



Correspondence

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Caucasus Military District.

The troops (51 battalions, 50 squadrons, and 30 batteries) will only take part in the mobile muster from 16th to 29th September.

Turkestan District.

These troops (12 battalions, 7 sotnias, and 5 batteries) will take part in a mobile muster in the neighbourhood of Taschkent, from 14th to 27th September.

Transcaspian District.

The troops of this district (8 battalions, 9 sotnias, and 5 batteries) will all take part in a mobile muster, near Ashkhabad, from 14th to 27th September.

It will thus be seen that, speaking generally, the troops taking part in the Koursk Grand Imperial Manœuvres will consist of 4 complete army corps, viz., the Xth, XIIIth, and XVIIth Army Corps, 2 infantry divisions, and 2 brigades of rifles.—*Revue du Cercle Militaire.*

CORRESPONDENCE.

A REPLY TO LIEUT.-COLONEL MAYNE'S CRITICISM ON "CONTINENTAL
2. SOUTH AFRICAN TACTICS," BY LIEUT.-COLONEL MAUDE.

To the Editor of the JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL UNITED SERVICE INSTITUTION.

SIR,—Colonel C. B. Mayne seems to have missed the whole drift of my lecture. I wished to establish a comparison between the risks which have to be incurred nowadays in crossing a fire-swept zone and those which our ancestors used to face before us.

For this purpose I drew attention to the fact that for the last two hundred years or so every line of battle has been formed with so many men to the yard, that as long as these men remained capable of aimed fire, all assaults on their front were bound to fail. But no leader ever attempted to attack such a fire wall until by skirmishing fire, artillery fire, or both, he had reduced the steadiness and aiming capacity of his foe to such a degree that their bullets no longer sufficed to keep back the rush. If the attempt was made too soon, it failed then as it would fail now. Success followed as a consequence of the leader's skill in the use of his means for preparing the attack and his judgment in the choice of the right moment. The more completely the enemy was shaken, the nearer his fire approached to the limit of being entirely random, *i.e.*, unaimed.

Now for many years past we have been taught in this country that against troops with modern arms a direct attack is terribly costly, the slaughter too terrible to be faced, and so forth, and to destroy this delusion I adopted the following line of reasoning. Fire in action is never altogether "aimed" or altogether "unaimed." If it approximates to the former condition, failure in attack is inevitable, whatever the weapons, ancient or modern, but the nearer it gets to the latter the less will the losses be. Accordingly, I analysed the conditions produced during a certain short limit of time by the discharge of a given number of rifles or muskets under identical conditions of unsteadiness in the firers, unsteadiness so great that the bullets are in both cases dis-

tributed at random, like shot from a shot gun or dried peas flung by the hand, where there is no idea of "grouping" whatever.

This analysis showed, of course, that for each class of weapon the divergence of the bullets increased as some function of the square of the range, which point Colonel Mayne concedes. But comparing the two classes of weapons with very different initial velocities it is obvious that the bullets are increasing their actual distance from one another, not only measured transverse to the range, but along it. Thus after, say, one second of time the old smooth-bore ball would have gone only 300 yards, the new Lee-Netford bullet, say, 600. This introduces a third factor into the case, viz., "time of flight," and this again varies directly as the range, so that we get back to my original formula that the number of bullets to a unit of cubic space must vary as some function of the cube of the range.

There are two distinct cases, symbolised by my small cake (*a*) and my large cake (*b*), and it is obvious that with the same number of currants, *i.e.*, bullets in each case, one's chance of meeting a bullet in a slice of (*a*) is very much greater than in a slice of (*b*). From this it is easy to find out how many currants must be used in cake (*b*) to bring their frequency up to those in (*a*), and converting the currants into bullets we find that with modern extended formations, no military weapon can attain the rate of fire required, even if the ammunition supply were adequate.

What it all comes to is this: Troops formed for the attack of a position held in the old Frederician method and with the old weapons, knew that they must lose, say, 20 per cent. to carry it, and might be annihilated, according as their leader knew his work or not. Troops nowadays, storming a modern position, though they also run risk of annihilation, may get through without about, say, a 5 per cent. loss, if the moment for attack is happily chosen.

