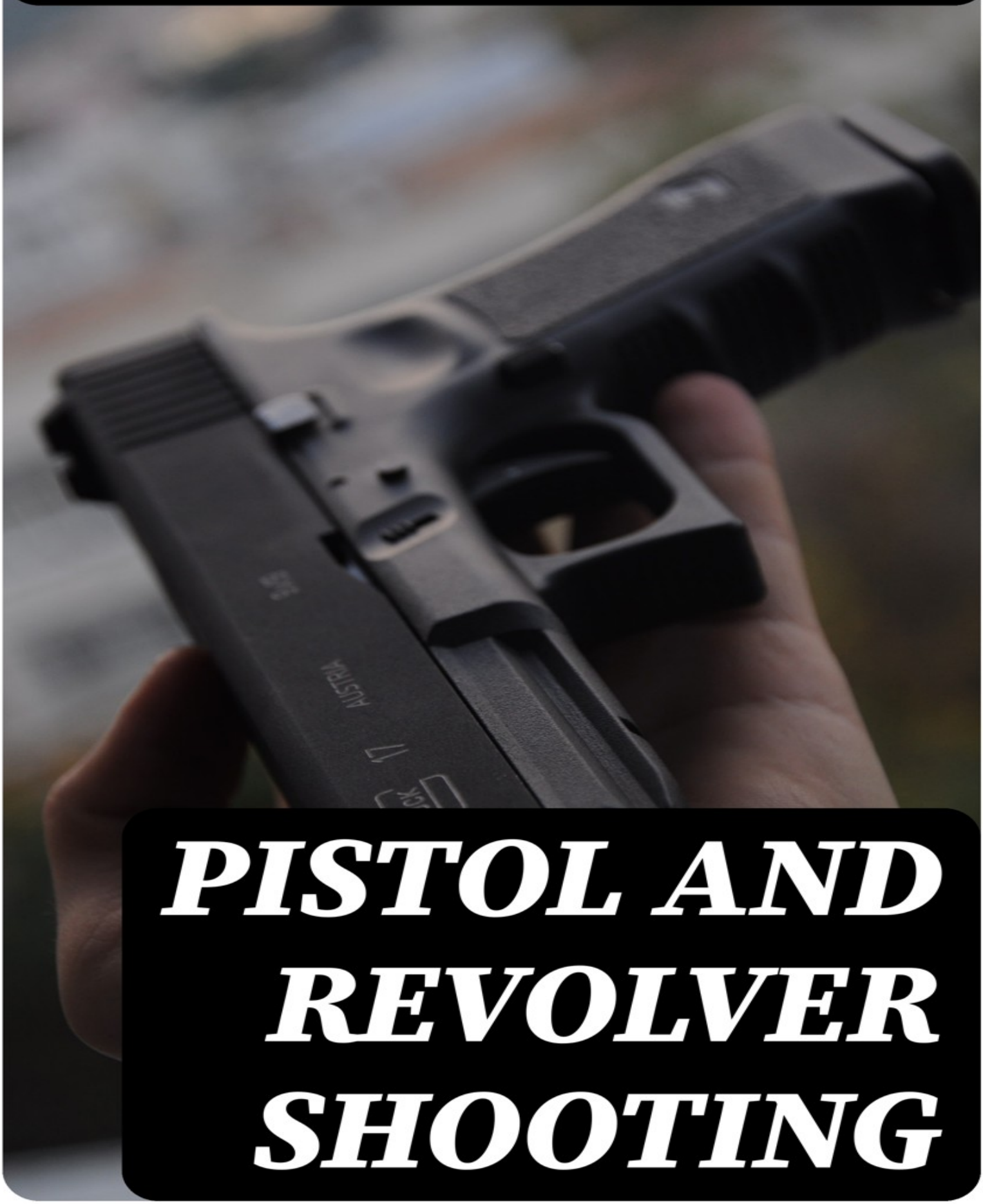
A. L. A. HIMMELWRIGHT



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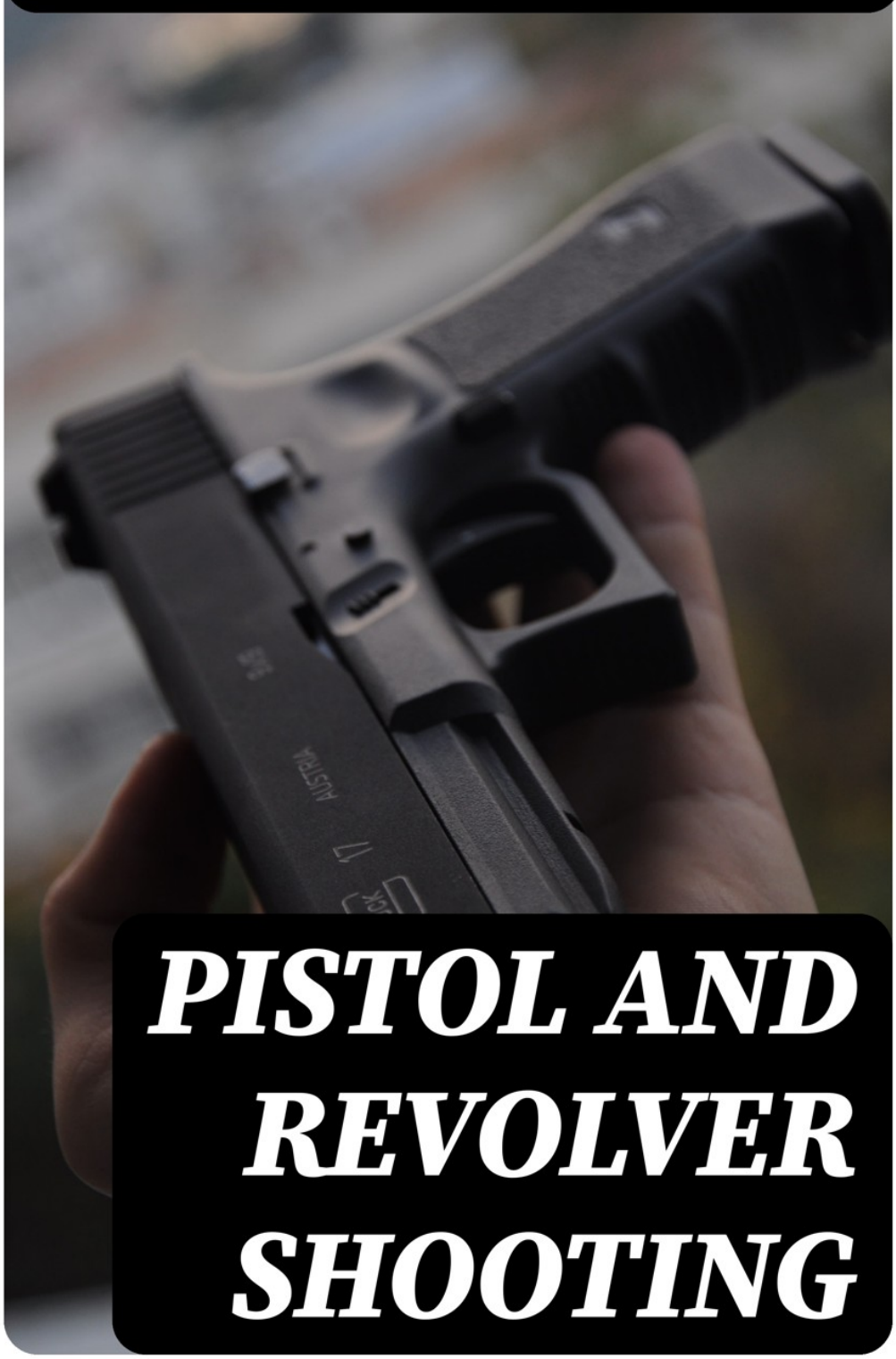

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EAN 8596547122654

DigiCat, 2022
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PREFACE

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Interest in pistol and revolver shooting has increased very rapidly in recent years and particularly since smokeless powder has been introduced.

The revolver and the magazine pistol now constitute part of the regular equipment of army and navy officers and cavalry troops. Regulations governing practice shooting with these arms have been issued and adopted by both branches of the service and by the National Guard of the various States. In the National Rifle Association and in the various State rifle associations that have recently been organized, pistol and revolver shooting has an important place, and the matches provided are largely patronized. In the numerous civilian shooting clubs scattered throughout the country pistol and revolver shooting has become extremely popular, and in many cases the majority of the members practice more frequently with the smaller arms than with the rifle.

