

### In the Mother Country.

Lord Harris gave a capital address at Maidstone the other day on the subject of "Athletics and the Nation," in the course of which he spoke as follows: "The great Duke of Wellington is supposed to have said that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton. If he did say it, I should suppose that he meant that the officers who led his army owed much of their capacity for leading men to the athletic sports of their youth; and if one result of taking part in them is to instill self-confidence, quickness of eye to see a possible opportunity and despatch in seizing it, then there are many walks in life, besides a military career, in which a man will be the better that he has encouraged these qualities, whilst eye and limb, muscle and sinew were plastic, and readily trained. . . . As men grow older, life becomes more earnest, and the race for it a hard struggle; but still I think we can find that it is good for the nation that even these can find some time for enjoying athletic exercises, either as lookers-on or actively. I am a firm believer in the sound common sense of the working classes, but I am satisfied that it would be a national misfortune, and I believe they hold the same view, if the wealthier classes did not take a commanding lead in our amusements. You cannot find a better example than in the British Army Tommy Atkins, as brave a soldier as serves in any country—and what country has he not served in?—has the greatest respect and admiration for his officers, because he knows they have never failed him, that where the fire is hottest, the breach the deadliest, they can be trusted to lead him; and so, in our mimic battles, the gentlemen of England are expected to take the lead. It will be a bad day for England, when, if ever, they as a class become lackadaisical and fear a knock or two."

"But," continued his lordship, "there is another athletic pursuit open to all, which must not be lost sight of; that is service in our Volunteer Army. There are some 220,000 Volunteers in the country, the great majority of whom serve their four years and retire. Think what that is doing for young England, putting aside the great military advantage that most young men should understand the handling of a rifle; and if not carrying as many lives in their pouches as there are ball cartridges, as could be said of our English bowmen and their arrows of old, still many of them are fair, some of them very good shots. Putting aside that advantage, consider what the men themselves gain in character by being habituated to discipline, in bodily strength by drill. There is, too, a paramount advantage in Volunteer service over most athletic pursuits, that to some extent the advantages derivable from it are not dependent on daylight and fine weather. Drill halls, notwithstanding the expense of erecting them, are increasing year by year, and resound every evening, after the working day is over, with words of command and the clink of arms. It all means work, and hard work too, but it is a change from the business of the day; it brings relaxation to the mind, and braces nerve and muscle. The Volunteer service is perhaps the finest school in the country for the workingman, looking to the advantages I have named, and also to the insight into military life, coupled with the health and strength gained from the marches and camps at Easter, Whitsuntide, and other holiday times."

The annual competition of the Volunteer Medical Staff Corps for the Challenge Shield took place on Saturday, 23rd November, at Westminster Hall. Three companies competed, viz.: No. 1, Surgeon V. Matthews; No. 4, Surgeon-Major J. A. Watson; No. 5, Surgeon F. E. Squire, M.D. Surgeon J. Falvey, M.S., Assist.-Instructor to the Medical Staff Department, Aldershot, kindly acted as judge. The companies were put through various movements in bearer, company and stretcher drill, and examined in bandaging and first aid to the injured. After a spirited competition the shield was awarded to No. 1 Company, the contest, however, having been very close. Surgeon Falvey having addressed the officers and men of the corps and complimented them on their work, Surgeon-Major Platt, V.M.S.C., in the absence of Surgeon-Commandant Norton, thanked Surgeon Falvey, in the name of the corps, for his kind services, bringing a most interesting afternoon's work to an end.

"A Progressivist" has written to the *Volunteer Service Gazette* an interesting letter on "The Supply of Officers," in which he says:

"Volunteering is recognized generally by all ranks as a sport and amusement, as well as a duty to our country. This being conceded, it rests with the officer commanding to make his battalion work as interesting as possible, the power to do so being in his hands. In how many corps in the metropolitan area do we find this considered? A com-

mission is in itself of no more value in one corps than in another; no difficulty exists in obtaining efficient officers in the few *élite* corps, and as we know that the men who fill the ranks of these battalions do so not only because they are select, but because they offer a constant variety of military work and amusement throughout the year, it is only natural to suppose that the same inducements prevail in attracting gentlemen to take up a commission in these corps. I do not believe the expenses of an officer in a first rate corps are any greater than in one less known. The difference consists only in the spirit with which the work of the corps is carried out.

