

Williamstown, a short distance from Melbourne, there is an immense tract of what we should call common (it is not unlike the marshes near Eastbourne and Pevensey, but drier), facing the sea, which forms a deep bay in this part. It is, I believe, the property of the Defence Department, and is completely covered with rifle ranges, so close together, and so very vividly shot over, that it was almost surprising that there was no accident. Besides the military forces, members of numerous rifle clubs—there is a movement, we believe, on foot for forming these clubs into volunteer corps—fire there. There is another range at Usterwick, in another direction not far from Melbourne. With such facilities and advantages the Victorian soldier should shoot well; and so he does. The artillerymen usually shoot out to sea; they have no difficulty in training garrison and field gunners; but the field guns, of which there are three batteries, labour under the disadvantage of possessing no regular artillery horses. They have harness, and an arrangement is made with civilians for supplying the necessary horses when required.

Whether this would be found to work efficiently in case of need remains to be proved. Occasionally the guns, or some of them, are horsed and driven. It would, under these circumstances, one would think, be difficult to get good drivers; though, perhaps, less so in Australia than in other countries, as so many men there are accustomed to driving and riding in all forms. With regard to transport and commissariat services, there is the same absence of horses, and, moreover, of vehicles too; and hiring arrangements, as above, have been entered into with the contractors to supply the necessary horses and carriages complete whenever called upon. It is possible this would answer very well (being different to artillery). Melbourne is a large city and rich; there are plenty of horses, carts, and wagons, &c. Every year lately the troops have assembled for exercise for a certain number of days in camp at Easter, at some distance out of Melbourne, and the transport having been managed partly as above, and partly by rail, has been found to work well. Of course, the force to be supplied is not very large. According to a report that has just reached us of a recent mobilization the Victorian Government seized the opportunity of the sudden interruption of telegraphic communication with Europe on June 30 last to order the immediate mobilization of the forces available for the defence of Melbourne. Perhaps the spirit in which the mobilization was undertaken could not be more aptly typified than in the instructions given by Capt. Thomas, in command of the naval forces of Victoria, to his second in command. "I ordered" (so he reports to the Minister of Defence) "Lieut.-Com. the Hon. Hely Hutchinson to . . . proceed with all despatch to Queenscliff, with written instructions to board all foreign men-of-war entering the port, and to request their captains to anchor at the Heads, pending further instructions from the government. In the event of their not complying with this request, he was ordered to wire to me, and immediately to retire on Hobson's Bay."

The order to mobilise was given at as inconvenient a season as it is well possible to conceive, on a Saturday, late in the afternoon, when a number of the men had already received and availed themselves of leave of absence till Monday. In addition to this it came at a time when the armament of Nepean and Point Franklin was in the act of being changed, and the South Channel fort had not been handed over to military charge. A large amount of work in making up and storing ammunition for the new guns was therefore necessary, which would not under ordinary circumstances have been required. There was a difficulty, too, in finding the requisite number of stokers.

In the face of all these drawbacks the result attained may apparently be looked upon as very satisfactory. The land forces manned the forts at the Heads and got everything ready for action. They laid such mines as could be laid without obstructing navigation, and practised with electric searching lights and code signalling. The preparations were considered quite sufficient to prevent the colony being taken by surprise. Capt. Thomas also describes himself as "well satisfied with the general efficiency" of the ships, finding everything in thorough working order in the torpedo depot and boats. One of the gunboats left to carry out her orders on Saturday night at 11.30, five hours after the order to mobilise was given, having been manned and provisioned in the interval. "The men of the torpedo depot worked without cessation during the night, and were ready for action when I inspected them at six o'clock the following morning."

All this is satisfactory enough, if only we can be quite certain that an Imperial fleet, so strong that "it is difficult to conceive of any enemy" venturing to encounter it, would be duly forthcoming at the proper moment.

Some severe fighting is reported from the Soudan, which ended in the defeat of the Dervishes, a force of whom attacked Fort Khormoussa, and were repulsed by our British troops. A gunboat repulsed the Dervish fleet, and the British loss was considerable.

The Rifle.

Rideau Range presented a scene of unusual excitement on Saturday afternoon 15th inst., the occasion being a challenge match between No. 2 Company, G.G.F.G., and No. 6 Company, 43rd Rifles, combined with which the members of No. 6 Company held the last competition for the "Challenge Shield" presented to them last spring by the ladies of New Edinburgh. The fair sex of that ward turned out in force to witness the final competition, and were liberal in applause of Pte. Short, the lucky winner. In the first and second competitions Pte. Short led each time, and though on Saturday there were several scores ahead of him, his lead on the first two occasions proved too much to be overcome. His scores were as follows: First 78, second 78, third, 80, making a total of 236 points, and Pte. Short deserves credit for the manner in which he has come to the front in his first season.

