

### Australia's Naval Defence.

IN the British House of Commons, on the 15th May, Rt. Hon. W. H. Smith, in explaining the estimates for Imperial defence, said:—"With regard, first of all, to the navy, the resolution provides that there shall be no addition to the Australian squadron, the cost of which is to be £850,000. The agreement was arrived at in the course of last year during the progress of the conference which was held at London, and at which the Australian colonies were represented. The proposals agreed to at the conference in 1887 may thus be summarised: There is a provision for an additional force of sea-going ships of war for the protection of the floating trade in the Australian waters, at the joint cost of Imperial and colonial funds, such additional force to be manned by officers and men of the Royal navy, and to be under the sole control and orders of the admiral commanding her Majesty's ships and vessels on the Australian station. The vessels are to be employed on the station in the same way as the other ships of the squadron, and not to be removed beyond the limits of the station without the consent of the colonial governments. No reduction is to be made in the normal strength of the force maintained on the Australian station in consequence of such additional force. The vessels are to consist of five fast cruisers of the improved Archer class and torpedo gunboats of the Rattlesnake class, of which three cruisers and one gunboat are to be kept constantly in commission, the Imperial Government to bear the first cost of constructing and equipping these vessels. The colonies are to pay interest at 5 per cent. per annum on the first cost of the vessels to an amount not exceeding £35,000 annually and to bear the actual cost of maintaining four vessels in commission and three in reserve, including liability on account retired pay, of pensions to officers and men and charge for relief of crews to an amount not exceeding £91,000 per annum. The Imperial Government are to bear the cost of commissioning and maintaining the three vessels in reserve, in time of emergency or actual war. Any of these vessels that may be lost are to be replaced at the cost of the Imperial Government. The agreement in this instance is to be enforced for a period of ten years from the date of commissioning the first of these vessels, terminable then or subsequently only on notice being given two years previously. On the termination of this agreement the vessels are to remain the property of the Imperial Government, and nothing in the agreement is to effect the purely local naval defence forces, which are to be paid for by, and are solely under the control of the several colonies.

### Correspondence.

[This paper does not necessarily share the views expressed in correspondence published in its columns, the use of which is freely granted to writers on topics of interest to the militia.]

#### HYTHE INSTRUCTION AGAIN.

To the Editor of the Canadian Militia Gazette:

SIR,—Major Peters, in his arguments against Theoretical Musketry Instruction, cites cases that are hardly to the point, and which I think fail to establish his contentions. He speaks of the shooting of the Boers in South Africa, and of the Metis in our own North-West, as if these people were good shots at long ranges. As I have read, the loss at "Majuba Hill" was caused at close quarters in an attempt to carry the hill with a rush, and was therefore no test of rifle shooting, but rather of the cool determined character of the defence.

In all the engagements in the North-West, except that of "Frenchman's Butte," the fighting, because of the ground chosen by the rebels, had to be done at very short ranges indeed. At "Frenchman's Butte" our attack did not come within 400 yards of Big Bear's line of pits, and as a result we only had three men struck. At "Cut Knife" our attack was at shorter ranges, and in many places our line was about 40 paces from the enemy, who was under cover; we had 8 men killed and 14 wounded in a 6 hours' fight. At "Fish Creek" for nearly an entire day we lay within pistol shot of the enemy in the ravine. They were cool and steady, and we had 10 men killed and 40 wounded. At "Batoche" on Saturday, Monday and Tuesday we were at very close quarters, part of the time on the "Sky Line"; on Sunday we were not so close and our loss was nil, while on those other three days we lost 8 men killed and 40 wounded. The "Duck Lake" fight under Major Crozier was at very close range, he being almost hemmed in, and we had 9 killed and 5 wounded.

The lesson to be learnt from these experiences is not, I submit, that the Metis were good rifle shots, but that they had among them men who were cool and courageous enough to fight under cover at close quarters, as long as the enemy (we) were only in the front.

June 15th, 1888.

CENTURION.

