

Correspondence.

[This paper does not necessarily share the views expressed in correspondence published in its columns, the use of which is freely granted to writers on topics of interest to the Militia.]

THE SERGEANT-MAJOR'S POSITION.

EDITOR MILITIA GAZETTE,—Re recently published remarks on the Sergt.-Major's position, is not the Sergt.-Major in most, if not in all cases, in our Militia Regiments, supplied with every article of clothing and accoutrements free of charge, many of them paid for by the officers. An officer pays for everything he wears and uses and has long calls upon his purse for the numerous regimental expenses, besides in most cases giving up his pay.

Toronto, March 8th, 1889.

ENQUIRER.

ABOUT SMOKING PARTIES.

EDITOR MILITIA GAZETTE,—Anent the account of the "Duffers' Smoke," in your last issue, allow a non-smoker's toot to be heard. We hope that our sociable and ever welcome visitor, the GAZETTE, does not accord its hearty commendation to this latest mode of being sociable to the exclusion of non-smokers, and the military man's tried and trusty friend the fair sex.

Were the Colonel prepared to receive the just dues of every good Irishman, "rist his sowl," we could understand the exceeding propriety of the meeting; but, is the solemn conviviality, the tempered melancholy, the soothing application of the weed to the torn and bleeding heart-strings of the bereaved relative, in the Irish wake, of tender memories, to be supplanted by this modern innovation?

Shades of Montezuma, and of Sir Walter Raleigh, also the more modern shades of Gen. Grant's cancerous cigar, and of the beloved Kaiser Fritz' no less fatal pipe, attend the glorification of this enthralling old barbarous habit (veritable relic of barbarism). Mourn, Moore, that the wine cup has been supplanted at the "Feast of Reason and the flow of Soul" by the more ethereal vapours of the "dhudeen" and the meerschaum.

Pity the non-smoker who has not yet forced his rebellious nature to accommodate itself to the requirements of modern culture, but who desires to be sociable with his corps; gasping for a breath of fresh air, even as the dying codfish in the fog of the "Banks" gasps for his native element. How thoroughly enjoyable is the dull, deadened thump of the piano and the distant sounding foghorn note of the soloist!

If the custom is to flourish, let us, if we resolve to stay it out, imitate the smoke-tanned lungs and the deep, beer-vat capacity of the Teuton, and have the German beer garden introduced in all its sociable glories; then the pleasant gurgle of the descending draught would mingle harmoniously with the "pop" of a neighbouring lip emitting its fragrant cloud.

I had hoped that the Canadian sentiment might have turned in the direction of Morris tubes and recreation rooms furnished with the lately introduced "game of war," cribbage boards, checkers, etc., while amateur theatricals or concerts would wile away an occasional evening, but of course these may not possess the inspiring power of the fragrant weed, and exalt our heroes to the level of our illustrious fathers.

But perhaps, considering the advance of modern science, it were well to cultivate this as a military practice for use in the field. Some genius will, some of these days, spring upon us a smokeless explosive to replace the crude compound, gunpowder; then, sir, you can easily imagine how invaluable would be a force armed with heavy draught brier roots, and abundantly supplied with that "most fragrant tobacco"; which force could be thrown forward as a screening party to the movements of the advance, or formed as a rear guard to cover a retreat; while the enemy, unprovided with such a cover, would fall an easy prey to our bullets of the latest accepted calibre, 32 or 22.

Thanking you for your valuable space, I beg to remain, yours truly,

HYPERBOREAN RANGER.

New Fort Barracks, Toronto, March 6th, 1889.

OFFICERS AND STAFF-SERGEANTS AS RIFLE COMPETITORS.

