

home sources. In the present instance there is reason to believe that neither of these conditions has been fulfilled.

In comparing the promptitude of the German delivery with the delay of the English, the Secretary for War let it be supposed (no doubt unintentionally) that the material supplied was of the same quality and model in both instances, and that the conditions of supply were identical. But this was not so, and the comparison lacks all value in consequence. The German carriage was of a much more easily-made type, and the conditions of supply were wholly to the disadvantage of the English maker.

It is as well to premise that the designs of the English carriage are prepared in the Woolwich Arsenal, and issued to the contractor. He must work to them, and cannot work at all till he gets them; while the German maker is entirely free from such trammels, and supplies his own pattern. This difference, which very seriously affects the question, was pointed out in a letter written to the *Times* (in issue of January 5, 1901) by Sir Andrew Noble, chairman of Sir W. G. Armstrong, Whitworth & Company. The order for a certain number of batteries was given to his firm, he says, late in January,

But it is sufficient, to show the difficulties with which we had to contend, to mention that the model of the breech block from which our tools and gauges had to be made (a work which would occupy five or six weeks) was only received by us on June 2, and that no less than forty-six drawings of details, either original or alterations to previous designs, were received by us between July 1 and the middle of September, the date at which we commenced to deliver.

We do not know whether such delays in the issue of Government drawings are customary. We hope not; for they seem to point to a vacillation and capricious change of detail not usually associated with technical confidence; but in the present instance at least they must be taken as having severely handicapped the English output. Thus, while it might be inferred from the House of Commons statement that both English and German makers received their orders at