

THE CANADIAN MILITARY GAZETTE.

(SUCCESSOR TO THE CANADIAN MILITIA GAZETTE.)

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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

The letter which appears in another column on the requirements of the force in the way of equipment is well worthy of perusal. Most of us are well aware of the defects pointed out by our correspondent, but it is nevertheless just as well to keep them constantly before our eyes and to discuss among ourselves the best way of providing a remedy. There is no denying that the question of the uniform and equipment of the militia is one to which the department should devote immediate attention. Different officers have naturally different ideas as to what the uniform of the Canadian militia should be, but there is one universal opinion that the present uniform is neither as serviceable nor really as economical as might be. Our men were out on service in the Northwest for four months and came back looking more like beggars than smart militiamen.

But for the industrious use of needle and thread by the men themselves they would have come back in rags and tatters. What would have been their condition had they been on service for twelve months and exposed to the rigors of our winter climate?

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So much for the uniform. What can be said for the equipment? Nothing. From the rifle to the knapsack the whole arrangement is antiquated, unserviceable and a positive disgrace to the country. Not only are the knapsacks, belts, pouches, etc., of the pattern worn by the British troops in the Crimea and discredited by them after that campaign, but many of our regiments are actually using the very articles discarded by the Crimean regiments after the campaign was over. We believe that this disgrace merely requires to be pointed out to the Minister of Militia to secure his all powerful aid in putting a stop to it. With their present equipment our men could not maintain themselves in the field in the presence of an alert enemy for a week. Armies cannot always have lumbering wagon trains dragging along after them to carry the men's packs and ammunition as they had to do in the Northwest, because the corps on service had not the necessary equipment to carry them themselves. The first requirements of the Canadian militia are modern rifles and the valise equipment and the force cannot be considered as at all efficient until these are provided, but the questions of uniform, footwear, etc., are of almost as great importance.

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Of course there are very good reasons why we should try to secure a continuance of the system of assimilation of the uniform of the Canadian militia as far as possible to the clothing of the Imperial army, for the national spirit, esprit de

corps, etc., must be considered. There is all the less risk in following the fashion of the Imperial army as regards uniform when we remember that improvement is the order of the day in the parent service and that changes in uniform are being constantly made to meet existing conditions. The Army and Navy Gazette, the other day contained a letter from an army officer, urging changes in the direction of the simplification and utility suggested by our correspondent. He said: "I am in the habit of walking after game in the shooting season, and have, therefore, very practical experience of what are comfortable and what uncomfortable coverings for one's legs when walking, especially in rough ground, and, although it may make you smile, I have always been anxious that our soldiers (infantry) should have as good a chance of marching well and with the least amount of fatigue as is possible, and I do earnestly suggest that it would be a great improvement if the infantry soldier, instead of those trousers which confine the knee, wore knickerbockers and a serviceable gaiter. The Highlanders with their kilts always appear to march much better and more freely than men in trousers, and I think many of the French corps which have a similar kind of dress, I mean the Zouaves, &c., are noted for their good marching. If in addition to this the ill-fitting sock, which so often blisters the feet were done away with, and a bandage of flannel or cotton wrapped round the foot, such as is in use I fancy in the Russian Army, substituted, I think the comfort and efficiency of the infantry soldier would be also greatly promoted; moreover the knickerbocker will wear out two or three pairs of ordinary trousers. The trousers, too, always wear out at the heel and in the fork, and in muddy weather accumulates a good deal of earth."

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There has been some doubt expressed as