Editor Militia Gazette,—I noticed in a recent issue of your paper the discussion which took place at the meeting of the Dominion Rifle Association regarding the proportion of officers and staff-sergeants who compete for and carry away prizes at the different rifle association meetings, to the exclusion of the rank and file. I believe it is quite true that this proportion is larger than it ought to be, but at the same time I think it would be a mistaken course to adopt to exclude them from shooting competitions. There are many staff-sergeants who have borne the brunt of working their companies up to their present strength and efficiency while they were in the ranks and as non-coms., and who have

only accepted staff-sergeancies because their civil employments do not permit of their longer devoting so much time to their companies as they have hitherto done. Still they take considerable interest in their companies, and their advice and experience is often very useful to those younger men who have succeeded them. Would it be a good thing to discourage such men by debarring them from shooting in competitions? It is well known that the volunteer force in Great Britain would never have attained its present dimensions had it not been for the interest taken and displayed in rifle shooting, and our Canadian militia very much resembles that force in its nature. If, however, commanding officers would avoid appointing men as staff-sergeants for the simple reason that they are good shots and useful men to have in a battalion when a prize is to be shot for (and who would not otherwise be available to strengthen their shooting team), but would give these appointments only to men who had proved of efficient service to their companies and battalions, and who had, as it were, "borne the burden and heat of the day," probably many of the objections taken at the meeting of the Dominion Rifle Association would be removed.

Because an officer carries a sword instead of a rifle is no reason why he should be debarred from shooting. To teach and encourage his men to become good shots he ought to know more about shooting and all its details, regarding sights, elevation, windage, effect of change in atmosphere, etc., than any of his men. In these days of improvements in arms and consequent alterations in details of shooting, nothing will so much tend to make an officer, or anyone else, approach excellence as encouragement to practise, and nothing will encourage practice so much as the inducements held out for an opportunity to obtain a good place in rifle competitions.

WINNIPEG.

A FIELD ARTILLERY HANDICAP.

Editor Militia Gazette—The following list copied from the D. A. Association's report shows the relative standing and efficiency credits of the eight affiliated batteries standing highest on the list for the year 1888.

	Drill, etc.	One-Fifth.	Total
	Credits.	Score.	Credits.
No. 1 Battery 1st Bde.....	210	72.2	282.2
Hamilton Battery.....	224	56.8	180.8
Montreal Battery.....	198	78.8	276.8
Quebec Battery.....	212	55	267
No. 2 Battery 1st Bde.....	190	68	258
Durham Battery.....	191	54.4	245.5
Woodstock Battery.....	174	61.4	235.4
Welland Canal Battery.....	160	65	225

One would naturally suppose that in a competition which is not only a firing but also an efficiency competition, those entrusted with the carrying out of the competition would be careful that no one or more batteries were unnecessarily handicapped by unequal conditions—and that all batteries would fire under the same rules, and under similar conditions as far as possible. The standing of the batteries and the credits awarded by the D. A. A. are published in the Militia Reports officially, and furnished to and published by the Ontario Artillery Association, which awards its prizes on these credits. They are published by the newspapers throughout Canada, and there is every reason why—not only that the greatest care should be exercised—but no trouble should be spared to secure an equal competition.

In the discussion on this subject at the Artillery Association meeting the effect—undeniably very great—that the state of the wind and weather, or the absence of a battery officer at the inspection, or firing, has on the credit of a battery, was again and again brought forward, apparently with the view of showing that as the conditions of the competition can never be exactly the same, no battery should object to being handicapped by controllable conditions. This view, which appears to meet with the approval of the Dominion Artillery Association, does away with all actual competition.

I will point out what the Executive Committee of the D. A. A. speak of as the "varying conditions under which gun practice was necessarily held" by the above eight batteries.

Batteries 1 and 2, 1st Bde.—Telephone between range and firing party; land target, easy of repair. ("Conditions.")

Quebec and Woodstock fired with studless shells. ("Conditions.")

Durham fired its preliminary at one range, its final at another range. ("Conditions.")

Hamilton and Welland Canal—Zinc targets on water; difficult to see and to repair; bannerols on booms; system condemned at Niagara, abandoned at Gananoque. ("Conditions.")

Four widely different controllable conditions!

If the gun practice is "necessarily" held under such various conditions, is it reasonable to count the scores of batteries in the credits in the efficiency competition and standing of the batteries? I have often