

The N.R.A. and its Work.

(Volunteer Service Gazette.)

At length after thirty successful annual meetings, the National Rifle Association is obliged—for reasons which we all know and deplore, but which need no longer be dwelt upon—to quit its old and beloved shooting ground, and to prepare to pitch its tents in a place which has, no doubt, its advantages, but which will never have quite the charm—to the older shooting men, at any rate—which was possessed by the beautiful common from which they are now exiled. "Wimbledon" as we have known it for twenty-nine years may have had its drawbacks, though we have never been able to see exactly what they were; but at any rate, it has been at Wimbledon, and through the National Rifle Association, that the art of modern rifle shooting has been brought to its present state of perfection in this country—a perfection which no foreign nation has ever attempted even to rival. We are quite aware that there are plenty of people ready to tell us our system is all wrong—that the Germans, the French or even the Italian Soldiers shoot better for military purposes than either our Regulars or Volunteers. We do not agree with this view. We believe that the art of hitting a given mark with a rifle bullet at short and long ranges, is now understood and practised in the United Kingdom and the Colonies and Dependencies, as it is endorsed and practised nowhere else in the world, except in the United States, whose military marksmen will be ready to admit that they are our own pupils, though they may have equalled their instructors. And we further believe that, upon this art of hitting a given mark must ultimately depend all military rifle shooting, and that perfection in the art can only be reached by constant competitive practice, in which the relative value of all shots is measured as accurately as possible.

Assuming our view to be true, let us try to show, as briefly as may be, how the National Rifle Association has performed the task which it took upon itself twenty-nine years ago, of teaching the art of rifle shooting to the nation. The association began its operations in a very modest way. It was formed at the end of 1859 by a small knot of volunteer officers, who had gone through a short course at the Hythe School of Musketry, then under the direction of two enthusiasts, Colonel (afterwards General) Hay and Colonel Wilford. The volunteers were being drilled and organized all over Great Britain, and were keen to learn the use of the rifle. The idea of a great annual prize meeting seems to have been based upon the Swiss *Tirs Fédéraux*, the details of targets, etc., being taken from the Hythe model. The scheme was warmly taken up by the late Prince Consort, and before actual work had been begun the Queen had offered that great prize which bears her name, and to the existence of which the continued success of the association is to a great extent due. But the whole original plan of operations was widely different from that which now exists. It was thought that the prizes would be provided by voluntary contributions, and apparently that entrance fees, at any rate so far as the volunteer competitions were concerned, would be needless. The volunteers were to shoot for the Queen's prize and for a certain number of rifles, and there were to be a few all-comers' prizes, and a special contest for breech-loaders, then just coming into notice. We need not go closely into the history of the great changes which took place in the first few years of the existence of the association. It may suffice to say that it was soon discovered that the public would not contribute prizes to any appreciable extent, but that the volunteer competitors would readily do so in the shape of entrance fees. It was by the courage—we might almost say the wise audacity—of the council in recognizing this fact at very early date, and issuing long strings of prizes on the faith that they would be provided for by the entrance fees, that the success of the association was assured. There was, indeed, for a few years a strong belief that it was necessary to encourage shooting with the match rifle, a weapon which could only be successfully used by men of considerable means. But before long the volunteer's weapon—first the Enfield, then the Snider, and now the Martini-Henry—has, as it was right that it should do, taken the foremost place in the Wimbledon prize lists. The result of all this has been that the N. R. A. meetings have for a long series of years given the law to all competitive rifle meetings, not only among the volunteers but in the regular army; that every county association, every battalion of regulars and volunteers models its regulations upon those of the N.R.A., and what is more, that there is no battalion of regulars or volunteers which has not its shooting club, of which one great object is to train men to compete in the N. R. A. competitions.

