

GREAT BRITAIN.

KING'S ROYAL RIFLES.



YARNS OF THE ARMY.

About the Rifle Regiments.

By D. H. PARRY, Author of "For Glory and Renown," "The Pets of the Regiments," etc.

IN European countries the rifle regiments are looked upon as crack corps. Although all the infantry is now armed with the rifle, their particular rôle is different from that of the Line, and they are dressed in a more or less distinctive fashion, according to the taste and discretion of the various nations.

In the Austrian service, the Jägers have a smart grey uniform, and, on State occasions, a turned-up hat with cock's feathers. The Prussian Jäger wears a dark-green tunic with scarlet facings, black trousers, and an ugly helmet similar to the hideous Albert shako that once disfigured our own infantry. The Russian Schützen-fights in green, with brown knee-boots; the French Chasseur in a peculiar blue, piped with yellow and the picturesque Italian Bersaglieri in dark blue trimmed with red, a handsome brigand-like hat, adorned with a huge bunch of cock's plume, and in summer, white trousers, as baggy as it is well-nigh possible to make them; while last, but by no means least, our own King's Royal Rifles and the Rifle Brigade wear an invisible green, nearly black, warranted to show the mud in winter and the dust at other times; and these two regiments were for many years our only representatives of this particular arm until the authorities recently gave us a Royal Irish and a Scottish corps.

Trained to be good shots, to act as scouts and skirmishers, to line a hedge or hold a wood against the enemy, the Jägers, or "huntsmen," as the name implies, are chosen in the German army from the foresters and gamekeepers, and their firing has stood the Fatherland in good stead in many an action.

Just as our Guards have a peculiar style of march, so the Italian Bersaglieri adopt a quick step which is almost a run. No matter how fiercely the sun may be pouring down from a sky of cloudless blue, the sharp slap-slap-slap of their gaitered feet seems to grow quicker and quicker as they pass along the white road: one expects it every moment to break into a gallop, but there is only time to note the heads bent forward and to catch a glimpse of waving feathers and the flash of arms before they are gone, and a cloud wreathes about them and shuts them out from view.

The splendid rifle-shooting of the Germans was a distinctive feature of the last war—not, perhaps, their superior accuracy so much as their terrible

torn by the shot from the batteries, against the 27th Magdeburg Regiment, which was drawn up to receive it, the 11th and 12th German companies being ranged four-deep, with riflemen in the intervals.

The artillery ceased, and a soul-thrilling silence fell over the field, as the Cuirassiers drew nearer and nearer at the trot, the steel helmets, with their long horse-tails, becoming more distinct, and the low thunder of the hoofs increasing; officers in front, long swords eager to bite deep into the hated Prussians!

Dressed as if on parade, the two com-

panies waited. At 400 yards the best shots opened fire, and the Cuirassiers changed their direction and rode for the 10th company, receiving a fearful flank discharge from the other two; 150 yards, then a withering volley! Shattered, but holding in their maddened horses with difficulty, the heavy squadron still advanced; eighty yards, and they were galloping, making the ground tremble and the air resound with the harsh jingle of chains and scabbards. At thirty yards they were going down like ninepins, and at fifteen the few that were left melted away and sought the shelter of a wood.

One man, a gigantic quartermaster, reached the bayonets alone and struck at Captain Helmuth, who parried the blow. The Cuirassier rode at him again and would have slain him, but some privates ran up and wounded him in the hip, after he had smashed the captain's blade.

"Surrender, monsieur, you are a brave soldier," cried the gallant German, wishing to save him; and, seeing the game was up, the Cuirassier replying, "Very well," attempted to disentangle his hand from his sword-hilt, but a rifleman, misunderstanding the action, fired, and the hero slid out of his saddle, dead, into the captain's arms!

Honour to the brave who went to certain death, and honour to the brave who stood unflinching before the rush of those iron hoofs!

