

Gun Practice at Petawawa

IN order to fully realize the true worth of the Canadian Heavy Artillery one must visit Petawawa Camp, during the summer months, where he will see the different regiments of this division engaged in friendly competition in heavy gun practice.

Petawawa justly called the camping ground of America affords excellent opportunities for the various kinds of military drill. Infantry drill and rifle shooting can be practiced to advantage on the smooth tract of barren land, while the more rugged and wooded portions are admirably adapted for heavy gun practice and complicated manœuvering.

The guns employed by the heavy artillery are generally designated by the term, "Four Point Seven," which means that the diameter of the bore measures four point seven inches. Besides this somewhat harsh sounding name, this important implement of war is occasionally referred to as a "Long Tom." The origin of this appellation is somewhat doubtful but it is generally admitted that a young officer on viewing one of these guns for the first time, remarked that there was an analogy between the barrel (which is very long) and a certain individual then prominent in military circles whose name was "Tom." The firing piece or barrel which is the essential part of the gun is mounted on a carriage fitted with an apparatus which is called in technical language "a hydraulic buffer." This is composed of a strong metallic chamber containing two compartments which are connected by a small tube. One is filled with some heavy liquid while the other remains empty, so that, when the barrel recoils on being discharged, the liquid which is forced through the small connecting tube into the adjoining compartment as a cushion to receive the impact of the recoiling barrel. Two heavy spiral springs attached to the carriage force the barrel back to its normal position and at the same time the liquid is transferred to its original compartment, thereby leaving the gun in readiness for another discharge. The barrel which is twenty feet long, is pivoted

on the carriage and may be easily lowered or depressed by turning a wheel which operates the elevating gear. The whole is mounted on two large wheels giving the gun a total weight of two tons.

At Petawawa rows of these great guns may be seen lined up in the gun park ready to be "limbered," and rolled away to action. The term "limbered," or "limber up," is strictly a military one and therefore demands an explanation, at least for those who are unacquainted with the terminology of this pursuit. When one considers the enormous weight of the four point seven it becomes evident that in order to bring one into action without unnecessary delay, or to make a hurried retreat, several strong and swift horses must be used for this purpose. This gun although mounted on two wheels does not possess all the essentials of a vehicle and as a consequence the horses required to effect its motion cannot be hitched directly to it. In order then to transfer this required force to the gun, the horses are hitched in pairs to a cart-like arrangement, called "a limber" which has projecting from its rear a large steel hook so shaped, that the "trail," (which is nothing more than the rear extremity of the carriage, on being raised, fits snugly over it, thereby connecting the gun to the limberforming as it were a large four wheeled vehicle. The operation of thus connecting the gun to the limber, is called "limbering up."

If my reader finds it inconvenient to visit Petawawa in person let him transport himself their mentally, and in the morning about seven o'clock stroll down to the gun park. There he will find everything in battle array. Detachments of soldiers stand in line awaiting the command to man their guns, others are busily engaged arranging stores and ammunition, impatient horses prancing and pawing are apparently eager to be attached to these great guns glistening in the morning sunlight; officers ride quickly to and fro inspecting the preparations for a hurried departure. While all are thus intent upon their respective duties, a military personage mounted on a fiery steed may be seen approaching. As he nears the gun park all operations cease; every officer and man comes to attention; for the Colonel—the supreme commander at the camping grounds, is before

them. With a quick motion of his hand he returns their salute and immediately summons the officers. After considerable parley he unfolds a chart containing a sketch of the surrounding country and directs the attention of the officers to the numerous hills and valleys, the narrow secluded passes and the approximate position of the enemy thereon depicted.

(I say enemy, for the huge target which is the object of bombardment is always spoken of at Petawawa as the enemy.) He then presents this chart to the senior officer in command and giving the order "to attack," rides away so as to avoid further questioning and to observe the movements of the section from a distance. The section commander then orders that two guns be prepared for action. The gun captains acting on this command take charge of their respective guns and direct their crews consisting of nine men to make all preparations to move off. Four pair of stalwart horses are hitched to each limber, the ammunition wagon is loaded and brought to the rear, the ambulance is wheeled into line and in an incredibly short time the entire detachment is fully equipped and ready to advance to the place of attack. The command, "forward," is then given and the whole detachment sets out at a brisk pace, preceded by the commanding officer who selects a circuitous and obscure route so as to avoid detection by the enemy who are endeavoring to observe the movements of their assailants. On nearing a suitable place for attack the commander halts the detachment and proceeds to reconnoitre the surrounding country so as to ascertain the exact position of the enemy and to select the most suitable place for attack. Satisfied with his observations he summons the range-finders who by the use of trigonometrical instruments and various nice calculations are able to compute the distance between the selected firing point and the enemy. At the same time portable telephones are being laid connecting the position of attack with the observation party stationed on a hill to the right or left of the line of fire, where an oblique view of the enemy's position can be obtained. The position and efficiency of this observation party is of the greatest importance, because the exact position of every shell fired must be observed in order that

effective work may be done; and such observation can be taken only from a point somewhat close to the enemy and to the right or left of the firing line.

