

### ROYAL MILITARY TOURNAMENT.

THERE is no more popular feature of the London season than the Royal Military Tournament, now in its seventeenth year, at the Agricultural Hall. It was for the purpose of gathering some information about this well-known function that I called upon Major Crabbe, of the Grenadier Guards, at his office in great Scotland Yard.

"Do you keep up this office all the year round?" I asked, after we had exchanged greetings.

"Oh, yes," replied the stalwart major, "for what with settling up one year's accounts and preparing for another tournament, we are pretty fully occupied all the year round, I can tell you."

"What was the origin of the tournament?"

"It was started by General Burnaby in 1880—of course, in a very small way, comparatively speaking."

"And what becomes of the profits?"

"They are distributed among various military charities selected by the Commander-in-Chief. Altogether, I should think that, since the first year of the tournament, something like £35,000 has been given to these charities."

"The profits seem very large," I remarked, "but I suppose your expenses are proportionately heavy?"

"They may be put down at £1,000 a day," replied Major Crabbe. "Take this year's tournament. There will be something like 800 men and 400 horses engaged, and most of these will be maintained at the Agricultural Hall. All these men, remember, are rationed at the expense of the tournament."

"I suppose your 'properties' are also on a pretty extensive scale?"

The major smiled. "All our 'properties,' he said, "are very real. There will be 16 field guns, besides machine guns of all kinds, gymnastic appliances, fencing gear, and practically everything connected with athletic exercise. Although the men look after their own horses, our paid staff at the Agricultural Hall will number about 150."

"I believe the Royal Military Tournament is quite official?"

"Absolutely. The Commander-in-Chief is always president, and the chairman is Major-Gen. Lord Methuen, C.B., C.M.G., commanding the Home district. Among the members of the Executive Committee may be mentioned Col. G. M. Fox, the very well-known inspector of gymnasia, who will act as commandant at the Agricultural Hall."

"Upon what principle are the men selected who figure in the tournament?"

"I will try to explain that to you," replied the major. "Every regiment," he continued, "has its own little tournament, and periodically sends up picked men to the district tournament. Well, then, we make our selections from the smartest men in these district tournaments, and each of the latter sends a contingent of seven men."

"I was wondering," I said, presently, "why you commence preparations so far in advance."

"Well, if we have colonial contingents," replied the major, "preliminary negotiations take a considerable time, as you may imagine. Each year," he went on, "has some special feature. The 1895 season was marked by the historical display of the 3rd Hussars and the 'Bufs,' who entered the arena, first of all, in the very earliest uniforms ever worn by these fine old regiments; and they then traced their history down to the present day by means of successive uniforms and accoutrements. The great feature of the 1896 Military Tournament will be a grand colonial pageant, termed 'The Sons of the Empire.'"

"Who designs these new features?"

"I should explain," replied Major Crabbe, "that the moment preparations are started for the next year's tournament the Executive Committee meet in this office as often as required, and the suggestions are freely offered by the various members. These are then discussed, and if found practicable and generally acceptable, they are put in training at once, and their management handed over to the officer who fills the post of secretary."

"Now, about this big pageant?"

"Very well. It is the endeavor of the Tournament Committee to give some little idea to the general public and to the world at large of the enormous reserves which lie ready for action behind our iron walls—our first line of defence, the navy; and also behind the comparatively small permanently-armed force, which is commonly accepted as the English army, and which guards countless millions of British subjects in an Empire covering nearly nine million square miles."

The major was getting enthusiastic.

"For the purpose of distinction," he continued, "the pageant is divided into six divisions, or armies. The first division—the English army—represents not only the 231,000 regular troops of our standing army and reserves, but also the 152,000 militia and yeomanry, and 262,000 volunteers, who are ready to be called out at any time in defence of their country."

"My time is precious, so I must describe the kind of troops for you generally, instead of dealing with every regiment separately. There are thirteen regiments of hussars;

but all these will be represented in the pageant by four gallant soldiers of the 4th (Queen's Own) Hussars. The seven battalions of the brigade of Guards are represented by four men of the Queen's Company of the 1st or Grenadier Guards, and so on in the other branches of the service. The Royal Irish Constabulary, a semi-military

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