

NOTES AND QUERIES.

BY G. W.

SHARPSHOOTERS.

"Our own Western hunters," says General Halleck, writing about 1848, "make the best tirailleurs in the world." There can be little doubt of it, inasmuch as they are more accustomed to carry on their pursuits in a continual state of watchfulness against hostile Indians, they would probably be found superior to the men we may possibly have to encounter at Red River, who hunt and trap amongst friendly tribes. No man whose habitual occupation, and whose thoughts are peaceful, is likely at the outset of a war to be the equal of him whose energies and faculties have been daily trained by the stern disciplinarian—danger, of hourly imminence—and who, like King James:

—trained abroad his arms to wield,
Fitz-James' blade was sword and shield,
He practiced every pass and ward,
To thrust—to strike—to feint—to guard—

or like William of Deloraine:

Blindfolded he knew the paths to cross;
By wily turns, by desperate bounds,
Had baffled Percy's best blood-hounds;
In Erke or Liddel, fords were none
But he would ride them one by one;
Alike to him was time or tide,
December's snow or July's pride;
Alike to him was tide or time,
Moonless midnight or matin prime:
Steady of heart and stout of hand
As ever drove prey from Cumberland;—

But I think it might astonish General Halleck to find how short an apprenticeship to the peculiar danger of war would place the average Canadian on tolerably equal terms with the best men the world could bring against him. Modern Americans, looking through Fenian spectacles, have conceived but a mean idea of the Canadian—let them try him!

It is amusing to find General Halleck saying (of course at the date which I have mentioned) that the rifle is only found to be of use in a few practiced hands and can never be an available weapon for the whole rank and file! He would tell a different tale were he to write another book at this date.

MEETINGS OF OFFICERS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE PURPOSES.

I notice in your issue of the 25th ultimo, an article quoted from the *Broad Arrow*, which assumes, as I think, a somewhat uncalled for high tone of rebuke to what, from the nature of the subject, we must suppose to be a portion of the *elite* of the Navy. It appears that there has been, or was to be, a meeting of naval officers at "Willis," to discuss the subject of naval titles, and more particularly to move for the abolition of that of Captain. This proceeding, as a combination for the expression of an opinion, the *Broad Arrow* reprobates.

Theoretically the position assumed by the *Broad Arrow* on this subject is doubtless borne out by the rules of both services. But it cannot fail to strike such as refuse to surrender all individuality to old-fashioned red-tape formulae, that there is an essential difference between questions which directly

affect the actual discipline of an army or a navy, and questions of the nature of a general feeling of propriety, I may say questions involving a sentiment. This difference the *Broad Arrow* has failed to discriminate, and the absence of this discrimination seems to deprive its rebuke of the weight which it would have carried had it been administered on a legitimate occasion. I think its selection of an occasion has been, indeed unfortunate. The grievance is precisely of that nature on which a commander-in-chief or a Board of Admiralty would, if he or they were not mere red-tape bigots, moral cowards, and of exceeding narrow-mindedness, be glad to be placed in possession of the feelings and opinions of the body of the service, and there can exist no possibility of such a step being taken in a manner inconsistent with proper deference to the higher authorities.

Neither, I suspect, is the movement altogether without precedent. I am not aware of the precise kind of action which brought about the shamefully long neglected amelioration of the condition of the whilom "Masters" branch of the service; nor of that which led to the abolition of the term "Master"—a greater grievance to officers of that rank some twenty years ago than that of Captain now—but I suspect there was more than here and there an isolated representation from individual officers to "My Lords;" and, when George IV. wanted to put the navy into red trousers disgust found expression in a most effectual form of combination which amounted indeed to "cutting" the monarch himself, for they caused it to be well understood, and not, I believe, in the most respectful manner, that if the king persisted in his project, no naval officer would go to court. Here was a case of combination of a far more objectionable nature, from the red-tapists point of view, than the perfectly innoxious meeting denounced by the *Broad Arrow*.

The *Broad Arrow* instances the Press as one of the modes by which grievances may be legitimately sought to be removed. Is this quite correct? Are not officers and men alike emphatically cautioned against newspaper writing? Yet is not this prohibition, as must be every attempt at an undue repression of the expression of legitimate remonstrance, an utterly unwise, as well as necessarily futile, endeavour to reduce all intelligence in the services to that "base uniformity" and dead level, against which both Mr. Kinglake and Colonel Wolseley justly and strongly inveigh?

Practically we know not only that every reform which has succeeded in struggling through the Admiralty and the Horse Guards has been previously advocated in organs of the services by able officers of all branches, but that no military and naval journal could exist without such contributions, as it would, in their absence, become not an organ of the forces, but a mere organ

of the authorities, and would consequently lose all support from the forces. Every officer, therefore, who ventilates the grievances of the service through the columns of a service organ, is as guilty of a misdemeanour as are those who seek an united expression of opinion, but the prohibition, like every edict which conflicts with the natural tendencies of an enlightened age is, and will continue to be, in either case, a dead letter.

Whether the *Broad Arrow* approve or no, it may make up its mind that the unhealthy extreme to which the wretched old gagging system has been fostered by martinets and master tailors in the shape of general officers (if we were pagans we should long ago have had gorgeous temples to Mars Sartorius!) will have to be modified to the requirements of the age.

ODDS AND ENDS.

It is satisfactory to learn from your last week's issue that the ponderous field exercise had been reduced by nine sections in company and twelve in Battalion drill. Most of the excisions have, of course, been long foreseen by those who have studied the matter, and might as well have been promulgated a year ago. I hope to see a few more sections yet follow those now recapitulated into limbo. For instance if two deep squares will be sufficient for the future, as some think, why retain "sections" at all? But when shall we see the new F.R.I. itself? Also the promised new Militia list? Men going to Red River would be glad to have both before they go.

Ap[ro]pos of Red River it is of course to be presumed that officers serving in that expedition in a rank below their real standing, will be allowed to count the time they so serve, as part of the time requisite to qualify them for promotion; thus if a Captain has served four years in command of his company and joins the expedition as a lieutenant, his time in the Red River force should count towards the five years Captain's time necessary for his promotion to a Majority.

To the Editor of the VOLUNTEER REVIEW.

SIR:—In your last number there appeared a letter asking for information concerning match rifles. I shall endeavour to put your correspondent in the way of satisfying himself. In the last match for the "Elcho Challenge Shield" at Wimbledon, in July, 1869, there were only four descriptions of small bores used, viz: the Metford, Rigby, Henry and Ingram, all on the new system of shallow grooves and using hardened bullets. The Metford is the only rifle in England using the "gaining twist" (patented), the Rigby, Henry, and Ingram being almost exactly similar to the Metford with the exception of the twist, which in those three is uniform. The Rigby rifle is the most commonly used of the four mentioned, owing to its being the cheapest of the lot. The price of a first class match rifle varies from £24 to