### The Militia Pastime.

An interest of a special, not to say melancholy, character attaches to all that concerns this year's Wimbledon meeting, in view of its being the last to be ever held there. Even the entries for the Queen's and St. George's seem to share in the depression so universally felt owing to uncertainty in regard to the future of the Association. The entries for the Queen's prize show that 2,272 volunteers in Great Britain, India, Canada, and other Colonial possessions will compete for the blue ribbon of the meeting. This is a decrease on last year's total of 122. The total value of prizes in the "Queen's" contest is £2,220, in 400 prizes. The entries for the St. George's contest—the next great volunteer event—also closed on Wednesday, and show 2,179 competitors, as against 2,292—a decrease of 113.—*Volunteer Record*.

"At last there is hope," says the *A. and H. G. Gazette*, "that the Martini-Henry breechloaders in store and in the hands of our troops may be turned to good use as magazine rifles. Captain Greville Harston's ingenious invention—briefly described in our columns months ago—for converting these weapons into repeating rifles has been submitted to the Commander-in-Chief and the Headquarters Staff, with the result that it has been referred to the Small Arms Committee, and a certain number will probably be issued for trial shortly. We have already praised the contrivance very highly, and shall not be surprised to see it adopted by the War Office. It is not intended that these weapons shall supersede the more perfect magazine rifles. The idea at present is simply to utilize arms already in our possession by making them valuable auxiliaries in case of need. This is a measure of defence that will commend itself to the most rigid economists."

The shooting men of the Empire being deprived of their head-centre to serve the private interests of the public servant who commands the British Army, that personage, the Duke of Cambridge now proves to be a stumbling block in the way of location at the next most convenient place, Richmond Park, part of which the Queen has placed at the disposal of the association, provided the consent of the Ranger—the Duke of Cambridge—is secured. He has no financial interests at stake this time, but anticipates danger owing to the long range of the rifles to be used, and further objects that the enjoyment of the public who use the park must not be curtailed. As to the public enjoyment, it might be well to bear in mind that, volunteering being checked by discouragements offered by such selfish considerations as those apparently influencing the Duke of Cambridge, the enjoyment of a much greater section of the public than can possibly frequent Richmond Park is apt to be very seriously curtailed if in troublous times the volunteer auxiliaries are not at hand or are inefficient.

In the absence of knowledge concerning the publication of a reliable handbook on the subject, our riflemen are wont to puzzle their own and their companions' brains over all sorts of points affecting their shooting, and no end of vexation results. In England there is published amongst other excellent text books, H. P. Miller's "Queen's Hundred," or Guide to the Art of Rifle Shooting, a little work which, in form so compact as to be comfortably carried in the pocket, is a veritable cyclopædia, invaluable to all who spend time and money upon the rifle range, and have any ambition to become good shots as the result. The work has now reached its twelfth edition, of which a copy has just been received from the publisher. The book has in the past had a limited circulation in Canada, being obtainable at a few leading bookstores by anyone who inquired for it, but we venture to say the number of purchasers were few in comparison with those who would be benefited by its possession, and would willingly buy if they had the chance. The contents comprise a series of interesting and well written treatises on rifle shooting in general; on the Martini-Henry rifle—with tables of elevation and windage allowance; on the eye, and its assistants—orthoptic and other shooting spectacles; on the correct positions for easy shooting, the proper method of discharging the rifle, explanations of the "unaccountable" shots which form the burden of the luckless rifleman's tale of woe; besides notes on a variety of kindred subjects too many to enumerate here. The book includes the shooting rules of the N. R. A. of Great Britain, the highest and lowest prize scores of the leading events at the Wimbledon competition of 1887, and a complete list of winners of the Queen's Prize, the St. George's Challenge Vase, and the N. R. A. silver medal since the first Wimbledon competition. It also suffices for a score book, there being at the end a sufficient number of pages prepared for records of scores and conditions of shooting, to contain a history of a season's practice. The book is published at the modest price of 1s. 6d. by T. G. Johnson, 121 Fleet street, London, E. C.