

## WIMBLEDON CAMP.

The picturesque beauty of the county of Surrey is proverbial in England, and, if there is one part of it in the vicinity of London more exquisitely pretty than another it is the spot selected for the July annual meeting of the British National Rifle Association. Wimbledon is one of those country resorts occasionally to be met with in England on the confines of great manufacturing cities, almost touching upon the black smoke, but offering to the weary citizen, in place of the heat, dirt, and unrest of crowded streets, fresh air, and green fields, and by lanes. But half-an-hour's ride in the train from Waterloo bridge, during which one appears to be perpetually travelling through interminable London, and but ten minutes ride from the river-side town of Putney—the scene of many a well-contested boat race—the common of Wimbledon, on which the camp is pitched, overlooks some of the most charming scenery to be found anywhere in Surrey. Richmond in the distance, close upon Bushy Park, with its glorious acres of towering chestnuts; the Thames meandering along like a thread of silver in the beautiful landscape, for the time cut off by the trees, and again reappearing from behind some picturesque spot, the country beyond undulating throughout, now opening into table lands of rugged heather-covered commons, then falling into cultivated valleys, or rolling in deeply wooded plantations to the verge of well-trimmed fields and gardens; and the substantial well-looking English houses dotted here and there, go to make up a picture whose charming combination of natural beauties cannot be found elsewhere out of England. Saying that we have chosen the direct line from the huge city by the London and Southwestern railway, conveyance for the moderate sum of sixpence can be had from Wimbledon town to the common itself, approaching which one catches sight of a dazzling range of distant tents, breaking the luxuriant view of Richmond park, with its magnificent groves of trees. For a shilling that goes towards defraying the expenses of the meeting, we are free of the camp, which perhaps the reader will be good enough to join us in inspecting. The ground upon which the tents are pitched is enclosed by a boarding, running round nearly the whole extent of the common for about five miles. Entering by the main, or "Putney carriage entrance," which is almost blocked by constant and successive arrivals of omnibusses, carts, cabs, vans, barouches, gigs, and phaetons, the first object that strikes the eye is the admirably appointed tramway managed by troopers of the Royal Military train, and laid down by men of the Royal Engineers for the use of volunteers and others in camp. This railroad, as we should term it, runs from a little beyond the 600 yards range, past nine other ranges, extending probably for a distance of a little over half a mile, to the executive officer's tents, thus affording facilities for the immediate adjustment of any nice point that may arise at these ranges during the shooting. The charge for a ride is three pence, and adopting this inexpensive method of getting to the extreme left of where we entered, we find ourselves in the camp of the Grenadier Guards—select men from that regiment who for a slight remuneration act as "markers" at the butts. A special feature of this camp— which, by the way, is a perfect model of cleanliness and neatness—is its field hospital tent. This, with another in the immediate vicinity of the volunteer camp itself,

is under the charge of one of the most experienced surgeons in the British army—Surgeon Major Wyatt, of the Coldstream Guards—an officer who originally earned his reputation for treatment of gun shot wounds in the Crimea, and who since then has added to his military surgical knowledge by passing through the horrors and privations of the Prussian siege of Paris as a volunteer on the Medical Staff of that capital. His colleague is an officer who should be known to us, for he saw service with our army at Vicksburg. His name is Mayo—Assistant Surgeon Mayo of the "Devil's Own"—and he wears upon his breast the decoration of the Iron Cross for the services rendered in the German hospitals during the late war. Peeping into the officers mess tent, rough and tumble, but redolent of the good things that lay temptingly displayed for the seven o'clock dinner, and bestowing a cursory glance upon the tents of the men and the military canteen, we walk a short distance to the two 1,000 yard ranges. The thought at once occurs to us, "But who on earth can see the targets."

"Do you mean to say," we ask in a friendly way of a staff sergeant in scarlet standing at the firing point; "Do you mean to say men put a bullet scientifically, without 'fluking'?"

"I rather think they do," replies our new found military friend, "if they didn't do something more than merely to put the bullet upon the target, if they didn't for instance make a bull's eye occasionally, or maybe a 'contro,' the Queen's prize of £250 I'm thinking would go a begging."