The preparations being now completed the section commander spurs his horse towards the halted detachment and orders that the guns advance the ammunition wagon and ambulance remaining in the rear so as to be concealed from the enemies observation. The guns, however, must be taken into position; the big horses are spurred and lashed into a frenzied gallop, the great guns leap forward crushing to the earth every obstacle that happens to stand in their path. The position of attack is soon reached. The commands "Halt," and "Unlimber," are quickly given and rapidly executed. The horses thus detached from the guns are lashed away to their former retreat where they remain until required for further advancing or retiring. Now comes the command, "prepare for action,"—Both guns are pointed towards the enemy and each loaded with a forty-six pound projectile backed up by a cordite cartridge of enormous size, the distance calculated by the range finders is given, and the gun-layer by means of a telescopic sight lays the firing piece deadly on the enemy. Now all is ready. That immense instrument of modern warfare shining in the summer sunlight is indeed a thing of beauty, but in the twinkling of an eye it can be converted into a death delivering monster. The command, "fire number one gun," is now given—the fatal striker is released—a sound like that of terrific thunder rends the air—the long barrel recoils on its carriage and the entire gun is backward as though it were a mere toy. Then all is calm save the low rumbling sound of the echoes dying away in the distant valleys. Suddenly in the direction of the enemy clouds of dust and smoke are seen followed by a rolling far away sound, sending a message, as it were, that the explosive projectile had completed its course and striking the ground had scattered its leaden contents in every direction. But was it effective? Had it struck near the enemy? Such are the questions asked after the discharge of every gun. Questions most difficult to answer especially by those who are observing from the position of attack. This important information however is obtain-

ed from the flank observers who looking obliquely into the enemy's position can calculate the error of a mis-directed shell with sufficient accuracy. Accordingly the information concerning the effectiveness of shot number one could be obtained only from the flank observers. Ere the last sound of the exploding shell dies away a message is flashed over the wires announcing the failure of the initial shot. It had fallen two hundred yards short. Such an error would indeed be unpardonable in rifle shooting and the unlucky person would undoubtedly lose his reputation as a marksman. But in heavy gun practice such an error is of minor importance since the object of bombardment is of considerable dimensions and the effects of an exploding shell are disastrous within a radius of almost a hundred yards. The section commander on receiving this information gives an increased elevation and from the mouth of gun number two, another messenger of death is heralded towards the enemy. As before the far-away sound of the exploding shell could be plainly heard and dense clouds of smoke roll heavenward. Another message arrives "second shot effective, but slightly long." This message is received with much enthusiasm for all know that once an effective shot is obtained and the exact range found that the remainder of the bombardment would undoubtedly prove disastrous to the enemy. A slight decrease in elevation is then ordered and from the deep throat of the redoubtable, "Long Tom," comes that awful sound accompanied by a dreaded projectile. In a few seconds the shell strikes, the result is appalling. When the smoke clears away the huge target which I have designated as the enemy is no longer visible. The shell had struck near its base and on exploding had scattered the main portion of this passive enemy to the four winds of heaven, leaving only a few shattered posts and crossbars. Although the object of bombardment had been thus destroyed, firing does not cease; shot follows shot at short intervals until ammunition is reported expended. The section commander then signals for the horses and gives the order, "prepare to retire." All stores are quickly replaced, the telephones removed and the "Long Toms," whirled around and placed in position for, "Limbering up."

The horses having arrived in the meantime, both guns are limbered and the detachment swinging into line moves off towards the gun park, where many congratulations are awaiting the officers and men for the disastrous work they had wrought upon the enemy.

J. L. SAUNDERS, '13.



"The sun is all very well," said an Irishman, "but the moon is worth two of it; for the moon affords us light in the night time, when we want it, whereas the sun's with us in the day time, when we have no occasion for it."



It is related, that when a former Bishop of Bristol held the office of Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, he one day met a couple of undergraduates, who neglected to pay the accustomed compliment of capping. The bishop inquired the reason of the neglect. The two men begged his lordship's pardon, observing they were freshmen and did not know him. "How long have you been in Cambridge?" asked his lordship. "Only eight days," was the reply. "Very good," said the bishop, "puppies never see till they are nine days old."



Be polite to everybody, but especially to your banker.



Suspicion is the poison of true friendship.