Practice with the pistol and revolver affords training in sighting, steady holding, and pulling the trigger, which are the essential features of rifle shooting also. On account of this relation, and the fact that skill with these arms can be instantly utilized in rifle shooting, the development of marksmanship with the pistol and revolver assumes national importance.

While numerous standard works have been written on the subject of rifle shooting, there is comparatively little information available on pistol and revolver shooting. The object of this volume is to supply practical information on this

subject. The author has attempted to treat the subject in a clear and concise manner, keeping the size of the volume as small as practicable and so as to be conveniently carried in the pocket. Particular pains have been taken to give sound advice and elementary instruction to beginners.

The author extends his grateful acknowledgments to Baron Speck von Sternburg, Messrsr. J. B. Crabtree, John T. Humphrey, William E. Carlin, Chas. S. Axtell, Walter Winans, Walter G. Hudson, Ed. Taylor, J. E. Silliman, M. Hays, and the various arms and ammunition manufacturers referred to herein, for valuable assistance, suggestions, information and *data* in preparing this volume.

A. L. A. HIMMELWRIGHT.

Stockholm, N. J.

ILLUSTRATIONS

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CHAPTER I

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INTRODUCTORY AND HISTORICAL

Pistol shooting has been practiced ever since “grained” gunpowder came into general use. It is only recently, however, that it has developed into a popular pastime and has been recognized as a legitimate sport.[1]

The useful and practical qualities of the pistol and revolver have been developed almost wholly during the last half-century. Before this period the small arms designed to be fired with one hand were crude and inaccurate, and were intended to be used only at short range as weapons of defense. The single-barreled muzzle-loading pistol has, nevertheless, been part of the army and navy officer’s equipment since the sixteenth century. These pistols were of large caliber, smooth-bored, heavy, and unwieldy. The load was a spherical bullet and a large charge of powder. Enough accuracy was obtained to hit a man at 15 to 20 paces, which was deemed sufficient. The usefulness of these arms in action was limited to the firing of a single shot, and then using them as missiles or clubs.

The pistol in early days was considered a gentleman’s arm—a luxury. It was the arm generally selected for duelling when that code was in vogue, the contestants standing 10 to 20 paces apart and firing at the word of command.

The development of the pistol has been contemporaneous and closely identified with that of the rifle. With the grooving or rifling of the barrel, the accuracy was greatly improved and the arm adapted to conical bullets. Although numerous

attempts were made to devise a multishot arm with flint, wheel, and match locks, it was not until the percussion cap was invented that a practicable arm of this character was produced. This was a “revolver” invented by Colonel Colt of Hartford, Conn., in 1835, and consisted of a single barrel with a revolving cylinder at the breech containing the charges, the mechanism being such that the cocking of the piece after each discharge revolved the cylinder sufficiently to bring a loaded chamber in line with the barrel.

The greatest advance in the development of firearms was the introduction of the system of breech-loading, employing ammunition in the form of cartridges. This principle rendered the operation of loading much simpler and quicker, and vastly improved the efficiency and general utility of the arms. [2]

The present popularity of pistol and revolver shooting is due, no doubt, to recent improvements in the arms and ammunition. The arms are now marvels of fine workmanship, easy to manipulate, durable, and extremely accurate. With the introduction of smokeless powders, the smoke, fouling, and noise have been reduced to a minimum. The effect of these improvements has been, not only to increase the efficiency of the arms, but also the pleasure of shooting them.

As a sport, pistol shooting has much to commend it. It is a healthful exercise, being practiced out-of-doors in the open air. There are no undesirable concomitants, such as gambling, coarseness, and rough and dangerous play. In order to excel, regular and temperate habits of life must be formed and maintained. It renders the senses more alert and

trains them to act in unison and in harmony. But, above all, skill in shooting is a useful accomplishment.

Anyone possessing ordinary health and good sight may, by practice, become a good pistol shot. Persons who are richly endowed by nature with those physical qualities which specially fit them for expert shooting will, of course, master the art sooner than those less favored; but it has been conclusively shown that excellence is more a question of training and practice than of natural gift. Some of the most brilliant shooting has been done by persons possessing a decidedly nervous temperament; but those of phlegmatic temperament will generally make more uniform and reliable marksmen.

