

MILITARY SMARTNESS.

A SHORT observation and consideration of the Russian army serve to convince me that in England we have a wrong idea of military smartness, a fact of which as a private in the volunteers I was never able to convince my superior officers.

The word "smartness" itself is of a vague misleading character. When we talk of a smart writer, a smart man of business, and a smart woman, we use the word in three different senses. So we may talk of a smart soldier in different senses. "The Bounceables were a devilish smart regiment, sir" Thackeray's old Gann might say, "where every officer kept his four-in-hand." A smart corps, among the volunteers, means a corps where the blacking and pipeclay are laid on without stint, and the march-past at Easter is carried off with symmetrical aplomb. This march-past is the end in life of the volunteer, and almost all his drilling is directed to carrying it off effectively. And yet a march-past has little practical value; one does not want to march past the enemy.

He would be a bold man who would say anything in disparagement of the Russian soldier, yet in Russia smartness is almost unknown. The Russian Tommy does not swagger down the Nevsky eyeing the girls in a purple jerkin with a cotton-wool chest sticking out in front of him; he slouches modestly along in rather dingy homespun. The officers may be seen walking almost as modestly (always in uniform), with their arms full of parcels and with umbrellas on rainy days; many of them eke out their pay by giving lessons. All the Guards were turned out the other day in full campaigning order, with their guns and baggage; it was a fine sight, but not smart. They rolled in, walking as if they were still treading between plough furrows; men of various uniforms were all jumbled up together; some had their mess-tins above their valises, some below;

some carried their portions of the tents horizontally, some vertically; and every here and there was a cheap fife or trumpet band to keep them in something resembling a step. But you put these men with an enemy in front of them and you will find it best to get behind. The Russian officers, it is said, do not have to urge their men forward on the field with harangues about "la gloire"; they have to say, "Gently, boys, gently!" Their training and traditions are different from ours. The troops quartered in Siberia are not engaged in pipe-claying their boots; they are taken out in squads of scouts and hunters to make their way through trackless wilds, and to hunt bears and tigers.

The chief harm done in the British army by striving after smartness is waste of the soldiers' time. Instead of practising or learning useful professions, playing healthy games, performing feats of marching and the like, they are set to rubbing things. It was the æsthetic ideal which used to make the authorities want to fill the ranks with tall men, and it is the æsthetic ideal which costs the nation a deal of money in providing the soldiers with costumes only meant for show. This same ideal is likely to ruin the volunteers altogether; there is very little time for them to make themselves efficient defenders, and none of that ought to be squandered on appearances.—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

THE CAPTAIN'S DILEMMA.

A certain captain was giving a lecture to his company on what they should do in case of fire, or should the "fire call" sound in barracks, and, seeing some recruits there who had never heard the "fire call," he ordered the bugler to blow it for their benefit, but imagine his dismay when he found that all the regiment had turned out to answer it. How to prevent them from getting the engine, hose and other things out

he did not know. The bugler, however, soon got him out of the difficulty by running to the door and blowing, with all his might, "Come to the cook-house door, boys," which had the desired effect.

THE NATIONAL ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION.

The Council of the National Artillery Association have issued the prize list for the competitions to be held at Shoeburyness in the first week of August. The chief items are the two prizes given by the Queen respectively for position and garrison artillery; but besides these there are many more, given by the Prince of Wales, the Corporation of London and City Companies, the Earl of Stradbroke (chairman of the council), the Association and others. The Queen's prize for position artillery will be awarded to the battery making the best aggregate in battery practice at standing and moving targets with 16-pounder guns; and that to garrison artillery to the group making the best aggregate with 64-pounders, one of the competitions being at moving targets. The position battery prize list also includes single gun competitions with 16 and 40-pounder guns, and a "disabled ordnance" contest; and for the garrison artillery there are competitions with the 10-inch gun and 6.6 howitzer (groups), and repository work; and "special defence" prizes for corps allotted to heavy ordnance in the District Defence Scheme, and whose men have in this or last year completed drill in the forts or positions to which they are allotted. An Imperial prize is offered for competition between British and Colonial detachments; and there will be a competition for officers, for other ranks in guard mounting, and probably for carbine shooting.

When living in a tent you can't have the luxuries of home; you must do without the china basin and the porcelain-lined bath.

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