We express our astonishment, the targets appearing to our inexperienced eyes like upright posts on the horizon, and pass on. A few yards, and we are at one of the firing points of the 600 yards range, where we find a match going on. There are four targets at this one range, and consequently there are four squads hard at work, an officer of the regular service and a staff sergeant being in charge of each squad. Every man is in the uniform of his corps, black, gray, green or red, and the weapon used is the Snider breech loading rifle. A man steps forward with military precision, there is no slouching, halting or hesitating, a perfect silence is maintained, crack goes the rifle, ping flies the bullet, a disc appears from the mantlet of the marker, over the spot made by the bullet upon the target, and "outer" says the sergeant, "two" says the officer, and "two" is scored on the books of both. We stay here awhile and find that the contest is the second stage of the "Alexandra" prize, founded by the Princess of Wales, the value of the prize is £50 and the conditions are seven shots from any position at 600 yards. This £50 is in addition to £752 worth of prizes shot for in the first stages of the "Alexandra;" the winners in the first being allowed to shoot in the second. Further on we come to a second 600 yards range with targets marked 5, 6, 7, 8; shooting going on as before. An officer was good enough to inform us of there being more than fourteen of these 600 yard ranges ahead so we got back to the tramway, and in a few minutes found ourselves in the Volunteer Camp, and in the group of council tents, where are to be found the official staff each in his separate department. A few brief remarks about the council, of which it may be as well to state the Earl of Ducie is the present President. During the meeting the council resides *en permanence* in the camp, and upon it devolved the routine administration of every matter connected with the inner life of the camp; the arrangement of the details in accordance with the varying

items of each days programme; the determining of disputes which are constantly arising between the several competitors, requiring great nicety and discretion in their adjustment, and the general receipt and disbursement of the funds of the Association. Subordinate to this species of supreme court any decision of which is absolutely final, is the executive officer, a captain of Royal Engineers; the secretary an army officer, the head of the Statistical Department, army officer, and the resident royal engineer, Captain Drake. Besides these, officers of the regular army likewise fill the positions of camp commandant, camp adjutant, and camp quartermaster but, it must be borne in mind that all officers of the regular service on duty at the camp are employed there at the special request of the Association itself, and not by way or interference on the part of the War Office. The meeting lasts for a fortnight, and during that period the most rigid military discipline prevails in camp. No amusements whatever are permitted in camp after eight p. m., and all dances, picnics, and fireworks, are absolutely prohibited until the last Saturday before the camp is struck. At daybreak is gunfire, and at 5 a. m. the bugles sound the reveille. At 8.30 the parade is called, and at 8.45 the different squads are marched off to the ranges, where firing takes place at nine precisely. At twelve noon, "cease firing," is sounded, and an interval of rest is allowed until two, when firing commences again and continues to gun fire at six o'clock. After this hour the time is the men's own until "last post" is sounded at 9.30 p. m., when all lights must be put out, and the officer of the day go his rounds. As to the convenience of the camp: The War office for a trifling sum lend the tents to the Association, one with the necessary bedding, water proof sheeting, etc, being allowed to every four men except of course in case of officers. All cooking utensils are provided by the men themselves, and each regiment also provides its own cooks, and makes its own arrangements for messing; it may be observed, however that there is a fine building on the ground kept by an experienced restaurateur from which are daily issued provisions most excellent by thousands. We subjoin some items in the list of prices laid down by the Association.

## FIRST CLASS.

	s.	d.	c.
Breakfast.....	1	3	0
Dinner with soup.....	1	6	36
Ditto. with soup and fish.....	3	6	85
Supper.....	1	0	25
Cup of tea or coffee.....	0	3	6

## SECOND CLASS.

Breakfast.....	1	0	cr 25
Dinner.....	1	6	36
Supper.....	1	0	25
Cup of tea or coffee.....	0	2	4

The personal comfort of the men in camp is not lost sight of, there being an excellent covered lavatory with accommodation for one hundred, vases for a penny, soap, clean towels, and all the necessary convenience for washing, and brushing up, are provided; moreover the association permits a shoe black brigade to reside in the camp for the benefit of members. Before "doing" the camp *in extenso*, it must be remembered that we are but yet at the council tents, it would be as well possibly to note certain other conveniences in this camp of the British National Rifle Association. First and foremost we have a police camp and a police office, very necessary to warn off evil doers. Then we have a telegraph office un-