bolt backwards and forwards, and snapping of the lock in the empty gun. We believe there has been too much of that at drill. We all know that no sportsman would allow his rifle to be treated thus, it could but lead to injury, and undoubtedly our rifle has received injury from the practice, and those injuries have been wrongfully held up as faults of the system.

When smokeless powder ammunition is ready for issue, it would be well to place some magazine rifles at the disposal of the Volunteers. The increased range and absence of recoil would give such satisfaction that we believe there would be before long an urgent demand in that important portion of our reserve force for the new weapon. Those who used the new rifle and new ammunition would hardly care