

Quebec, June 23 1915

My dear Sam,

I asked Major Kircaldy to dinner, spent the evening with him and had him up at the factory. I did my best to draw from him a true picture. This is what I got:-

On one side.

1. Strengthened magazine boxes needed (Note, I did this in Octr.)
2. Foresight raised to make battle sight shoot to 300 yds. instead of 600.
3. Complaints of rifles "jamming" working stiffly with English, but not with Canadian ammunition.

No other troubles.

On the other side

Stories of regiments (Canadian) being required to maintain a sustained fire all day long, which was done, and cases recorded of regiments running out of ammunition. Stories of regiments holding back many times their number of Germans for hours and hours and almost for days.

Now, let us assume both these tales are quite true.

I cannot diagnose and paraphrase this into anything else than that the troops more than held their own, - indeed, saved the situation, but were troubled with a bad batch of ammunition. The question comes: Were they troubled more than anyone else using other arms? There was no means of comparison. Now, I know that a large percentage of the arms were not cleaned at Valcartier; that they were packed in the rain and shipped without cleaning; that after arrival at Salisbury they were full of rust as to the barrels, and that there were either no, or very inferior means of keeping the arms clean. Then they saw three months service in France. These conditions would, of course, tend to accentuate any imperfection in ammunition. Added to this, we must remember the troops had never seen their arms before, and practically no means were available for instruction in the arms.

Strange as it may seem, I have a greater belief in the rifle than ever.

As to the future, I would suggest:-

- 1) That the musketry regulations should be to some extent complied with, and especially Sec. 118.
- 2) That all regiments should go on board ship carrying their arms and that the time on shipboard should be devoted to their use.

Copy of private letter from Sir Charles Ross to Maj. Gen. Sam Hughes.

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- 3) That bayonets should be sharpened.
- 4) That officers and N.C.O. and men should be impressed with the importance of a knowledge of their arm.
- 5) That certain small numbers of the English pattern Ross should be issued to regiments with the object of ascertaining whether the English type of foresight is an improvement.
- 6) That the English practice of issuing breech sticks should be followed and their use explained to and be required of the troops.

I cannot help thinking that the presene event may be a blessing in disguise, and that with a little experience of another rifle the troops would be glad enough to go back to their old arms.

Yours,
sig. C. ROSS.

It might be a good plan, so that troops would not be prejudiced against the Ross, to give practical demonstrations to officers in Canada of the superiority of the Ross. A short and effective programme could be worked up. What do you think?