It is much more difficult to shoot well with the pistol or revolver than with the rifle. The latter, having a stock to rest against the shoulder and steady one end of the piece, has a decided advantage in quick aiming and in pulling the trigger. The former, without a stock and being held in one hand with the arm extended so as to be free from the body, is without any anchor or support whatever, and is free to move in all directions. Consequently the least jar, jerk in pulling the trigger, puff of wind, or unsteadiness of the hand greatly disturbs the aim. Intelligent practice will, however, overcome these difficulties and disadvantages to such a degree that an expert shot with a pistol or revolver under favorable conditions can equal a fair shot with a rifle at the target up to 200 yards. When the novice essays to shoot the pistol or revolver, the results are generally disappointing and discouraging; but rapid progress invariably rewards the efforts of those who persevere, and when once thoroughly

interested in this style of shooting, there comes a fascination for it that frequently endures throughout a lifetime.

CHAPTER II

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ARMS

The term “pistol” is frequently applied indiscriminately to the single-shot pistol and the revolver. A marked distinction between these arms has gradually been developed.

The pistol is now recognized as a single-shot arm, adapted for a light charge and designed to secure extreme accuracy. Its use is limited almost exclusively to target and exhibition shooting.

The modern revolver is an arm with a revolving cylinder holding five or six cartridges, which are at the instant command of the shooter before it is necessary to reload. It is designed for heavy charges, and is a practical and formidable weapon. Revolvers are made in great variety, and adapted for various purposes, such as military service, target shooting, pocket weapons, etc. The best grades of pistols and revolvers may be had at a reasonable price. The cheap grades with which the market is at all times flooded should be avoided. They are incapable of doing good work, and frequently are positively dangerous, on account of being made of inferior materials.

The magazine or automatic pistol is the latest type of hand firearm. It is a multishot pistol in which the mechanism is operated automatically by the recoil. Pulling the trigger is the only manual operation necessary to fire successive shots until the supply of cartridges in the magazine (usually six to ten) is exhausted. The first models were introduced about 1898. These had many defects and objections, such as failure

to function regularly, danger in manipulation due to insufficient safety devices, poor balance, unsightly lines, etc. Nevertheless the advantages of this type of arm over the revolver for military purposes in effective range, rapidity of fire, accuracy, interchangeability, etc., were soon recognized and manufacturers were encouraged to improve and perfect them.

Practically all the mechanical defects referred to have been corrected, the balance and the lines improved, and safety devices introduced so that these arms are now well adapted for military use and are rapidly superseding the revolver as service weapons in the United States army and navy. A synopsis of the severe tests leading to the adoption of a magazine pistol by the War Department of the United States government may be found in the Appendix.

Military Arms.—The revolver and the magazine pistol are used for military service. To fulfill the requirements these arms must be strong, very durable, and withstand a great amount of hard usage without becoming disabled. The effectiveness, or “stopping power,” is of prime importance. The caliber should be large, the bullet should have a blunt point, and the powder charge should be sufficiently powerful to give a penetration of at least six inches in pine. There was a tendency some years ago to reduce the caliber of military revolvers. While this resulted in increased velocity and penetration, and reduced the weight of the ammunition, it did not improve the stopping power of the arms.

The ineffectiveness of the .38-caliber service revolver charge was frequently complained of by the officers and men serving in the Philippine Islands. This was due to the light powder charge and the conoidal shaped point of the bullet. To

remedy this weakness .45-caliber revolvers were issued for the Philippine service, and a new .45-caliber cartridge designed to which magazine pistol manufacturers were invited to adapt an arm. Unfortunately this new cartridge, which is now the service ammunition, has also a conoidal pointed bullet, is not well proportioned, and consequently develops only a part of its stopping power possibilities.

The sights must in all cases be very substantial, and solidly fixed to the frame or barrel. The trigger pull varies from 4 to 8 pounds, the barrel from 4 to 7½ inches in length, and the weight from 2 to 2¾ pounds. Ammunition loaded with smokeless powder is now invariably used for military service.

The service revolvers still in use in the United States army and navy are the Smith & Wesson and Colt, both .38 caliber, and taking the same ammunition. They have passed the prescribed series of tests as established by the United States government,[3] and as improved and perfected represent, without doubt, the highest development of the military revolver.

