

MODERN WARFARE

Man's Genius Expended on Weapons.

SUPREMACY STRUGGLE

Great Work Accomplished During the Century in the Perfecting of Arms.

Among the many inventions of modern science, it appears now that those concerning the weapons of warfare are most important.

A retrospect of the advances made along this line reveals the fact that genius has almost been playing havoc with the good-naturedness of mankind; for as soon as a deadly weapon of destruction is invented, more than equal means of defence are brought forward as an offset. The selfish hope that one nation in the circumstances of war might find itself better armed than another has been the only spur to activities such as have perfected the modern arms and armaments of civilization.

Prussia, who adopted the needle gun secretly, in her troubles with Denmark and Austria about 1860, was the only nation of the century who realized her selfish hope.

The percussion cap and nipple were first used by France, instead of the old flint lock. Firearms were commonly made in 1820 with a nipple, but the rifling principle was not adopted till near 1830. About the first successful breech-loader was invented by Samuel Colt, in 1835, when he secured patents on his revolver. Colt's revolver was adopted by the United States army about 1845, just about the time breech-loaders were being generally taken up by civilized governments.

Between 1850 and 1860 very many breech-loaders were invented, and the magazine principle was adopted in many, but was very cumbersome.

Many good rifles were invented during the Civil War in the United States, but did not displace muzzle-loaders at that time. The Spencer and Sharp's rifles constructed on the magazine principle, were much used, and since then breech-loading rifles have been made very nearly perfect.

A great change in the use of arms was brought about when Germany, in 1885 adopted the Mauser rifle. The following incident will explain its use: "A British soldier, in South Africa received three Mauser bullets in his left leg, but was quite unconscious of the shot until loss of blood forced him to lag behind, when he became aware that he had been wounded. Mauser bullets, having a very high velocity, go through a man's body like a rapier thrust."

It was considered that the United States had given up the Springfield rifle in 1895 for the Grag-Jorgensen, but this weapon was chiefly used in the Spanish-American war. In comparison with the Mauser, charged with smokeless powder, the Springfield is a very inferior rifle.

The bayonet is hardly of the same importance, since the introduction of the magazine rifle, for the firing range has been increased so as to make a bayonet charge, in many cases, impracticable.

The magazine gun, however, was only a stepping stone to more wonderful inventions. All the horrors of modern warfare were first realized by the invention of the machine gun in Belgium. Prussia was the first unlucky victim, in 1870, when the mitrailleuse was adopted by France. Then about 1871, came the Gatling gun, perfected in America, which was considered to be the most perfect weapon of its kind.

Soon after Maxim produced his machine gun, with which one man could fire 1,500 shots a minute. The Maxim gun has only one barrel, and is not much heavier than an ordinary musket, thus differing from the Gatling gun and mitrailleuse.

When steam superseded sails in the maneuvering of vessels of war it became necessary to protect the machinery by armor plate. This has done much for modern guns and high explosives, and there has been a competition of inventive genius between the gun-maker and the armor-plate.

Continued on the Last Page.

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THE EDITOR'S MAIL.

Provincial Finances.

Sir.—Something bearing on our local finances and the causes bringing about direct taxation may be of interest to the public. Only those conversant with the political history of the past, are capable of understanding the issues of various administrations. Parties are identified by certain fundamental principles, sometimes radically at variance and unfortunately many subtleties exist for the purpose of deception.

Present financial difficulties do not arise materially from the faults and failures of recent administrations, but will be found by going back to the building of the railway and the terms and conditions upon which the Island went into the Union. The Railway Bill causing an indebtedness of three millions of dollars, was passed in open defiance of the will of the people many of its riders and abettors have been identified with Liberal Conservatism down to the present time. The terms of Union were accepted in the face of an adverse vote, by the same parties who were instrumental in passing the Railway Bill, for the purpose of forcing the Island like the Province of Nova Scotia into Confederation.

The Union being consummated, a large amount of loose money, together with heavy receipts from the Land Office lay waiting investment. Large expenditures were made on public institutions, the Asylum, Law Courts, Public Works, &c. In a short time, Mr. Davies becoming Premier, resorted to direct taxation in order to make revenue and expenditure meet. The system adopted being unpopular, as all taxes are, he was ousted from office by those who assisted in framing the scheme. Had a little patience been exercised during the trying moments when considering the terms of union, P. E. Island would have emerged unscathed. The position Newfoundland occupies to-day is a standing rebuke to the tactics employed by Confederates in those days.

Had succeeding governments continued a light popular system of taxation similar to that adopted by Mr. Peters, though such would not have been wholly sufficient for the purpose of government without some sweeping changes in the most expending departments, finances now would be on a better basis. In the future an income exceeding three hundred thousand dollars will be required, controlled largely by the amount of extraordinary expenditures. Available income from all sources including subsidy, show a deficit of thirty, or forty thousand or more, to be made up by direct additional taxation or otherwise.

Expenditures during the regime of Mr. McLeod and Mr. Peters, in the election years of 1891, and 1896, are indefensible however plausible, as to the success of contesting parties.

The financial problem requires more intelligent consideration than that given by would be legislators. Many petty amounts together with the growing public debt appear to be the whole bone of contention, and vague and indefinite assertions which are worthless.

Will those who seek to govern point out the measures they intend to adopt supplementary in income to the requirements of the public service? Will they accept or reject the efforts of Liberals on this score? Will they lessen the cost of education or the public works, or will they levy forty thousand dollars additional taxation? Will they draw more from capital or seek thereof? Will they defend the attitude of Senator Ferguson and Hon. Alex. Martin with respect to appointment of claims in public already admitted? Will they accept as satisfactory the absorption of those claims in public works or will they insist that a portion be placed to our credit at least any portion bearing a local construction similar to the conditions when the twenty thousand was added some years ago? Will they promote the building of the bridge and branch line to Belfast? In short will they define frankly what policy they intend to adopt in order to relieve the people in the near future from oppressive taxation?

By a decision of the Imperial Privy Council, it appears we are entitled to a share of the Fishery Award, also certain refunds on inshore fisheries, etc. These are of local import and with a little strategic engineering on the part of our non too patriotic statesmen, might result in placing forty thousand dollars to our credit, thus adjusting the finances in the most statesman-like way, and the most commensurate with the public interest. It would be well for those who pretend, but have failed, to work out a glorious destiny for P. E. Island to ever keep in view the labors and public life of the late Hon. Joseph Howe.

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