

Army, fresh from its victories over Austria, the French military authorities unduly exalted the advantages of the mysterious engine hidden in their arsenals. Terrible stories of its destructive powers were allowed to leak out, and every method was taken to rouse the confidence of the troops in the new weapon which was to revolutionize war. On the 1st of July, 1870, the Army was provided with 190 mitrailleurs.

At the first skirmish, viz., the affair before Saarbrück, the mitrailleuse was brought to the front and shared with the Prince Imperial the honours of this short lived success. The events that followed were so awful, and the defeats of the French Army succeeded each other so rapidly, that opportunity did not offer of examining critically the employment of any particular arm. Now and then, among the many accounts of these battles, anecdotes of the mitrailleurs are narrated, sometimes mentioning them derisively, at others alluding to the deadly effects of their fire, and summing up with the enumeration of the numbers captured at the successive surrender of the French armies.

Feeling the importance of investigating the truth of the many statements which were put forth on this important question, Colonel Wray's Committee decided on taking evidence from Officers who had been witnesses of some of the engagements, although unfortunately, owing to the veto put upon the presence of English Officers with either army during the earlier campaigns, little direct information on the employment of the mitrailleurs previous to the battle of Sedan could be obtained. The evidence therefore, relates principally to the later actions fought on the Loire. Time will admit of but a short summary of what was given before the Committee, but should any one desire still further to investigate the subject, he has only to read the evidence in full. The effect of the French mitrailleurs (for, excepting in one Bavarian corps, none were brought into the field by the Germans) was witnessed by several of our Officers on different occasions, and has been alluded to by more than one writer on the war.

Thus Colonel Rustow speaks of a mitrailleuse battery of Douay's division being in action for a short time at the battle of Weissenberg, when its ammunition waggon was struck by a Prussian shell and blown up, wounding so many of the gunners that it was forced to withdraw, not however (if one may judge from the accounts of those who have inspected the field of battle), before it had inflicted heavy loss on the advancing infantry.

In a book entitled "From Sedan to Saarbrück" by an Artillery Officer, the effect of the fire of six mitrailleurs at the battle before Sedan is thus narrated. The guns were entrenched, and played with deadly effect on the Prussians who attempted to cross a valley intervening between them and some rising ground about 900 yards distant. The author writes, "that the numerous Prussian graves on the slope of the Meuse attest the severe loss they suffered, and," he adds, in this solitary instance the effects of the mitrailleurs were confessedly superior to any which could have been inflicted by common shell." He further quotes the opinion of a Prussian Officer given to him personally, which appears to be in accordance with that of the generality of the German Officers during the War. This Officer admitted that the effect of the mitrailleuse against solid masses was good; but he considered them comparatively harmless against troops in line, under which circum-

stances their action might be likened to a charge of unscattered swan shot, merely riddling two or three men. It is fair to say that this defect in the French mitrailleuse has been remedied in the Gatling, in which the traversing arrangement permits of a wide sweep of the shots during the very process of firing.

Mr. Winn thus describes the effect of the mitrailleurs on a body of cavalry at the battle of Gravelotte:—"It was about 3 o'clock that M. la maison was taken by our" (meaning the German) "troops, and it was on some Uhlan, who tried to cut off the retreat of some Voltiguers from it, that the mitrailleuse so terribly vindicated its character for destruction. A squadron rode forward with its usual pride and confidence; we heard the growl of this truly infernal machine; we saw an unlooked confusion in the Lancers' ranks; they wheeled, and retired, leaving behind them 32 horses and many men. They had unwittingly crossed the fatal line of fire; and had they waited to rescue their comrades, three minutes would have sufficed to the French artillerymen to put them in the same helpless condition. We had gone forward to the extreme point on our side of the glen, and with our glasses could plainly see the gunners as they placed the fatal plato in the hydra mouthed cannon.