The Light Infantry of the French army has always been famous. At Witepsk, two hundred Voltigeurs resisted the ferocious attack of the Cossack Lancers of the Russian Guard, in sight of both forces, the whole French army cheering them to the echo. During the Peninsular War they were always to the front, and, though their organisation since that time has undergone many changes, like their uniform, they are, next to the Cuirassiers, perhaps the most popular corps in the service.

During the Crimean War, at Bomarsund, one man was particularly noticed. He crawled behind a large stone near the fort and, lying there for sixteen hours, fired two hundred rounds, and killed no fewer than one hundred and fifty Russians at six hundred yards!

Always the last to adopt any improvement, the English Government decided to form an experimental corps of riflemen, and it was accordingly done in 1800, by picked drafts from some line regiments, and was known at first as Manningham's Sharpshooters.

There was already a company attached to the 60th Foot, but they were all Germans, and dressed in scarlet, the new corps having a green uniform, and carrying powder-horn, bullet-bag, and a little mallet to drive the ball down the grooved barrel of their Baker rifles.

FRANCE.



CHASSEURS.

GERMANY.



PRUSSIAN JÄGERS.



They received their "baptism of fire" at Ferrol, and afterwards went with Sir John Moore on the fatal campaign of Corunna as the 95th Regiment, marching to the well-known air, "I'm 95," which is still their march to the present day.

They were a harum-scarum set—the first to face danger and the last to leave it, the story of one of their crack shots showing the romantic and pathetic side of a soldier's life.

Tom Plunket was an Irishman and one of the most reckless fellows in the regiment.

At Calcabellos, during the retreat on Corunna, the English rear was sorely pressed by a gallant young French general named Colbert, who had the reputation of being as brave and as honourable as any in their service.

Mounted on a white horse, he was very conspicuous in his attempts to dislodge our rifles from a vineyard where they were posted, leading his chasseurs and dragoons again and again across the bridge.

Tom Plunket ran forward and lay down on his back in the snow, placed his foot in the leather sling of his gun, and sighted, just as you may have seen it done at Wimbledon or Bisley, pressed the trigger, and the general fell into the arms of his trumpeter!

Up jumped Tom Plunket, reloaded and primed, lay down again, and killed the trumpeter with his second shot!

At Quatre Bras Tom's wife was standing near an ammunition waggon when it exploded, blowing her face to a hideous, unrecognisable mass, with nothing human left about it.

After Waterloo, Plunket was finally discharged as a drunken incorrigible, and many years after that one of his old comrades, who held a position at the Tower, was surprised to receive a visit from the disfigured woman, then a widow, who told him of Plunket's sad end.

The battered, poverty-stricken pair had been on tramp through the Eastern counties, when the misguided veteran suddenly fell forward on to his face, without warning, and Tom Plunket's wasted life was over!

Two curious instances are recorded of officers of the 95th. One had been reading a pocket volume of "Gil Blas," and, going into action, crammed it hurriedly into the breast of his laced jacket, to find afterwards that a bullet had lodged in it, and his life been saved by the book. A watch, a coin, and, more than once, a Bible, have been known to do the same thing.

The other circumstance was very remarkable, and is well authenticated. Lieutenant Worsley was hit in the right ear at the storming of Badajos in 1812,

and his head remained twisted slightly towards the right shoulder; but three years after, at Waterloo, another ball struck him in the left ear, came out of his neck within half an inch of the former wound, and set the head straight again!

The loss of the Rifles was heavy at Waterloo. Three battalions were represented, and of these, six officers were killed, thirty-two wounded, and 452 rank-and-file.

At one period the officers wore a fur-trimmed pelisse, and even now the Hussar braiding has survived the many alterations the uniforms have undergone.

A good story is told of a smart Irish pri-

added to its already glorious reputation in that war. In a private letter written home by an officer who died a few days after, he says, speaking of Inkerman: "We had a terrible fight. . . . I had my jacket-pocket cut out by a ball. . . . My old company went into action thirty-six men, and came out sixteen. . . . We (the Rifle Brigade) had only three hundred men and eight officers in action. Of those, eighty-three wounded; killed and missing, about thirty. . . . Horsford was knocked down by a shell bursting close by him, but was unhurt, though a narrow shave for his remaining eye."

