

NOTES FROM HEADQUARTERS.

LESSONS FROM EAST AFRICA.—IV.

General Letton-Vorbeck's description of the state of affairs resulting from his systematic attacks on the Uganda Railway is very instructive for the Irish Republican troops. The General says: "The continual menace to the railway had obliged the enemy to take extensive measures for its protection. Wide clearings had been made along it, of which the outer edges had been closed by thick zarebas (abatis of thorns). Every couple of miles there were strong blockhouses, or entrenchments with obstacles, from which the line was constantly patrolled. Mobile supports, of the strength of a company or more, were held in readiness, so that, whenever the railway was reported to be in danger, they could at once go off by special train. In addition, protecting detachments were pushed out in our direction, who tried to cut off our patrols on their way back on receiving reports from spies or from observation posts on the high ground."

All this has to us a very familiar ring, for our own persistent attacks on the R.I.C. have brought about a parallel state of affairs in Ireland. The German General dictated the course of the whole campaign by his menace to the Uganda Railway: he compelled the English to concentrate their main forces there instead of attacking the coast towns. His aim was, in his own words, "to grip the enemy by the throat and force him to employ his forces for self-defence." So, too, our own troops are similarly dictating the course of events by never-ending minor successes over the R.I.C. For thereby all the enemy forces are compelled to concentrate for defence—abandoning the initiative. They are now like the Austrian officer in Napoleon's famous jest—the officer who could never make up his mind whether the battalion should defend the hill or the hill should defend the battalion.

While maintaining the present system of un-remitting offensive tactics we must at the same time take measures to forestal any hostile attempt to recover the lost initiative. This at the moment can be best accomplished by developing our Intelligence Department, and still more varied training.

GRADING AND SPECIALISATION.

Warfare is to-day a complicated business—and this is the case whether we are concerned with large or small forces. The soldier to-day must be a specialist, because it is too much to expect any single man to master all the different aspects of

the work. The weapons and equipment are so varied, the conditions vary so much that the man who does not concentrate his efforts in one definite direction will merely end by being "Jack of all trades, master of none."

This being the case it is necessary for all Captains of Companies to see about carrying out a definite grading of their men by means of which each man may be allotted to the work for which he is best suited. In this way the best results may be expected from the work of the whole—for the efficiency of the whole depends directly on the efficiency of the parts.

With reference to grading his men the Captain of a Company must be fully acquainted with two things—he must be aware of the different divisions into which it is sought to divide his men, and he must have a thorough knowledge of every man under his command. Without this last he cannot possibly hope to grade his men successfully. What specialists he requires and how many of each kind he may find out from Orders and Instructions from Headquarters; but the characters of his men he can only get to know by personal experience and careful study. Accordingly all Company Captains are required forthwith to get clear about the aptitudes and capacities of their own men—this is the first step, and it is a step with which an immediate start can be made.

As regards the other matter each Captain will in any event require snipers, grenadiers, engineers, and first-aid men and must see about getting preliminary instruction in these branches. There are the most urgent points—especially the three last. Grading requires time and care, but the fundamental points can be gone ahead with at once without further delay.

ENGINEERING NOTES.

PETROL.

A few casualties have occurred in the demolition of enemy works owing to the improper use of petrol.

That any Volunteer should be injured in handling this material is deplorable, and suggests grave carelessness on the part of the officer in charge. A plea of ignorance of the nature of this fuel on the part of the officer is not admissible. An officer of Volunteers should realise that it is his duty to acquaint himself with the properties and possibilities of everything he handles. I have stated in former