"The energetic and interesting military training of the corps that takes part in all manœuvres organized with the permission of the War Office at Easter, in the autumn, and on special occasions; and at its inspection shows the inspecting officer that the previous training has been directed to obtain results beyond mere barrack-yard drill, and that the company officers are capable of fulfilling the duties of field rank, and have had opportunities of practising those duties, is surely more attractive than one in which year after year, at stated periods, the same orders and drills are repeated with unvarying monotony. I submit that if an officer belonging to what I should describe as a progressive corps were not occupied on special occasions by his attendance with his corps, he would surely be engaged in equally expensive recreation of some other kind, and it is not just to add these incidental personal expenses to the yearly cost of holding a commission.

"I wish to draw attention to the fact that it is not alone the difficulty of finding gentlemen willing to take commissions that requires consideration, but also how to prevent the large number of resignations that occur every month, many of which I feel sure are occasioned through officers being disappointed in, and finding no interest in, the proceedings of their corps, a state of things which can and ought to be improved, and for which commanding officers themselves are primarily responsible."

A very successful bazaar has recently been held at Selkirk towards paying off the debt in connection with the Volunteer drill hall. On the first day, the proceedings were opened by Lord Polwarth, prior to which Captain D. C. Alexander made a statement of the objects of the bazaar. On the following day, the proceedings were opened by Lady Napier and Ettrick, who made a very graceful address, in which she said: "I avow that I cordially share that predilection for the Army and Navy with which my sex is commonly credited. My heart warms to the blue, the red, and the tartan, and to every cloth and every colour that covers the breast of a volunteer on land or sea. This sentiment is not unshared by the mothers and daughters who stand before me, if I properly interpret their looks and smiles. The love which we bear to the profession of arms in all its branches, springs from the recognition so natural to our weaker nature that the man who, in any shape, spontaneously courts, embraces, and accepts labour, danger, self-sacrifice for the defence of his sovereign and his country, and for our defence, is the man who, in reason and justice, we are bound most to honour and regard. And we owe this debt peculiarly to the volunteers, for they receive no other pay, and we trust that the manifestation of our esteem is more welcome to them than much fine gold. Consider for a moment the deep, well-founded claims that the volunteers possess on the favour and support of our sex. Are we not their mothers and sisters, identified with them by all the ties of blood, of love, and tender offices? We do not, it is true, bear arms, but we have done a better service, we have borne the volunteers in our arms. We have nursed them, we have trained them, we have taught them to walk straight, we have planted in their hearts the first seeds of truth and faith and stoutness and manly virtue; and then we have sent them forth, still unspotted, to the changes and chances, the strife, the perplexities, the trials, the temptations of the troubled world by which we were encompassed, to float or to founder, as good or evil destiny may ordain. Are we not deeply concerned in the efficacy of every instrument and agency by which our sons may be bound together in good aspirations and in common exercise of practical duty? for self-respect and exertion are the safe-guards of rectitude and good conduct in all the affairs of life. Such an instrument, and a most powerful one, is supplied by the volunteer service.

Badges for "Skill at Arms" are in future to be competed for biennially. The best man (non-commissioned officer or gunner) in each battery will wear "a badge of crossed guns with laurel leaf worked in silver," the second best "a badge of crossed guns worked in silver," and the third best "a badge of crossed guns worked in worsted." The badges are, it is needless to say, to be provided at the expense of the corps, and will remain its property. Each badge will have to be fought for and won at least every two years. The competitions are to be conducted as nearly as possible in conformity with the instructions laid