

321. *Mr. Macdonald.*] I was going to ask your opinion upon this: I suppose the object of educating Volunteers in firing is to teach them to hit the enemy when they get the enemy in front of them?—Just so.

322. Then, the Polhill Gully range being confined between two hills, are you not prevented from getting that education, as, under ordinary circumstances, you would not be likely to have an enemy in front of you at the end of a gully between two hills?—Yes.

323. That is the reason you prefer to fire at Evans Bay?—I would always insist on them firing on an open range, and train them on an open range from the very first.

JOSEPH STITT examined.

324. *The Chairman.*] You are an experienced rifle-shot?—Yes.

325. And a successful one?—In former years I have been very successful.

326. You know the Polhill Gully rifle-range well?—I cannot say I know it well. I have not had a great deal of shooting there. Of course, we do not go to the Polhill Gully range to practise shooting for the New Zealand Rifle Association meetings, for the reason that it is not a long enough range.

327. Do you look upon it as a good range?—Yes, for the purposes for which it is used—that is, looking at it from a Volunteer point of view; from a selfish point of view, I should say it was not good. We never shoot at it ourselves.

328. In what respect do you call it a good range?—From its locality, it is beneficial to other Volunteers. I reckon only about thirty Volunteers, perhaps, in Wellington attend the Rifle Association meetings. All the other members go to the Polhill Gully range to do their class-firing. If it was further away I do not expect they would go. That is why I think it is a good range for the purpose.

329. Is it a range suitable for training shots, and likely to improve the young people who practise there?—Yes; in going through their first stages—up to 600 yards—I reckon it is a very good range to teach shooting, because, if you bring a young shot out on to a range where it is blowing a gale, and he does not make good shooting the first time, he will not go there again; but if you get him out at the gully, where he can hit the target, you can fetch him out into the open another time, and he will eventually become a shot.

330. Could he not learn to be a shot without practise of that kind?—He might, but it would take a long time to do it. There is so much variation of the wind in the open. In the gully you can always rely on getting on the target.

331. Then, really, he would not learn at Polhill Gully what is essential before he could make a first-class shot?—He would have to go on to the open, and have a certain amount of practise, before he could compete at the New Zealand Rifle Association meetings. In regard to Trentham, where the New Zealand Rifle Association meeting is held, I think Polhill Gully would be most beneficial for practise. I think, if we had had more practise at the Polhill Gully range we would have been more successful at the last meeting than we were. Of course, we all went out to the Evans Bay range, and we had some tremendous gales there to contend with. At Trentham we were all at sea.

332. You were at Trentham protected from the wind?—It is partly protected. When the wind comes it is a sort of what we call a fish-tail wind. On the left-hand side there is a patch of bush lying parallel with the range, forming a protection from the wind from that quarter. On the other side there is a range of hills a long way off; that does not prevent the wind from blowing, but it does prevent the wind from blowing directly on to you, and there is always a sort of eddy, which we call a fish-tail wind.

333. You think there is an advantage in having a range of that kind near town to teach the young men to practise?—Yes, and so far as I am concerned, if I have to go to the Rifle Association meeting next time—as I think I shall—I shall do all my practise up to 600 yards at the Polhill Gully range; that is the conclusion I have come to. There is one drawback to the range—we cannot get a 700 yards range there.

334. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Can a Volunteer be trained as well by shooting in an enclosed gully like that as he can in the open?—Yes; I think he would be trained better. He would get used to his rifle, and know how to hold it in the gully, when he would not learn in the open. Out in the open where it is blowing, he would not know whether it was himself or his gun that was wrong. A man can go into the gully, where there is no wind, and can find out whether his gun is good, or whether he is good himself.

335. What is the object of teaching men to be good shots? Is it to teach a man to go out and win a championship, or to shoot an enemy in the open at an uncertain distance?—I suppose a good man would be able to take a man off at a greater distance.

336. Would a man go to the end of a gully or into the open, subject to all windage and so on, to learn to pick a man off? Would he not find some difficulty in picking a man off if he had not been taught to shoot in the open?—I say that a man should go first to the gully, or some enclosed place, and then afterwards, when he becomes master of his weapon, he should go into the open.

337. Are not the conditions entirely different?—No; because he would learn how to carry his gun, and would know how much allowance to make. It is a very different thing. If a man goes out into the open when he has never fired out of a gun before he is all at sea.

338. A man who had simply learned to shoot out of a shooting-gallery would be all at sea too, would he not?—Yes; but look at the distance he would have to shoot. Of course, I am only giving my own opinion. If I was going to bring out a boy of my own I should first take him to a place where it was sheltered from all winds, and let him practise there until he had become thoroughly master of his weapon; I would then take him into the open.