



***WALTER  
WINANS***

***AUTOMATIC  
PISTOL  
SHOOTING***



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# **Automatic Pistol Shooting**

**Together with Information on Handling the Duelling  
Pistol and Revolver**

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# PREFACE

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Though my last edition of *Hints on Revolver Shooting* was published only four years ago, I find it now necessary, owing to the advance of the automatic pistol, to revise it thoroughly and to add new chapters.

Till quite recently, the automatic pistol had many defects, both as to balance and as to safety, chiefly in the latter respect, so that only a very careful expert could handle one without danger to the public and to himself.

This has now been altered, and with safety bolts and external hammers several automatic pistols are quite safe for the use of experts.

They are still very dangerous in the hands of ignorant persons; a revolver is dangerous enough in such cases but the automatic is much more so.

I shall try to explain how any one possessing mechanical knowledge can, by observing certain precautions, safely carry and shoot an automatic pistol. Of course, some men who, for years, have shot small game, and who are good shots, are still very careless in handling a gun. Such men should never touch an automatic pistol.

I have made the above remarks as I do not want to be responsible for any accidents with automatics; and I advise any one not sure of himself to confine himself to revolvers and single-shot pistols.

The automatic pistol is gradually replacing the revolver except as a gallery pistol.

Up to the present no automatic pistol can shoot gallery, or light-charge, ammunition, and the full charge, because of the noise, is very unpleasant in a shooting-gallery.

It is a great pity that the .44 Smith & Wesson break-down model of revolver (shooting gallery ammunition) is no longer made, as it is still the best revolver for gallery shooting.

M. Gastinne Renette, of 39 Avenue d'Antin, Paris, for his gallery, uses them still, together with his duelling pistols of the same calibre and powder charge.

I mention this as he is the only dealer who can now supply the old Smith & Wesson revolvers.

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# CHAPTER I

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### THE AUTOMATIC PISTOL

This is the pistol of the future and the revolver has now to give place to it, just as the horse has to give place to the automobile for traction purposes.

Still, like the horse, the revolver seems still to have before it a future for certain purposes, and one uses a revolver where one would not care to use an automatic pistol.

The superiority of the revolver consists in its being adaptable to reduced charges and also in its being less complicated and less apt to be discharged accidentally by an ignorant person.

At one time, the revolver was considered the most dangerous fire-arm in existence, but the automatic far surpasses it in this respect. When the chambers of a revolver are emptied, it is harmless; but when the magazine is taken out, after an automatic pistol has been charged, *one cartridge still remains in the chamber*. This has been the cause of several accidents; a man thinks the pistol is safe after he has extracted the magazine.

The automatic pistol is barred from gallery shooting by the fact that the mechanism is operated by the recoil from a full-charge cartridge only, and this full charge makes too much noise.

I do not advise the purchase of any automatic pistol which does not have at least one safety bolt and which does not have also an external hammer.

There are two makes which, from personal experience, I can recommend; one is the Colt .45 which has been adopted by the United States Government for army and navy purposes. This has a grip at the proper angle for shooting. Hardly any other automatic pistol is properly designed in this respect, their grips being too much at a right angle, so that the barrel tends to point too high, this creating a strain on the wrist, since the wrist must be held in an unnatural position.

The Colt automatic of the U. S. Army pattern has a stock as pleasant to aim with as a duelling pistol.

Next, it has a hammer which can be put to full and half cock, just like that of an ordinary pistol or revolver.

It has, besides, two safety appliances; one a slide which can be moved with the thumb just before firing, like the safety bolt of a shotgun, the other a safety bolt which is pressed by the palm of the hand in the act of squeezing the trigger, like that of the Smith & Wesson safety revolver, later described.

The pistol is, therefore, as “fool-proof” as it seems possible to make it, but yet there is the danger of a cartridge being left in the chamber when the magazine is taken out. I again warn all shooters of automatic pistols to bear this fact constantly in mind whenever handling an automatic.

However, I do not like the sights of this Colt automatic. The front sight is a black, upright, narrow rod when aiming, and the notch in the hind sight is far too small. This arrangement of sights may be all very well for deliberate



aiming at a black bull's-eye on a white target, but it is of no use for practical shooting in a bad light.

The front sight should be a "shotgun" silver "bead," and the hind sight a large "U"-shaped notch that will show the full bead in it with a little to spare at the sides.

With these alterations, I think the U. S. Regulation Colt automatic is the best automatic I know.

The Savage automatic is also very good, and I can confidently recommend it, especially for those who find the .45 Colt too large for their purpose.

The following chapters on learning to shoot with the revolver and duelling pistol apply equally to the automatic pistol, except that the butts to be shot against should be more solid when using the automatic, owing to its penetration, and the shooting with it should take place only out-of-doors, as the noise is very bad for indoors.

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# CHAPTER II

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### SELECTING A PISTOL

You must first decide for what purpose you want the pistol; a “general utility” one is about as much use as a hunter who goes in harness—not much good for either purpose. If you want a hunter, buy an English hunter; if a harness horse, buy an American trotter. In the same way, for whatever purpose you want a pistol, buy one, if by any means you can do so, especially for that purpose. Anyhow, it is useless to compete with a short-barrelled pocket automatic against target pistols. This class of pistol is intended only for self-defence at short range, and has no pretensions to accuracy.

A long barrel theoretically gives greater accuracy, especially at long range, owing to there being more length to burn the powder in, and to the sights being farther apart, which minimizes error in aiming; but practically this advantage is more than counterbalanced by making the pistol heavy at the muzzle, so that it therefore balances badly. The balance ought to be as near the trigger as possible. For a pocket pistol, a short barrel may be absolutely necessary for portability. In England some men use very long barrels, but I prefer shorter pistols, and I do not consider that anything over 7½ inches is a “Military” revolver nor should it be permitted in military competitions.

See that the trigger-pull is “sweet,” and has no “drag.” Also, have your trigger-pull as light as can safely be used. The pull is often left by makers very heavy, so as to be

alterable to suit customers, and the shopman may forget to have this altered. If you are not hampered by rules, about three or three and a half pounds is the best trigger-pull for general purposes.

I do not like a double-action revolver, except for a pocket one, as it cannot do accurate shooting when cocking with the trigger.

For a man whose hands are apt to get moist, roughing the trigger may prevent slipping; but it may also make the finger sore if roughed too sharp.

Some pistols have too narrow a trigger, almost like a piece of wire; a wide, spoon-shaped trigger is best, as less likely to cut the finger, especially when coupled with a heavy trigger-pull.

Get a pistol which, when you grip the stock properly, has the barrel and your arm as nearly in a horizontal line as possible. Many makes of revolvers and automatic pistols have the stock much below the level of the barrel, which consequently is above the hand. This makes shooting more difficult; you are apt to cant the weapon to one side, and the recoil is more severe on your wrist. A man who holds a pistol properly does not need a big stock, even if he has a big hand.

For rough work, and in strong sunlight, a pistol is best blued. I temporarily paint the rib, etc., when target shooting on sunny days, with "sight-black."

Revolver ammunition is usually made in the following calibres: .32, .38, .41, .44, .45, .455. Most of these can be had loaded with various smokeless powders, as King's semi-smokeless, Riflite, Cordite, Walsrode, etc.