

Denmark has a rifle, the Krag-Jorgansen, of .315 cal., and a velocity of 2,099 ft. per second.

The Belgian Mauser rifle of .301 cal., working on the bolt system and using a bullet encased in a German silver envelope, has a velocity of about 1,800 ft. per second.

The new English rifle of .303 cal., working on an improved Lee system, has a muzzle velocity, using ordinary powder, of 1,500 ft. per second.

The German Infantry rifle, pattern 1888, of .311 cal., has an estimated initial velocity of 2,034 foot seconds. Its sights are graduated to 2,242 yds.

The new Swiss rifle, the Schmidt, of .295 cal., has a muzzle velocity of 2,362 foot seconds. Its estimated rate of fire is 30 shots per minute. The Schmidt is operated on a bolt system.

The new French Lebel rifle is of .3228 cal. maximum and .3142 cal. minimum. It has a muzzle velocity of 2,194 foot seconds, and it is said that a Lebel bullet can pierce over 15 in. of oak at 220 yds. The powder is a secret compound of gun-cotton and collodion, which is reported as producing no smoke, little noise, and very slight recoil.

The new Portuguese rifle is the Kropatschek of .315 cal. It has a muzzle velocity of 1,745 foot seconds.

In comparison with the above the United States Springfield rifle is found to have a .450 cal. and a muzzle velocity not exceeding 1,300 foot seconds. It is at the same time a single loader, while all of the above pieces are magazine guns.

EUROPEAN GOSSIP.

[By a Volunteer Abroad—In Volunteer Record.]

A special letter of thanks and the distinctive decoration of the Blue Ribbon Army of England ought to be voted to General Saussier, the worthy Military Commandant of Paris and its environing forts. The General, it may be observed, has already a large constellation of others to carry on his breast, either for civil or military merit secured amidst trials of "derring do" in every nature. This gallant officer has friends on every side, and amidst all the latter mutations of the French Cabinet, no overt attempt has been ever made to alter the command of the Paris Army to his prejudice, or to disturb the ruling of the forces under his command.

The reason why your "Volunteer Abroad" will ask for the additional honour to a gallant French General, from the Blue Ribbon Army, is the fact that General Saussier has ordered that every trooper and Infantry soldier within the sphere of his command shall every morn receive half-a-pint of warm, sweetened, strong *tea*, in addition to the ordinary liquid allowances of water, or the infused chicory mixture misnamed "coffee" daily doled out to the stomachic perturbation of the soldiery at large.

"The cup that cheers, but not inebriates" will be certainly largely appreciated, and the consideration of General Saussier received as a bounty by the otherwise insufficiently nourished troops under his command. It is quite a novelty besides, in its way, as this temperate and refreshing drink is almost unknown, save in a medicinal sense, to the majority of the French people. As it is, both the physical and moral forces of the recipients may be greatly improved. Whether the venerable military commandant knows or not, his idea is a good one, and supported by the proof that the four largest and most numerically powerful nations in the world are inveterate tea-drinkers, viz., China, Great Britain, the United States, and All Russia.

The French Minister of War in his many tentative yet somewhat senile aspirations for the progress and improvement of the Army, and military science in general, has frequently led his ideas to an extreme length. Aerostation has of late become a particular study for Army purposes, and last Sunday some bold experiments were made accord-

ing to the order of M. de Freycinet, "up in a balloon" at Rheims. A balloon christened "La France," was sent into the clouds to carry out some curious scientific and military manœuvres, including aerial bombardments, a sham fight between hostile machines, the launching of torpedoes from the skies, and the interchange of telegraphic messages from air to earth and vice-versa. The balloon car, which was captained by a certain M. Chereau, carried two howitzers, four torpedo tubes, a parachute, a long rope of "saucissons" (sausage) petards, twelve smaller parachutes or pilot balloons, with other smaller explosive devices—and 130 bursting shells for incendiary purposes. Its pyrotechnic display in mid air was only comprehensible to the spectators on terra firma, by the numerous puff of smoke and muffled reports at intervals during the inexplicable gyrations and movements up and down imparted by the aeronaut to his machine, but which were possibly perfectly explicable to the inspecting military men who had to report the trials.

Two no able French painters, amongst a trio of artists on canvas or on marble, and about half-a-dozen writers or journalists of mark at Paris, have paid the debt of life in January last. Leaving aside the political celebrities of the time—whose name is legion—in France, your correspondent will confine himself to a short biography, and passing anecdotes concerning the deceased limners (each good in their ways), Meissonnier, and Charles Chuplin.

Meissonnier, who was born at Lyons, in 1811, grew to be of an exceedingly irritable and pugnacious temperament, like all little men, who possess or have acquired a certain reputation in their chosen line of labour. Meissonnier prided himself as much upon his large flowing beard and moustachois, as he did in his paintings, upon which he placed and obtained in the future the most extravagant and after-enhanced prices—according to the customer. In his earlier career, Meissonnier had been content to cover canvas with his pictorial ideas at the rate of 5-frs. (4s.) for a metre square (168 cubic inches) of modulated pigments in oil. He then took up the almost lost art of miniature or cabinet pictures, and in this *genre* he largely excelled, according to the present standard of fine art judgment. More ambitious grown, Meissonnier went into military episodes, and also triumphed all along the line of soldiers (French), which he most ably portrayed, at doubtful episodes, in some of the uncertain battle successes of his countrymen under the First Empire.

Meissonnier was not above painting portraits, but clients, in the end, grew somewhat chary in enlisting his talent to perpetuate their "lovely features and forms divine" by his brush and palette, as the artist had an ugly propensity to ask a certain sum, and to double the demand when the picture was nearly finished. Many people of rank or distinction were thus "Jewel" by the "mammikin" artist, including even Napoleon III.; but it finally belonged to an American woman to bring the dwarfed *maître de peinture* on his knees, and to his proper senses. Mrs. Mackay ordered her portraits of Meissonnier, during one of her fits of lavish expenditure, but, well cognizant by report beforehand, of the vanity and avarice alike, in the character of this accumulative genius, and with whom she would have to deal afterwards in regard to the stipulated payment. Meissonnier, without suspicion, haggled about the sum; in the end the conditions were assented to by Mrs. Mackay, and the finished portrait was brought by the painter himself to the lady. The money was at once paid down, but to the ungovernable rage of Meissonnier, Mrs. Mackay, after bestowing but scarcely a glance at her re-produced features, ordered her servants, in the presence of the horrified painter, to detach the canvas from its frames, roll it up, and put it away in the lumber-room.

Of far different temperament and character, and in his mode of dealing with the world, was Charles Chaplin, whose