

THE EASTER MANOEUVRES

A very useful programme of work was carried out at Easter by the Volunteers. The centres were Dover, Guildford, Chatham, Canterbury, and Winchester. At the first-named place the North London Brigade of six battalions under Colonel J. B. Sterling, Coldstream Guards, were provided with quarters, and in addition Colonel Hozier's smart corps, the 3rd Kent (Woolwich Arsenal) Artillery were located here. The Surrey Brigade of eight battalions, under Lord Belhaven, late R. E., went to Guildford, the three engineer corps forming a brigade under Colonel Althorpe, C. R. G., Home District, were accommodated with quarters at Chatham, who also was the Honourable Artillery Company under the Earl of Denbigh. There was also located in the Thames District the 1st London Artillery under Colonel W. Hope, V. C., who occupied the forts at Sheerness. The South London Volunteer Infantry Brigade under Colonel Gascoigne, Scots Guards, and consisting of seven battalions, went to Canterbury, while at Winchester was a portion of the East London Brigade under Colonel H. Trotter, Grenadier Guards.

DOVER.

At Dover, Maj.-Gen. Lord William Seymour, commanding the South-Eastern District, determined that the work done by the Volunteers should be of a practical nature. Every effort was made to prevent the operations as in former years being interfered with by crowds of civilian spectators with, however, only partial success. On Saturday some useful work was carried out by the North London Brigade in the Alkham Valley to the west of Dover, which work engaged the attention of Col. Sterling's men practically the whole of the day, for they left Dover at 9 in the morning and returned about 4 in the afternoon. On Monday, however, the usual field day took place, in which the three regular battalions at Dover participated. It was assumed that a landing had been effected by an enemy at Kingsdown, a few miles to the South of Deal. This force, which was represented by the three regular battalions indicated, took up a position about a couple of miles to the north of St. Margaret's, covering the road to Kingsdown with the object in view of protecting the landing of the main body of the invaders at Kingsdown. Receiving information of this occurrence the General Officer commanding at Dover ordered Col. Sterling with his brigade to drive the invaders from their position, and if possible prevent the landing of reinforcements. The invaders were under the command of Lieut.-Col. Jenkins, 1st Batn. West riding Regiment, and occupied a ridge extending from a little in advance of Kingsdown to the Deal-Dover Road. Colonel Jenkins' left hand rested on Oxney Wood, which he occupied, but his was *en pair*, the position occupied

being, roughly speaking, about a thousand yards from left to right. Patrols were pushed forward on to the plateau, upon which stands the small town of St. Margaret's which was clearly visible from the position occupied, and these patrols about half-past 11 came into contact with the cyclist scouts sent forward from St. Margaret's by Colonel Sterling. The latter marched from Dover in two columns, one on the right consisting of four battalions under the orders of Colonel Ward, C. B., London Irish Rifles, and that on the left under Colonel Vickerman, Paddington Rifles consisted only of a couple of battalions. At St. Margaret's Colonel Sterling made his dispositions for the attack of the invader. Colonel Ward, with two battalions, was ordered to attack the left of the defenders at Oxney Wood, while the left column was to assail the right of the defence. Colonel Vickerman advanced, covered from view by a belt of timber extending close up to the right of the position occupied by the invaders, while Colonel Ward with his force, on debouching from St. Margaret's, had to at once to deploy into line, and had the defenders possessed artillery would have suffered severely before his men were in position to use their rifles with effect. The advance was conducted over arable land under a long-range fire of small-arms from the invaders, who behind their imaginary entrenchments were fairly well concealed. There was very little firing on the part of Colonel Ward's column during the advance which was led by the Central London Ranges until about 600 yards from the defenders, when a vehement fire was opened. In the meantime, however, Colonel Vickerman's column had come into contact with the enemy, and the Paddington Rifles, by means of the belt of timber indicated were able to reach the foot of the ridge on the right flank of the defenders. The attack in this direction was delivered in too great a rapidity, for in less than half an hour from the time the first shot was fired a few companies of the Paddington Rifles had advanced to within almost a couple of hundred yards of the crest of the ridge upon which the enemy was entrenched. The position of affairs was simply ridiculous, and calculated to afford a most erroneous idea of an action. Consequently, seeing that as a tactical exercise the affair was likely to be completely spoilt, ordered a temporary cessation of hostilities, during which the detachment of the attacking force above indicated retired further down the slope. When, after an interval, the fight recommenced, it was seen that Colonel Sterling appeared to be making a determined attack with Ward's column on the left of the defence and a couple of battalions which we had kept in reserve under his own immediate command were being pushed forward in this direction the object evidently being to throw the defenders off the road leading to Kingsdown, and separate them from their base. Before this object could be attained,

however, Col. Jenkins, yielding to the pressure of the column under Col. Vickerman drew in his right abandoning his entrenchments on the flank but still clinging to those in the centre and also to the wood of his left. Vickerman's column, however, pressed forward quickly and when shortly before one o'clock the cease fire sounded the portion of affairs was thus: The defender has been compelled to refuse his right wing and was being gradually enveloped on the left, so that it was in imminent danger of being cut off from his base. Considerations which influence commanders in actual warfare have in mimic combats to give place to others, and therefore to criticise the tactics of Col. Sterling would be to do that officer an injustice. Had the action been real he would scarcely have made an attack on both flanks of his opponent simultaneously, especially when it comes to be recollected that the latter occupied an entrenched position; was not greatly inferior to him in strength, and might according to the general idea be at any time reinforced, which would probably enable him to take the offensive. As a tactical exercise, therefore, the action was faulty, and it required little knowledge of the art of war to perceive that many things were done which would scarcely have happened had the action been other than a sham. In all mimic combats the prevailing fault is to push troops too rapidly into action. The exigencies of the situation demand the work shall be done in an hour which in real warfare would require the greater part of a day to accomplish, but the danger is that totally false notions are imbibed by those who participate in the work. The attackers attempted a task which they could never have hoped to have accomplished, and the unrealistic aspect of affairs spoilt what would otherwise have been a useful tactical exercise.

(FROM ANOTHER CORRESPONDENT.)

The forces engaged at Dover, comprised six Volunteer battalions from London under Col. Sterling, namely: The Finsbury Rifles, the Victorias and St. George's, the London Irish, the 18th Middlesex, the Central London Rangers and the Bloomsbury Rifles, with one machine gun belonging to the Rangers; and 750 men furnished from the Dover Garrison and one machine gun under Brevet-Lieut.-Col. Jenkins of the West Riding Regiment. Major-General Lord William Seymour, commanding the South Eastern Division, was Umpire-in-Chief, and his staff acted as umpires. The Volunteer force numbered roughly about 2,000 men.

General Idea.—“On Monday morning, the 26th of March, information is received in Dover that the coast-guard at Kingsdown observed on Sunday evening that the enemy's boats were taking soundings, and evident preparations were being made for landing at Kingsdown. The Dover Field Force is ordered to rendezvous at St. Margaret's, when it learns that a hos-