This is a small sample of what the "Duskiess" went through in one action, and they were in everything, the caves and the trenches falling to their share, as well as the terrible pitched battles, seven out of twelve Victoria Crosses won by the regiment having been gained in the campaign.

The King's Royal Rifles, formerly the 60th, are friendly rivals with the Rifle Brigade for the honour of being the first rifle corps enrolled in our service, but a careful investigation of their claim shows that it will hardly stand.

Their roll of honour is a glorious one, and they have won eleven Crosses, doing great things in the Indian Mutiny, particularly at Delhi; in fact, from Ticonderoga, 1758, down to our last war the regiment has made itself a glorious name.

At the close of the miserable war in Flanders, where we were soundly beaten by the ragged Republicans, and our Duke of York had to save himself by the speed of his horse—bad generalship, mind you, no fault of the troops—a now-forgotten officer named Money offered to raise a rifle corps at his own expense, but the offer was rejected.

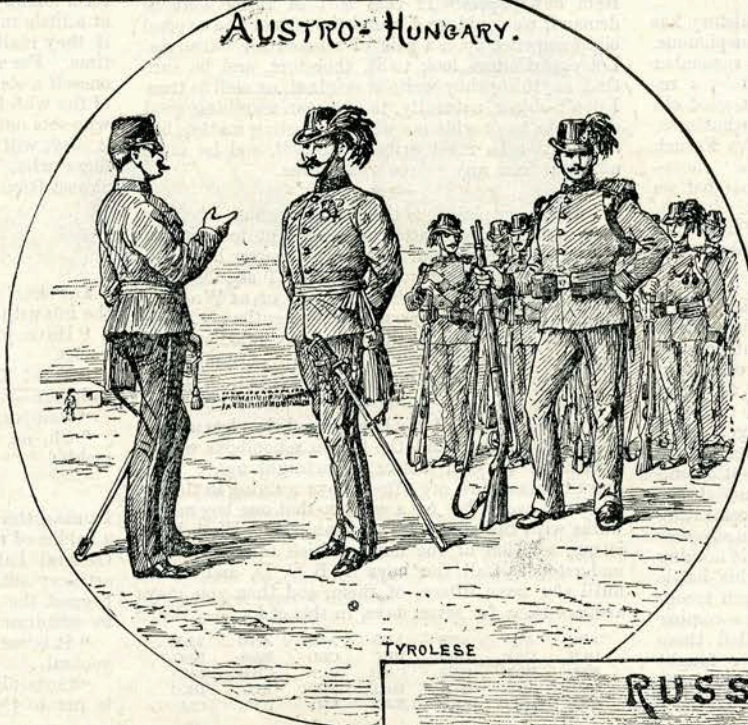
We had been driven out of America by the Trappers with their rifles, but it takes John Bull a long time to learn anything new. When he does grasp it, however, perhaps he does it better than anyone else, but that is another thing. Anyway, when the experiment was tried, it turned out a success, and the record of our rifle corps is one of the brightest pages of British military annals.

It must not be forgotten that it was a rifleman in the maintop of the *Redoubtable* who shot our hero, Nelson, and who was afterwards successfully potted by two middies named Collingwood and Pollard; although there died not long ago in France an old soldier who claimed to have been the very man.

"PAPA," said Bobby, "can I ask you just one more question?"

"You may—one more."

"How much older is a 'ripe old ago' than a 'green old age'?"



vate during the Crimea. The Russians made a sortie one night, killed a picket of the 50th Queen's Own (once so well known as the "Dirty Half-Hundred"), and were only driven out by the Rifles, who slaughtered them and occupied the post.

The patrol came round soon after, and the officer, not finding his own man on guard, said to the Rifleman, "What are you doing, sir? you don't belong to the 50th."

"May it please yer honour," was the reply, "the Rooskins relaved the 50th, and we relaved the Rooskins."

The Rifle Brigade, as it was then called,