Colonel Fielding attached great value to the mitrailleuse, and instanced the effects produced on a Prussian column of infantry at the second battle of Beaugency, where clear gaps were cut through one of its angles. The same effect, he thinks, could not have been produced by infantry, as the time necessarily spent in deployment would have given warning to the approaching column. "He looked upon the proper use of mitrailleurs to be as representing a certain number of infantry, for which there is not room on the ground, suddenly placed forward at the proper moment at a decisive point to bring a crushing fire upon the enemy." He also prefers placing them in defensive positions "where the front is restricted, and where it is necessary while keeping up a proper amount of fire to the front, to economise space.

On three different occasions Colonel Reilly, C.B., R.A., saw the mitrailleurs used against troops who were taking advantages of the undulations of the ground to obtain cover, and on none of these occasions did he notice the loss inflicted by them to have been great. On the other hand, although the mitrailleurs were standing in the open, exposed to the fire of the Prussian artillery for four and a half hours, no injury was done to them by shot or shell. At Beaume la Rolande the French did good service in street fighting with the mitrailleurs, but on the whole, Colonel Reilly evidently considered that artillery would have been more efficient, and that the extra wheeled transport entailed by this description of armament, did more harm than good to the French Armies. He also states the Prussian Officers were greatly opposed to incumbering infantry regiments with mitrailleurs, even supposing they were introduced into their service.

Captain C. E. Brackenbury, R. A., who was present with the Army of Prince Frederick Charles, narrates that upon the only occasions when he witnessed any serious effect from the mitrailleurs, three of them succeeded in stopping the advance of the German troops who had hitherto faced the fire of the artillery. These three mitrailleurs were subsequently captured by skirmishers detached from the main body, who took them in flank. He considers their fire to be

superior to that of infantry, because an infantryman has nerves, which will probably be disturbed when he is exposed to fire, whereas the machine has none.

Captain Hozier formed opinions similar to those of Captain Brackenbury. He saw mitrailleurs employed in the sorties from Paris and at Le Mans, where the supports of a line of skirmishers, suffered from their fire; the skirmishers, however, advancing beneath them, and avoiding their direct discharge, closed in, and captured them. By this method the mitrailleuse batteries were usually taken, their infantry supports retiring and leaving the guns to their fate. On the whole, Captain Hozier concurs in the opinion of the Prussian Officers with whom he conversed, that for field service the horses and men necessary for the mitrailleuse could be better employed with artillery, but that for entrenched positions, for narrow roads, and for the ditches of fortresses they were and would be most valuable. Prince Frederick Charles expressed a preference for 12 or 13 infantry soldiers instead of a mitrailleuse, as they would be less liable to be destroyed by a bursting shell, and their fire would be more accurate.

Captain Gurdon, R. N., who witnessed the later campaigns on the French side, entertains a high opinion of the efficiency of the mitrailleuse fire. He saw them employed against infantry columns, and on one occasion against field batteries, which were compelled to retire, owing to a loss of horses. He considers them quite indispensable in warfare at the present day, but does not agree with the French in their method of employing them. They are adapted, he believes, for defence rather than for attack and are especially suited for protecting gorges or defiles, and for street fighting. The French mitrailleurs he considers to have been too heavy, as four horses were required for the gun alone. The weight of the guns or rather their increased charges, seem to have given range, as, according to Captain Gurdon, they were most efficient at from 1,000 to 2,300 yards.

(To be continued.)

## THE PRESENT POWER OF ENGLAND.

(From the Naval and Military Gazette.)

Through the fierce, protracted, and deeply interesting discussions which not so long ago occupied pre-eminently the public mind, on the subject of the possibility of an invasion of this country, it seems strange that no one discovered, or at any rate noticed, the utterly powerless condition into which we ourselves have fallen in the event of the necessity arising for British troops to invade some foreign land. With the Alabama and San Juan difficulties but just settled, and the Khiva question assuming daily more extensive proportions, this military lassitude is but ill-fitting us, especially when we call to mind the fact that our Navy has, since the introduction of armor-plating assumed a superiority over those of other countries, which is unparalleled in history. France, America, Spain, Holland, and Turkey, have all, at one time or another, threatened our naval supremacy, and have savagely contended with us for it too, while now we have little hesitation in asserting that the combined squadrons of all the above-mentioned powers would be just a match for our own magnificent fleet. In inverse ratio our Army has decreased in strength—we will not say efficiency—before the gigantic armaments of