In the company match, the teams consisted of fourteen men a side, the ranges being 200, 400 and 500 yards, 7 shots at each (the same as for the shield). Before the shooting commenced, the prevailing feeling was that young No. 6 was in for a bad beating, the time being still fresh in the memories of riflemen when No. 2 of the Guards beat the rest of their battalion in a match with ten men a side, and also the 43rd Bn. in a similar competition. However, when the firing was finished at 200 yards No. 6 was 14 points ahead. This greatly encouraged the Rifles, but at 400 yards their spirits were again sent down to zero by the fact that the Guards had gained 14 points, and the teams went back to the last range each with 715 points. Then came the tug-of-war, both sides winding up with splendid scores. Pte. Armstrong, of the Guards, making the magnificent total of 96 points, and Sergt. Wm. Short, of the same team, 89 points. Corpl. Dial, of the Rifles, came next with 87 points.

When the totals were added up, much to the surprise of everybody, No. 6 was found to be victorious with a majority of 29 points.

There can be no doubt but that the wonderful improvement in a company so lately organized as No. 6 is entirely due to the great impetus occasioned by their shooting for the handsome "challenge shield" given to them by the ladies. Saturday's score was as follows:

NO. 6 COMPANY, 43RD.		NO. 2 COMPANY, GUARDS.	
Corpl. Dial.....	87	Pte. Armstrong.....	96
Capt. Bell.....	86	Sergt. Short.....	89
Staff-Sergt. W. T. Mason.....	85	Pte. Wiltshire.....	81
Pte. McJanet.....	84	Sergt. Dawson.....	81
Pte. R. A. Brown.....	83	Sergt. Codd.....	80
Pte. J. T. Higginson.....	80	Lieut. Gray.....	80
Pte. S. Short.....	80	Pte. Brown.....	79
Pte. E. W. Gilbert.....	74	Sergt. Newby.....	77
Pte. A. Lough.....	72	Sergt. Mailleue.....	75
Pte. W. Tink.....	72	Sergt. Colman.....	67
Pte. J. M. Bell.....	67	Lieut. Watters.....	59
Sergt. W. Savage.....	65	Pte. Lamb.....	59
Corpl. W. Lambkin.....	60	Capt. Toller.....	56
Pte. W. D. Barnhardt.....	57	Pte. Stringer.....	44
Total.....	1052	Total.....	1023

It will be noticed that the average shooting of the winning team ranks as first class, the first ten men averaging over 80, and the whole team averaging over 75 points. The range totals were: 200 yards, Rifles, 364, Guards, 350; 400 yards, Rifles, 351, Guards, 365; 500 yards, Rifles, 337, Guards, 308.

THE OTTAWA RIFLE CLUB.

After a long holiday, since early August, the Ottawa Rifle Club resumed on Saturday afternoon last their series of spoon competitions. The day was a perfect one, the light being good and scarce a breath of wind stirring. High scores prevailed, as will be seen from the list appended. The ranges were 200, 400 and 500 yards, seven shots at each, and standing position at 200. The tie for the first spoon was shot off, Major Anderson winning with three bull's eyes:

Major W. P. Anderson..	30	32	30	92	J. E. Hutcheson.....	24	27	29	80
Capt. J. Wright.....	29	30	33	92	N. Morrison.....	29	26	25	80
A. Pink.....	27	31	32	90	T. McJanet.....	21	30	28	79
J. P. Nutting.....	29	30	31	90	S. M. Rogers.....	26	28	25	79
Capt. C. F. Cox.....	27	34	29	90	W. E. Cooke.....	18	31	27	76
E. D. Sutherland.....	28	34	27	89	Dr. Geo. Hutchison....	25	24	27	76
F. W. Smith.....	26	33	27	86	J. D. Holbrook.....	24	31	21	76
C. S. Scott.....	23	30	31	84	W. A. Jamieson.....	27	28	21	76
T. C. Boville.....	24	27	32	83	F. C. Lightfoot.....	18	29	27	74
J. H. Ellis.....	28	31	34	83	Major H. F. Perley....	24	25	25	74
H. H. Gray.....	29	30	24	83	R. Moodie.....	19	32	21	72
T. Carroll.....	22	31	29	82	E. Coste.....	22	25	23	70
J. D. Taylor.....	16	32	32	80					