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A GUNNER LOOKS BACK

(By W.O. II L. Winks).

In the year of the Spanish Armada, Cyprian Lucan translated and dedicated to Henry VIII, a famous Italian work called "Three Books of Colloquies Covering the Arte of Shooting in Great and Small Pieces of Artillery," and he added thereto an appendix which dealt with "The Properties, Office and Duteie of a Gunner," from which we may cull quite a lot of useful advice.

"A Gunner ought to be a sober, wakeful, lustie, hardie, patient, prudent and quick spirited man. He ought also to have a good eyesight, a good judgement, and perfect knowledge to select a convenient place in the day of service, to plant his Ordnance where he may doe most hurt unto his enemies, and be least annoyed by them, and where his Ordnance may not be surprised by the enimie. A Gunner ought to be skilfull in Arithmetick and Geometric, to the end he may be able by his knowledge in these artes to measure heights, depthes, breadthes, and lengths, and to draw the plat of any piece of ground, and to make mines, countermine, artificiall fireworks, rumpiers, gabbions or baskets of earth and such like things, which are used in times of warre to be made for offensive and defensive service. A Gunner ought also to procure with all his power the friendship and love of every person, and to be careful for his own safetie, and for the preservation of all those that shall be about him.

Also he ought to be no surfeiter, nor a great or sluggish sleeper, but he must governe him self in all times as a wise, modest, honest and a skilful man ought to doe, that through want of understanding he may never lese his credite, nor an universall victorie which oftentimes by the means of good Gunners well managing their pieces is gotten."

The gun and its carriage passed through numerous stages before they reached their present state of perfection. The earliest cannon was laid along the ground for firing, being supported merely in a frame of timber, and were given elevation by the insertion of wedges under the muzzle. The next development was a high cannon with a calibre of 36 inches, which was used at the siege of Constantinople in 1453, and, for its transport, required 30 waggons, linked together and drawn by a team of 60 oxen. "Mons Meg" now in Edinburgh Castle, is of this type, but its calibre is only 20 inches. Up to the end of the 16th Century, guns were used almost exclusively in fortress warfare, and were consequently of large calibre and borne on cumbersome carriages.

Gustavus Adolphus, the great leader of the 17th Century, was the first to render the gun mobile and to use it in the field. He adopted a weapon mounted on a carriage drawn by two men, and another on a carriage drawn by two horses. Then the limber was invented, giving four wheels to the carriage and shortening the time of coming into action.

During Marlborough's wars our light artillery was drawn by four horses, and was distinguished, according to a continental writer, "by its lightness, its elegance and the good quality of its materials." The drivers were civilian carters, and marched on foot. At the end of the 18th Century, drivers were enlisted and rode, gunners were mounted on the carriages, and the pace could therefore be increased beyond that of the walk.

Improvement was, however, a slow process. When a field-gun fired, it recoiled 24 feet or thereabouts—a defect which entailed great labour in running up, and a great delay between rounds. At Waterloo, for instance, the gunners, after a time, became too exhausted to run up their guns. The carriages, therefore, kept receding from the line, and finally got so much bunched together that they could hardly be fired.

Then came a great advance in the invention of the recoil-buffer. The carriage was further steadied through being anchored to the ground by the

brakes, and by a spade fixed to the end of the trail. To complete the system, which was introduced in 1890 and gradually developed into the present Q. F. equipment, a recuperator was designed which returned the gun after recoil to its original position.

Heavy Artillery was employed in the field in Spain by Wellington, and in the Indian Mutiny and Crimea. In general it was neglected or even abandoned in peacetime. Gunners, since the day when they first tasted speed, have always liked to move rapidly. Horse-gunners had been accused of saying:—"If it wasn't for these ruddy guns, how we could gallop!"

So the cry, in peace time had been for mobility. But in war there was at once a demand for greater fire-power, only to be obtained through heavy guns. In the South African war there was an early cry for them, for our field artillery, though numerous, was out-gunned both in weight and in range by some of the Boer ordnance. Four-point sevens—obsolete naval guns were towed to Ladysmith on cumbersome carriages improvised on board ship; and so good a "press" did they have that the Government ordered 200 new ones to be made, which were completed about the time the war ended.

Nobody then wanted them, and so they remained until 1914 rusting in the arsenal, out of which, on the usual call for more "heavies," they were then dug, to be regarded, in the scarcity of other weapons, as great treasures. They were given second-rate carriages, on which, having a high velocity, they recoiled violently. It used to be said of them that if their shells created as much alarm and dependency in the hostile ranks as the guns, on firing, did in the battery position, they were worth all the pains suffered by the detachments on their account.

Actually, at the beginning of the war we possessed a first-class heavy gun—the 60-pounder—perhaps the best in Europe. But we had only one battery (4 guns) to each division—a total of 24.

In addition to these, there were a number of old 6-inch howitzers which were kept in coast defences and, though occasionally allowed to let off a round or two, were never taken seriously. The Germans at this time were known to possess nearly 800 heavy guns and howitzers. Our deficiencies in this respect were realised in the first battle and orders were placed for many modern 6-inch and 9.2-inch howitzers. A design for the latter had been approved just before the war, so it was possible to go at once into production with it. The first specimen appeared at the front in November, 1914. It was known as "Mother," and was in great demand from one end of the line to the other.

Two years later there were 233 of these weapons in France. They were true "weapons of position" with a holdfast kept in place on recoil by a box under the muzzle, which had to be filled with seven tons of earth, a bed, a live roller-ring, and other ponderous properties. It was an impressive and effective weapon with a range of 10,000 yards and a shell weighing 300lbs.

