

THE CANADIAN MILITIA GAZETTE

A WEEKLY JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF THE ACTIVE FORCE OF THE DOMINION.

First Year.
VOL. I, No. 7.

Ottawa, Tuesday, 23rd June, 1885.

\$1.50 per Annum in advance
Single Copies Five Cents.

CORRESPONDENCE.

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THE CANADIAN MILITIA GAZETTE,
Box 316, OTTAWA, Canada.

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COMMENT AND CRITICISM.

Nothing shows more conclusively the opinion of the country that the active campaign is virtually over, than the loss of interest that is apparent in the doings of our troops, and the scarcity of news concerning them in the daily journals. It is neither particularly interesting nor particularly satisfying to read of flying columns making excursions of one or two days into the woods in one direction, then in another, and failing in every case to meet the enemy, and yet this action is necessary, and will have one of two effects: either to keep Big Bear moving so quickly that he will have to drop his supplies as he has already given up his wagons, and finally succumb to hunger, or to drive him altogether into the northern wilds, if he cannot be beaten, he can do us no harm. The particularly good news, however, has just reached us, as we go to press, that the McLeans are released from their imprisonment and are expected at Fort Pitt immediately. The chase no doubt will be now wholly relinquished, Big Bear left to his own devices, and some of the troops sent home at once.

A bad precedent was established when the Militia Department consented to bring home the bodies of any of the victims, though it is quite easy to understand why it was done. Like the country at large, the Minister of Militia felt that nothing he could do was too much to mark his appreciation of the achievements of our active service contin-

gent, and the assistance given to one could not in fairness be refused to others. Fortunately the number of casualties has been comparatively small, for if there had been a long death roll the return of the bodies would have become an embarrassing undertaking. Although the feelings of the relatives of the deceased are worthy of all respect and admiration, it would have been best if the old rule of making the battlefield the soldier's fittest and most glorious burial place had never been departed from, and if by any unhappy chance the Canadian Militia are ever again called to fire a shot in anger it would be well to have it distinctly understood beforehand that the removal home of dead soldiers would receive no encouragement from headquarters.

A correspondent suggests a good way of marking tangibly the indebtedness that all feel to those who fell in defence of their country in the late fights, by having memorial tablets, suitably inscribed, erected in some public place. He refers particularly to Ottawa, the locality in which he is specially interested, and where the fine brick drill hall lends itself admirably to the carrying out of his scheme, but the suggestion is evidently equally applicable to every town which has suffered a similar loss; if it cannot be placed in a drill hall, there will always be some public building which can be utilized. Visitors to Toronto will have been impressed by the handsome monument erected in the Park to the memory of those who died for Canada at Ridgeway. All towns cannot afford such memorials, but the smallest can compass a mural tablet, and every town that has lost a citizen will wish to mark their gratitude in some way, and in what way better could it be done?

In another column will be found a short article from one of the principal officers in New Brunswick pointing out some facts which were borne in upon the inhabitants of that province by the call to arms of their provisional battalion. It may be that the ill-fortune of New Brunswick in not sending forward a provincial contingent emphasized these facts, but there is no doubt the same lessons have been learned by every province of the Dominion: That in times of danger all her young men are ready and eager to spring to her defence; and that the policy adopted by the successive Governments of retaining a small permanent force as a nucleus around which the remainder of the militia might rally and from which they might derive such instruction as to justify their motto of "In pace paratus," has been the most beneficial that could have been adopted for a large country with a small population.

It is a question whether Canada has not been following British army regulations too closely in other things besides headdress; for instance, in the matter of tents. The bell tent has many good points, but it has one very bad one; it is too heavy and cumbersome. In a campaign like our present one, where every pound's weight is a matter of grave importance this must have been a serious drawback. Take our North-west surveyors, who are proverbial for making camp life comfortable, and they say unanimously that they "would not be bothered" with bell tents. Ridge-pole tents, with walls three feet high and semi-circular backs, technically known as "wells," made of light