These arms, shown in Figs. 1 and 2, have solid frames, and the actions are almost identical, the cylinder swinging out to the left, on a hinge, when released by a catch. The shells may then be extracted simultaneously by pushing back the extractor rod. The Smith & Wesson has an additional hinge-locking device in front of the cylinder. The Colt has an automatic safety lock between the hammer and the frame, permitting discharge only when the trigger is pulled. Apart from these features there is very little difference between these arms.

The Smith & Wesson .44-caliber Military Revolver is the latest model of the large caliber revolvers. Its action and general lines are the same as the .38-caliber military, but it is a larger, heavier, and more powerful weapon.

Other excellent military revolvers are the Colt New Service and the Smith & Wesson Russian model, usually in .45 caliber and .44 caliber, respectively. The ammunition for these arms was formerly loaded with black powder; but smokeless cartridges have been adapted to them, which give slightly increased velocity and the same accuracy. (See Fig. 4, facing p. 24.)

The Smith & Wesson Russian model has a hinge “tip-up” action, with an automatic ejecting device. The action is operated by raising a catch in front of the hammer. It is easy to manipulate and, on account of the accessibility of the breech, the barrel can be readily inspected and cleaned. This arm is single action. (See Fig. 5, facing p. 24.)

Fig. 1.—SMITH & WESSON 38 cal. MILITARY REVOLVER
Six shots; 6½ inch barrel; weight, 1 lb., 15 oz.

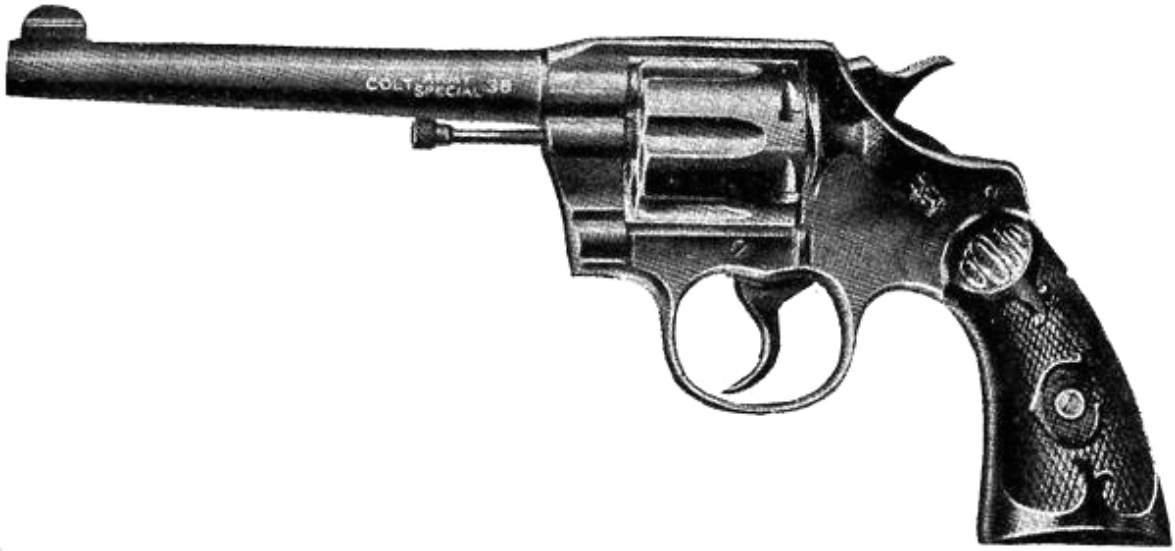

Fig. 2.—COLT ARMY SPECIAL REVOLVER
Six shots; 6 inch barrel; weight, 2 lbs. 3 oz., .38 cal.

Fig 3.—SMITH & WESSON .44 cal. MILITARY REVOLVER.
Six shots; 6½ inch barrel; weight 2 lbs. 6½ oz.

The action of the Colt New Service is similar to that of the .38-caliber revolver shown in Fig. 2, with a solid frame. It is double action.

The Colt Officer's Model is identical in every respect with the Army Special except that it is fitted with adjustable target sights and may be had with lengths of barrel up to 7½ inches.

The foregoing arms, with good ammunition, are capable of making groups of ten shots on a 3-inch circle at 50 yards.