In doing this, the National Rifle Association has done, in our opinion, a very great piece of work. If it had not been for Wimbledon, we have no hesitation in saying that not only would the volunteer force have probably died out twenty years ago, but that the shooting of the regular infantry would have been far, indeed, inferior to what it is now. Some of our volunteer officers who were attached to battalions of the regular army, even so late as 1870, can bear testimony to the disfavour

with which "Musketry" was looked upon by both officers and men. The Hythe system, good as it was, would never have been developed in the regular army save by the introduction of competitive practice and regimental rifle clubs, both of which owe their existence distinctly to the National Rifle Association. To have effected all this is credit enough; but the N.R.A. may also fairly claim to have played a very prominent part in the introduction of breech-loaders into the British army, and we only wish we could say that it had done as much for the weapon of the future—the magazine rifle. But the want of space at Wimbledon, and a certain inexplicable prejudice against taking the element of time into consideration in rifle shooting, has militated against this. Nevertheless we affirm that to the National Rifle Association is due the present high standard of military rifle shooting in England—a standard which, we believe, is not even approached in any Continental country.

The general commanding the district which includes Portsmouth (England) was appealed to by the Lord's Day Observance Association to stop the Sunday playing of the military bands. He replied that nothing would induce him to order a band to play on Sunday, but as it was all done voluntarily and afforded great pleasure to many people who couldn't get it on week days, nothing would induce him to stop it.

The vote by the French Chamber of Deputies, agreeing to the Senate's amendments to the army bill, compelling seminarists to undergo a year's military service, and making clerical reserves perform infirmary services during time of war, is a result of a recent decision of the German War Office that all priests are liable to hospital duty in time of war. It is considered doubtful by military men if the same measures can become law in Austria and Italy.

A curious and spasmodic effort of Turkish activity is just now attracting some attention in India. Quite recently some Turkish troops assembled in Fao, an island in the Persian Gulf commanding the entrance to Shat-el-Arab, as the Tigris and Euphrates are called after their union, and began to erect fortifications there. No one can explain why this is being done, and the presence of the Turks is as surprising as if they had dropped from the clouds.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* is responsible for the following story: "One of our admirals, who shall be nameless, was so severely hit the other day by a pencil caricature in a local print in the town where he is stationed, that he applied to the admiralty to prosecute the editor. Needless to say the admiralty refused to become advertiser in general to the provincial press, and advised the admiral to proceed on his own initiative. They are at present waiting in a state of amused expectancy to see what action he will take."

Special Announcement.

We have made arrangements with Dr. B. J. Kendall Co., publishers of "A Treatise on the Horse and his Diseases," which will enable all our subscribers to obtain a copy of that valuable work *free* by sending their address (enclosing a two-cent stamp for mailing same) to DR. B. J. KENDALL CO., ENOSBURGH FALLS, VT. This book is now recognized as standard authority upon all diseases of the horse, as its phenomenal sale attests, over four million copies having been sold in the past ten years, a sale never before reached by any publication in the same period of time. We feel confident that our patrons will appreciate the work, and be glad to avail themselves of this opportunity of obtaining a valuable book. It is necessary that you mention this paper in sending for the "Treatise." This offer will remain open for only a short time.

DOMINION RIFLE ASSOCIATION.

The Annual Prize Meeting of the Dominion of Canada Rifle Association will be held on the Rideau Rifle Ranges, commencing on

MONDAY, 2ND SEPTEMBER.

The Prize Lists include

Seven Thousand Dollars in Cash,

— BESIDES —

Handsome and Valuable Trophies, Cups, Medals and Badges.

Entries close on the 28th of August.

For Programmes and any further information, apply to,

S. LEONARD SHANNON, Lieut.,

Acting Secretary D.C.R.A. Ottawa.

ONTARIO RIFLE ASSOCIATION.

SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING

— WILL BE HELD —

MONDAY, AUG. 26th, and three following Days,

On the Association Ranges, Garrison Common, Toronto.

PRIZES IN CASH - \$3,000 | PRIZES IN VALUE - \$1,000

Single return fares by all railways. Send for Prize List and particulars.

W. GEORGE MUTTON, CAPT., Secretary, TORONTO.