

LONG-DISTANCE MARCHING COMPETITION.

The long-distance marching competition among the Regulars, Militia and Volunteers of the East Surrey Regimental District, London, (Eng.), came off on Saturday 5th Nov., and was brought to a conclusion early on the following morning. The route to be covered lay between Kingston and Guilford, returning through Camberley, a distance of about fifty-four miles. This was a severe test as the men were in heavy marching order, with the exception of the valise, spade and helmet. The competitors were divided into squads of eight men, commanded by a section leader. Although there were eighteen teams entered, only seventeen competed, one detachment, unfortunately being three men short at the time appointed for starting. The first two teams left Kingston at six o'clock on Saturday morning, one travelling in the direction of Camberley, while the other went round by Guilford. To avoid anything like racing, an interval of one hour between each successive team was allowed. Colonel Leyland Hornby acted as umpire in chief, while each competing section was accompanied by an officer umpire. The condition of the roads was bad and the first arrival was not expected until midnight on Saturday, thus allowing eighteen hours for the journey. The 3rd East Surrey team, however, which left Kingston after 6 a.m. on Saturday, did not complete their march until 1.37 a.m. on Sunday, nineteen hours, seventeen minutes after starting. But this result was far surpassed by a team of the 3rd Battalion of the East Surrey Volunteers led by Color-Sergeant Warren, which left Kingston at noon on Saturday, and covered the distance in seventeen hours, thirty-six minutes, maintaining an average speed of three miles one furlong per hour. The next team in was only twelve minutes behind. Lord Methner, commanding the Home District, was at Kingston Barracks on Sunday morning to inquire as to the progress of the competition.

Captain R. D. Wynyard, writing from Kingston Barracks, says: "The winning team of the 3rd Volunteer Battalion well deserved their victory and generalship." It seems, that by means of cyclist scouts, they were kept advised of the "times" made by other teams, and more particularly that belonging to the 4th battalion. On the strength of the information so given, the Volunteers marched in from Ripley without a halt, and succeeded in beating them by just twelve minutes. He adds, "None of the competitors so far are any the worse of their exertions."

None of the Volunteer teams had undergone any training, though the Militia and Regulars had.

With reference to the foregoing competition the *United Service Gazette* makes the following very sensible remarks:

Besides demonstrating in the most satisfactory manner what on an emergency could be done by picked teams of regulars, militia, or volunteers, the recent contest afforded several useful lessons. In the first place it is to be remarked that the average age of the winning team was somewhat over twenty-eight years, while that of the next team, though it had no members as young as eighteen years three months and eighteen years and nine months respectively--averaged twenty-five. The ages of the winning team ranged from twenty to forty and of the next from just over eighteen to thirty-three. Men of mature age therefore, very largely predominated. Another point is that, although hardly anything in the way of training was attempted by the teams, only one of them gave in before they had done thirty miles. The great majority of them covered forty miles, and no less than eleven out of the seventeen completed the course, these men marching in with a good step and in regular formation.

The mistake of forcing the speed, and the way a breakdown may be caused through injudicious eating and drinking at the halting places, were abundantly proved. Too much care in these respects cannot well be exercised in competitions which involve a test of the power of endurance, and to some neglect in these matters do we partly attribute the failure of the regulars who, after struggling on bravely to Chertsey, notwithstanding a mishap to which we shall refer immediately, took three hours to do three miles, some of the team being overcome by an irresistible drowsiness.

The mishap to which we have just alluded has a direct bearing upon the subject of equipment. One of the men in-

cluded in the team of regulars thinking it advisable, after dining at Guildford, to change his socks, found that his feet were so swollen that he could not again get them into his boots. Now it is evident that either he had been badly fitted or that the boots had not been kept sufficiently soft by dubbing or one of the better preparations, such as "Mollis-corium." The marching powers of an army very largely depend upon how it is shod, by which we mean not only that the boots themselves should be good, but that they should be carefully selected so as to be an easy fit for each individual wearer and not to be allowed to get stiff and hard. Men, too, should be taught to take proper care of their feet, as, for instance, by soaping their socks before undertaking any long march. Blistered feet were on the present occasion the cause of trouble in several instances.

The tunic should be looser across the chest than it is usually worn, so as to give full play to the lungs; and we are inclined to think that there is still room for further experiments to be made as to the easiest way the weights a soldier has to carry can be disposed.

What can be done in heavy marching order was lately shown by Lieut. Barker, R.M.L.I., by his march from Okehampton to Plymouth on a muddy road in twelve hours, including three and a half hours' stoppage, and by Sergeant Bernard, and Corporal Barnard, of the same corps, who did the distance in an hour less, being, we believe, the best time yet made in heavy marching order.

While hoping that long-distance marching competitions will become a regularly recognized thing in this country, we trust that it will not deteriorate into frantic efforts at record-breaking, but that the practical side will be kept steadily in view.

CANADA AND GLADSTONE.

Some excitement has been occasioned in Canada by the report lately circulated to the effect that the Imperial Government proposed to withdraw the Imperial troops from British North America. The Canadian papers have taken the matter up somewhat fiercely, but really there is no occasion for any fuss. Halifax, the headquarters of our fleet in the North Atlantic, is the only point at which troops are now kept, and it is not at all likely that even the Gladstone Government would essay their removal at the present juncture. Canada is mostly Conservative, and the press of the Dominion has naturally jumped at the throat of the new Liberal Government at home in connection with the rumoured withdrawal, but the excitement will doubtless soon pass away. One of the leading journals in Toronto charges Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues with attaching but little importance to the Canadian connection--with not being overburdened with anxiety about colonial greatness. The paper goes on to lay stress on the fact that the Canadians have hitherto defended themselves at considerable expense, and maintains that it was in consequence of Mr. Gladstone's sympathy for the South during the American Civil War that the Fenian invasion of Canada was brought about. The Liberal leader's bungling also, it is alleged, prevented Canada, when England was paying heavily for the Alabama mistake, from recovering for the damages then inflicted on Canada. It is evident that the Premier's critics on the other side of the Atlantic are prepared to assail him at every possible opportunity, and this Canadian onslaught, although perhaps it is undeserved at the moment, will serve to warn Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues that they must not attempt to play at ducks and drakes with colonial interests, as they did half a dozen years ago. *English paper.*

Rear-Admiral Stephenson, the new commander of the British squadron in the Pacific, has been in Her Majesty's navy for 40 years, *The Pall Mall Gazette* says, and saw active service in the Crimea, in Japan, and during the Indian mutiny. It was Captain Stephenson, as he then was, who was in command of the Heron gunboat on the Canadian lakes during the Fenian disturbances; and he had charge of Her Majesty's ship *Discovery* in the Arctic expedition of 1875-76. Rear-Admiral Stephenson was formerly a naval aide-de-camp to the Queen, and has been an equeerry to the Prince of Wales since 1878.