The new 6-inch howitzer which appeared about the same time, was a first-class weapon. It weighed less than five tons behind the teams, it possessed a non-recoil carriage and it did not, as its predecessor had done, require a platform. When drawn by lorry it was quite a mobile piece, and was often in the forefront of the battle in both advance and retreat.

As there was no serious danger from the sea, it was found possible to withdraw a number of 6-inch guns from coast defences for service in the field. Some of these continued to be used as guns, others were shortened at the muzzle, had their bores enlarged, and reappeared as 8-inch howitzers. Nine-point-two inch guns were also taken from coast fortresses and were used on railway mountings.

Twelve-inch howitzers were constructed and used both on positions and

The Recruit

Drilling. Drilling. Drilling.
Every day's the same.
Marching here, marching there;
What a bloody game!
Blisters big as pennies,
Tongue half hanging out,
Sweating like a stallion—
Won't some blighter shout!

Doubling. Doubling. Doubling.
In the heat and dust.
Panting like a walrus,
Streuth! My heart'll bust.
Eyes all bleared and grimy,
Stomach in a whirl,
Strike me pink! I'm barmy—
Ain't this life a pearl!

Standing. Standing. Standing.
In the blasted rain.
While the Colonel orders,
"Do it once again."
Moving off in sections,
Floundering in the mud,
Cursing him to Hades,
Frothing for his blood.

Marching. Marching. Marching.
To our rendezvous,
Nostrils wide extended
Sniff the juicy stew.
Bunkers now replenished,
Feeling good again;
Let the colonel josh us—
We don't mind the rain.

Singing. Singing. Singing.
Life it ain't so glum;
Hear the pipes a-skirling,
Hear the throbbing drum.
Chests are now expanding,
Horizons are blue;
Look out Mister Hitler,
We're coming after you.

—Haven.

Editor's Thanks

The Editor wishes to thank all contributors to "The Observation Post" for their help and specially to thank W.O. II L. M. Winks, who was Editor of an Army paper in another camp, for several articles appearing in this and next weeks' issues.

(Next week's publication will be on THURSDAY).

railway mountings, and an 18-inch howitzer, weighing no less than 86 tons or, with its mounting, 356 tons, was under construction when the war came to an end. A 15-inch, known as "Granny," and designed, like "Mother," before the war, was in action, manned by naval detachments, towards the end of 1914, but proved unsatisfactory. Finally 12-inch and 14-inch guns—very powerful and long-ranging weapons, mounted on railway carriages—came on the scene, the one late in 1916, the other in 1918.

(To be continued.)

DON'T FORGET

BOXING — BOXING
BOXING — BOXING

Opera House

TO-MORROW (Saturday)

At 7.30.

COME AND SEE YOUR
CHAMPIONS IN ACTION.

BOXING

Sparring Bouts

The boxing on Wednesday night was intended to show the progress made by our lads. It was also intended to give the regiment an idea of the sport to be seen to-morrow (Saturday) evening in the Opera House, Palmerston North.

Mr. Harvey thanked Sgt. Down and Gnr. Ornberg for their help in training the team. Two Hawke's Bay boys, Privates D. A. Lean and G. Sudfelt, kindly came over to spar with our chaps.

Sgt. Down and Gnr. Ornberg gave an interesting demonstration of various stances and punches, followed by a light work out. Wednesday evening was only the second time with the gloves for Gnr. Ornberg.

Gnr. Shuker next took on Gnr. Ornberg and both men gave their audience two minutes of scientific boxing.

GNR. O'CONNOR v. GNR. WHELAN (Winner of the Regiment's Weight Championship).

This fight was really fast and furious, both men giving and taking plenty of punishment and giving their audience plenty of thrills.

The second round was slower, but still very fast boxing. These two men will make their name.

GNR. O'CONNOR v. GNR. CHAPMAN
Although O'Connor had just fought two fast rounds, he was still fresh to

take on Chapman, who was no sluggard, being very active and packing heavy punches with both hands.

GNR. TREACY v. GNR. WHELAN
In spite of his injured hand, Treacy still held Whelan. The round was a fine exhibition of good boxing.

PTE. LEAN (H.B.) v. L/BDR. LEWIS
Lean led the fighting, making use of a very powerful left always followed up by his right. For the most part, Lewis was on the defensive.

In the second round, both men sparred well with Lean still making the pace, although Lewis never allowed him to make ground. A pretty fight.

PTE. SUDFELT (H.B.) v. GNR. TAYLOR, M.R.C.

Taylor gave a good exhibition of fast movement. Both men were evenly matched and put up a good showing. The second round was very fast and one of the best rounds of the evening.

Unfortunately the rest of the Hawke's Bay team were unable to come over with the result that the evening was comparatively short.

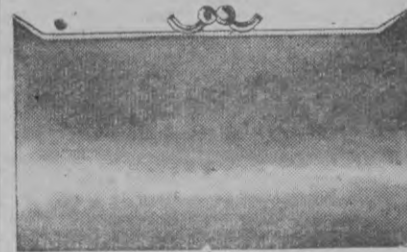
After the audience had almost departed, Capt. Mitchell (Mixer) and Lt. Martin (Basher) indulged in what had the appearance of a friendly grudge fight. Only by a slice of luck did Lt. Kemp manage to remove a knife from one of the contestants.

During the interval, both men solemnly patrolled the ropes (on opposite sides). The second round was a Spartan effort.

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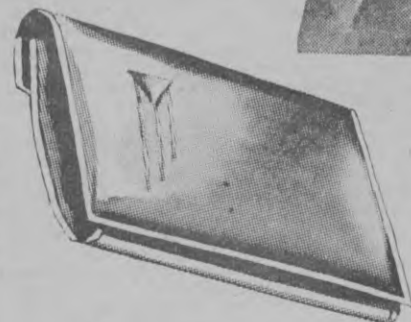
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