Moreover, the increase in range and power of both artillery and infantry, by increasing the weight of fire that can be poured upon any predetermined point, especially a flank, enables the leader nowadays to ensure with greater certainty the degree of unsteadiness in the enemy's fire. It is more difficult to see the effect of one's practice nowadays, but it is not ocular vision which counts, but that higher power of genius which enables a born leader, like Napoleon, to read and balance the resultant will-power of the contending forces in his mind.

If when the attack is fairly launched, the attacking troops find themselves followed by the enemy's aim, as Colonel Mayne suggests, then the fire is not unaimed. The work of preparation is inadequate. This was the case in the first attempt on St. Privat, with the result we all know. But this is the only case I have ever heard or read about in which the French fire actually was under control. Generally it lashed the whole ground, and skirmishers, supports, and reserves came in for it equally.

Colonel Mayne further objects to my using the rate of loss per hour as a measure of the intensity of the fighting. In this I am only following a host of modern writers, who simply use this measure as a rough but more satisfactory generalisation than the usual one of taking the losses in whole battles, irrespective of their duration. I might have chosen typical attacks sufficiently alike in their general circumstances to be reasonably comparable, but this would make things worse for the present day. When formerly an attack meant a rush of, say, 300 yards, perhaps 50 per cent. of the stormers fell in a few minutes. The excitement and strain on the nerves must have been much greater than in such a one, for instance, as the St. Privat, attack which lasted at least three hours, and cost only 30 per cent.; or even than that of the 38th Brigade at Mars la Tour, which lasted, according to Hoenig, 90 minutes, and cost 47 per cent.

As to the formula I used, viz., that "after a certain number of rounds varying with the training of the troops was exceeded, the hits began to fall off inversely as the square of the number of rounds fired," I regret I cannot give him the reference, as the book is packed up in store and inaccessible, but my recollection is very distinct and my experience with raw troops confirms it.

Finally, let me ask Colonel Mayne, if my method is not correct, how else does he account for its extraordinary agreement with recorded figures? How was it, for instance, that with the old musket, French and English squares alike were impervious to the charge of Mamelukes, Turks, Sikhs, and Beloochees? How was it that at Meannce, for instance, every musket on the ground killed three and wounded six of the enemy? Whereas nowadays we have instances, such as Isandlwana, Maiwand, Ahmed Khel (a very near thing), Tamai, Abu Klea, etc., to explain away, to say nothing of Vlakfontein and other more recent experiences.

The men are the same, probably much better, but the weapons and the drill have changed. If the modern weapon is the fetish we have made of it, what must have become of the discipline?

F. N. MAUDE,
Lieut.-Colonel,
late R.E.

NAVAL AND MILITARY CALENDAR.

MAY, 1902.

- 1st (Th.) 27th and 28th Bns. Imperial Yeomanry left England for South Africa on the "Plassy."
- 2nd (F.) H.M.S. "Aboukir" left Portsmouth for Mediterranean.
- 3rd (Sat.) 3rd Bn. Northamptonshire Regiment (Militia) arrived at Cape Town from England on the "Harlech Castle."
- 5th (M.) H.M.S. "Vengeance" left Portsmouth for Mediterranean.
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| " | " | 3rd Bn. Royal Scots (Militia) | } Left South Africa for Eng-
land and Ireland on the
"Canada." |
| " | " | 3rd Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians) (Militia) | |
- 6th (T.) H.M.S. "Bulwark" left Plymouth for Mediterranean.
- " " H.M.S. "Amphitrite" left Portsmouth for China.
- " " H.M.S. "Sutlej" commissioned at Chatham for Channel.
- " " H.M.S. "Theseus" and "Rupert" arrived at Plymouth from Mediterranean.
- " " 2nd Bn. Cameron Highlanders arrived at Crete from Gibraltar on the "Carthage."
- 7th (W.) Lord Kitchener reported that 231 Boers had been killed or captured in a drive in the Orange River Colony.
- " " Bn. Loyal North Lancashire Regiment left Crete for Gibraltar on the "Carthage."
- 8th (Th.) Lord Kitchener reported that an armoured train had been derailed near Pretoria, and that an officer and 10 men had been killed and 11 men injured. He also announced that 34 Boers had been captured in the Piesburg district.