FIRING GUNS BY ELECTRICITY.

A New Departure in the Art of Naval Warfare.

SUBMARINE TORPEDO BOATS.

Successful Experiment With a French Vessel—A New Railway Telegraph Device—The Electric Light in Paris.

Fired From the Pilot Tower.

On some of the larger European ships-of-war, and on a few United States vessels, arrangements have been made for firing the guns by electricity, writes Lieutenant W. S. Hughes, of the United States Navy, in the October Scribner. This is usually accomplished by causing the current from an ordinary zinc-carbon battery to pass through what is known as an electric primer inserted in the vent of the gun. The primer, as used in the United States service, is simply a quill tube nearly filled with small-grained powder, and containing a fine platinum wire wrapped with a wasp of gun-cotton. The platinum wire is connected with the wires of the electric battery. When the battery circuit is closed the platinum becomes instantly white hot, thus igniting the primer and firing the gun. The firing key, with which the circuit may be closed at pleasure, is placed in the pilot tower, or in some other position where it is directly under the control of the commanding officer, and the circuit is of course kept open until the instant of firing. The advantages claimed for such a system are many. Obviously, under some circumstances, as, for example, where it is desirable to concentrate the whole broadside upon a certain point, and to fire all the guns together, such an arrangement would have a great advantage over the ordinary method of depending upon the simultaneous action of the gunners. Again, it is no uncommon occurrence in battle for a ship's gunner to become so enveloped in smoke that the enemy cannot be seen by the men at the guns, and in such cases, with an electric system, the firing could be done by an officer clear of such an obstruction. Usually the electrical appliances admit, also, of the guns being fired singly and in succession; and for cases where the ship is rolling heavily from side to side, an "automatic circuit-closer" is sometimes employed, which, after the regular firing-key has been pressed, closes the circuit and discharges the guns the instant the vessel reaches an upright position.

Submarine Torpedo Boats.

A French contemporary says, referring to the new submarine torpedo boat: "It is not of to-day that search is made, a little in every country, for the solution of a problem, which seems now as impossible to solve as that of the steering of balloons; it is of the submarine boats that I wish to speak. M. Goubet has just concluded a long series of experiments with a submarine boat of his invention. This boat has been spoken of for a long time. The numerous preceding abortive attempts had put people on their guard against submarine vessels. Successful attempts were vainless against this state of mind until it became necessary to recognize the fact that a solution of the problem had been found when the Goubet—that is the name of the vessel—had remained eight hours submerged with two men on board, who ate, smoked and played at cards without the slightest inconvenience. How is this vessel constructed which so well merits the name of fish boat? This secret, like others relating to national defense, is well kept. But whatever the mechanism and the system which works the Goubet, the experiments which are being continued at Cherbourg prove that it is efficacious. The naval authorities have not such a tender feeling for inventors in general that they would have consented, if the invention had not appeared really practical and capable of rendering real service, to place at M. Goubet's disposal a basin at the port of Cherbourg, and also officers and sailors. The new boat was able, during the course of the experiments, to sink at command to variable depths, and to maintain a perfect equilibrium. The sinking of the Goubet was brought about with the greatest regularity, without oscillation or shocks, quickly or slowly, according to the orders transmitted through the telephone wire which communicated between the submarine boat and the pontoon. At the different depths the Goubet was maneuvred at will, and behaved as much like a fish as possible.

Cade's Railway Telegraph.

A new form of railway telegraph has been invented by Mr. Baylus Cade, of Louisburg, N. C., says the Electrical World. This apparatus is of the contact type, and consists simply of an ordinary box sounding relay with a key on the base, which is placed in the circuit, and maintained there no matter how fast the train runs. The difficulty of constructing a circuit which would allow instruments on the trains to be thrown into circuit and kept there while trains were in motion is, it is claimed, entirely overcome, and the cost of construction will not exceed $50 per mile, the instrument being capable of adjustment to the car in five minutes. It also has the great advantage that the operators require no "phones" to detect the sounds, and can always know if there is any trouble on the line; whereas in the inductive method, if the current in the line conductor fails for any reason to act instinctively, the train operator has no means of knowing of such failure.

Electric Lighting in Paris.

The visitor from the states who has occasion to go abroad at night in Paris, upon emerging from the exhibition, which is brilliantly lighted in all parts, both by electricity and gas, enters into comparative darkness, and sighs for the arc lamp which he is accustomed to see at the street corner of even the smallest towns of the states, says the Electrical World. With the exception of the lights on a few of the boulevards there is no electric street lighting in Paris. When the exhibition was about to be opened the Paris municipality, considering it important to have its streets at least in part, well lit, gave out contracts to different companies, allotting to each about fifty lamps. Among these companies were those operating the system of Marcel Deprez, the Edison company and Thomson-Houston company. These lamps are placed on the Rue Royale, running from the Place de la Concorde up to the Boulevard de la Madeleine along the Boulevards des Capucines, des Italiens and Montmartre. I took occasion to examine the Thomson-Houston system, which is run in connection with the Popp system of distribution of power by means of compressed air. One of their installations is placed in the Edeu theater, where they have two machines furnishing sixty arc lights. Of these forty-nine lights are employed about the theater, eight of which are employed as foot-lights, and from this station also eleven street lights are run. At the other station on the Boulevard des Capucines two machines operate twenty-nine public lights and about fourteen or fifteen private lights. All the circuits, of course, are underground, and the lamps are in series. On the other arc system the lamps are connected two in series across the lines, the E. M. F. being only 110 volts.