The Colt single action Army is the most popular belt or holster weapon among ranchmen, cowboys, prospectors, and others. It has a solid frame, simple mechanism, and is exceedingly durable and reliable. The arm is operated by opening a gate on the right-hand side, back of the cylinder. The cartridges are inserted in the cylinder through the gate, the cylinder being revolved by hand until the respective chambers come opposite the gate. In the same manner the shells are ejected by pushing the extractor rod back into each of the chambers. (See Fig. 6, facing p. 24.)

The Smith & Wesson Schofield Model, .45 caliber, was formerly a United States service weapon. The ammunition for this arm, while less powerful than the .45 Colt, was admirably adapted for military service, and had much less recoil.

The Webley & Scott W. S. Model revolver is an English arm of much merit. The caliber is .455. It has a hinge "tip-up" action, with an automatic extractor very similar to the Smith & Wesson. (See Fig. 7, facing p. 26.)

The service weapon adopted by the Joint War Office and Admiralty Committee for the British army and navy is the Webley & Scott "Mark IV," or "Service Model," revolver. This model is almost identical with the W. S. Model, except that the barrel is 4 inches long and the weight is 2 lbs. 3 oz. On account of the short barrel, the accuracy of this weapon does not equal that of the W. S. Model.

Another English arm is the “Webley-Fosbury” automatic revolver. The recoil revolving the cylinder and cocking the hammer, it can be fired as rapidly as the automatic pistols. It is chambered for the .455 service cartridge loaded with 5½ grains of cordite. This arm has been introduced since 1900. (See Fig. 8, facing p. 26.)

Among the leading magazine or automatic pistols used for military service are the Colt, Luger, Webley & Scott, Savage, Mauser, Knoble, Bergmann, White-Merrill, Steyr, Mannlicher, Mors and Bayard. Most of these arms were tested by the United States government[4] previous to the adoption of the Colt as the service weapon of the U. S. Army and Navy. (See Fig. 9, facing p. 26.)

Fig. 4.—COLT NEW SERVICE REVOLVER
Six shots; 5½ inch barrel; weight, 2 lbs., 8 oz.; .45 cal.

Fig. 5.—SMITH & WESSON RUSSIAN MODEL REVOLVER
Six shots; 6½ inch barrel; weight, 39¼ oz.; .44 cal.

Fig. 6.—COLT SINGLE ACTION REVOLVER
Six shots; 5½ inch barrel; weight, 2 lbs. 6 oz.; .45 cal.

The Luger has been adopted as the service weapon by Germany, Switzerland, Portugal, Bulgaria, Holland, and Brazil. (See Fig. 10, facing p. 28.)

The Webley-Scott (.455 caliber) was adopted as the service arm by the British navy in 1911, and the .32-caliber (weight 1 lb. 2 oz.) is now the adopted arm of the London City and Metropolitan police forces. (See Fig. 11, facing p. 28.)

In most of these weapons, including the Colt, Webley & Scott, Luger, and Steyr pistols, the cartridges are inserted in magazines which feed them into the breech through the handle. In the Mauser pistol the cartridges are supplied through clips from the top and forced into a magazine located in front of the trigger. (See Fig. 12, facing p. 28.)

The magazine pistols can be fired at the rate of about five shots per second. These arms equal the best military revolvers in accuracy.

Many persons believe that the magazine pistol will soon supersede the revolver for general use. While this may be the case eventually, it is not likely to occur within the next few years. The magazine pistol is more complicated, and consequently more difficult to learn to shoot with and care for, than the revolver. On account of the special problems to be solved in the mechanism, many of them balance poorly and the trigger pull is almost invariably long and creeping. The novice will also find it difficult to avoid flinching in shooting these arms, on account of the recoil mechanism, louder report, etc. The line of sight being considerably higher than the grip, if they are not held perfectly plumb, or in the same position at each shot, the shooting is liable to be irregular. The cost is more than that of a good revolver. Until these undesirable features can be remedied or eliminated, the revolver will probably remain a popular arm.

Target Arms.—For target purposes the greatest possible accuracy is desirable. To obtain this, many features essential

in a military arm are sacrificed. Delicate adjustable sights are employed, the trigger pull is reduced, the length of the barrel is increased, the charge reduced, etc.

Fig. 7.—WEBLEY & SCOTT “W. S.” MODEL REVOLVER
Six shots; 7½ inch barrel; weight, 2 lbs., 7 oz.; .455 cal.