Such as it is, the arc lighting in Paris is good, the Rue Royal, less than one-quarter of a mile long, especially being very well lit. In looking over the ground, however, it would seem almost certain that considerable economy could be attained by the use of arc lights in Paris to replace the large number of gas lamps in use. To be fair, it must be said that the Paris authorities are by no means stingy in their use of gas on the streets, but the results are, it seems, not up to the cost which such a large number of lights must involve. Take, for instance, the Place de la Concorde, a space measuring about five hundred to seven hundred feet and containing probably between five hundred and six hundred gas lamps. There can not be the slightest doubt that thirty or forty arc lamps well distributed would give a far better illumination than is now obtained. Again, on the Avenue des Champs Elysees, there are running from the Place de la Concorde up to the Arc de Triomphe, a distance of about a mile and a half, four rows of gas lamps, the latter being placed at an average distance of fifty feet apart, while at frequent intervals in the middle of the roadway two extra high gas lamps are situated. Thus, while I would not advocate arc lamps in some of the narrow, crooked streets of Paris, there are a sufficient number of beautiful, wide streets in which the arc lights would show up to the improvement of the street and conduce to economy at the same time. As I have said before, the present arc lighting in Paris is merely provisional, but it is greatly to be hoped that at the end of the exhibition some permanent arrangement will be arrived at and the system extended.

Gamblers and Electricity.

It has been suggested recently that instead of using the rack, so well known to trans-atlantic travelers, that the dishes might be held on the table by means of electricity. This would be accomplished by the use of a number of electro-magnates placed immediately below the table cover, which could be made by closing an electric circuit, to powerfully attract the various dishes, they having been provided with iron bottoms.

A similar device has been designed by certain gamblers who, like the rest of the world are quick to avail themselves of electrical aid. The loaded dice of to-day have the same specific gravity, but have a piece of iron inserted opposite the side which is wanted to turn up throughout, so that when thrown on an ordinary table they are governed only by the law of chance, but when cast on the magnetic table at the gambling den can be made to turn up "three sixes" or not at the will of the person controlling the secret button connecting the battery with the electro-magnates.

Casting by Electricity.

That electrical engineering has taken a foremost place among the manufacturing industries of the world, is exemplified in a striking way by the fact that a few days ago at Glasgow a casting of Siemen's steel was successfully run containing no less than seventy tons of metal, for the shaft of the monster Ferranti dynamo now under construction for the London Electric supply corporation. When turned, bored and finished the shaft will weigh about thirty-two tons. It is seldom a steel casting of such magnitude has been made for any purpose, and when we reflect that this is for a dynamo, we begin to realize that electric lighting has a pretty firm footing.

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Dr. James H. Gordon, of Greenville, Ill., is seventy-two years old and the father of twenty-two children. Seven of these were boys, and, with one exception, all became physicians and attained more than ordinary success. The exception was a son who was accidentally killed while a student at the St. Louis Medical college. To take the place of this one, though, there is an only living son-in-law who is a medical practitioner.

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Uncle Bob Carleton, of Magazine, Ark., is said to be one hundred and twenty-six years old. He is strong and hearty, has good eyesight and can shoot more squirrels than any boy in the neighborhood. He uses an old-fashioned rifle that was carried by a soldier in the revolutionary war.

Presidential Thrift.

An old observer of presidential life in Washington says that each new president begins his term by spending more money on hospitality during the first year of office than during any of the succeeding ones. The expenditure decreases gradually, it is said, until the fourth year, when the ordinary president begins to think more about saving money for the coming rainy day than about spending it for dinners and reteptions.

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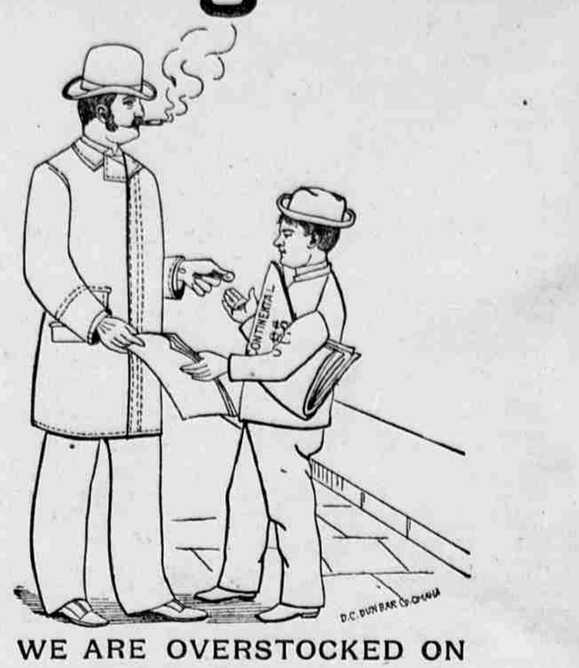

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