

Comparative Efficiency Returns.

Editor Canadian Military Gazette:

The system lately adopted of marking the comparative standing of the different corps is susceptible of much unfairness, and has given cause for dissatisfaction.

A return to the former method of the inspecting officer making a concise report of his inspection, would, in my humble opinion, be fairer all round.

In the first place, under the new system of marking, each military district having a different inspecting officer, it follows that the return he makes of the corps in his district will bear relatively little comparison with the report of another inspecting officer in *his* district.

All men do not look through the same glasses.

A corps fortunate enough to be inspected by a D.A.G., who is a good fellow and views everything *couleur de rose*, will, in the natural course of things, receive high marks; while a corps in another district, just as efficient, inspected by a martinet who is also commandant of a military school, and accustomed to the performance of regulars, will be marked lower.

This is manifestly unfair, disheartens all ranks, and conveys a bad impression to the public, without any corresponding benefit.

The following incidents which have come under my personal observation will perhaps bear out the above:

INCIDENT No. 1.—(Maximum No. of marks for horses in troop of cavalry is 20.) A troop of cavalry recruited from a city and far better mounted than any other troop in the regiment, is given 15 points; the other troops recruited in different sections of the surrounding country are each given the same.

INCIDENT No. 2.—(Maximum No. of marks for officers answering questions, 8, as appears by circular issued from headquarters, although in the returns it would appear that 24 is the maximum number; however, after considerable study, I take it that 24 marks is intended to include 3 officers, either on the staff or per company, but if this supposition is correct, it is impossible to ascertain the No. of marks obtained by each individual officer, which is obviously unfair. It looks rather absurd to find that where the maximum is given as 24, some city colonels are credited with 32 marks.) A captain of a troop of cavalry appeared before the inspecting officer to be questioned. As the questions are, for some reason that a fellow can't understand, printed and given to each officer some days before the examination, the latter should, if he takes any pains at all to consult his book, readily answer. The captain was the only officer in his troop questioned—13 points were given. Query: Why should this officer receive 13 points when the maximum is only 8? An infantry regiment from same city was shortly after inspected, and the *captain of a company who was absent without leave* and

consequently not questioned, gets credited individually with full marks.

INCIDENT No. 3.—(Maximum marks for arms and armouries, 20.) A troop of cavalry having armoury in city, tended by a paid government caretaker, accoutrements and saddlery in as good condition as it was possible to have them—points given, 15; four country troops of same regiment, who had not half the conveniences and whose accoutrements were in no better shape than they should have been, get each the same No. of marks.

INCIDENT No. 4.—(Maximum marks for infantry, 150.) A city corps inspected in 1892 obtained 86½ points, *not including target returns*. Inspected in 1893 by a different inspecting officer, battalion being as efficient, if not more so, marks given, *including target returns*, 58.71. This battalion is the only city corps of its district, and the marks given, probably the lowest returns for any city corps in the Dominion.

INCIDENT No. 5.—(Maximum No. of marks for answering questions, say 8.) An officer present at last inspection was not questioned at all and received full marks.

Added to this the fact that some inspecting officers deduct points for absentees, including vacancies of commissioned officers, and even officers and men absent from inspection with leave, on account of sickness, vouched for by medical certificate, or necessary absence from home, whereas other inspecting officers are more lenient, and do not insist upon these deductions.

If these absurd returns must be made, let the department spend a little more for paper and printer's ink, so that they can at least be understood. VEDETTE.

Women as Volunteers.

Some months ago a spirited correspondence was maintained in these columns, as the outcome of an article which we published on "A Volunteer Corps for Women," from the pen of Miss Ethel Stokes. As was natural to expect, the most diverse ideas were expressed in reference to the practicability of carrying the writer's views into effect. Somewhere were who endorsed the lady's ideas without question, whilst others, without going so far as to be ungallant, satirized her proposals with more or less severity. As the correspondence proceeded suggestions were made to the effect that it was woman's mission to cure rather than to kill, and that there was ample scope for the exercise of such military instincts as she might be disposed to display in nursing the sick and wounded, who by the mischances of war would yearn for gentle hands and tender hearts to alleviate their sufferings. Even those that ventured to scoff at the idea of women soldiers were amongst the foremost to admit the principle, so admirably put into words by Sir Walter Scott, in "Marmion":—"When pain and anguish wring the brow a ministering angel thou." Whilst giving the various contributors to the controversy all needed scope for the expression of their opinions, we, ourselves, gathered up some fringes of the arguments put forward, and

expressed approval of Miss Stokes' objects, in so far as she aimed at the improvement of the physique of her sex. We were, however, constrained to take exception to the proposal that ladies should be armed and drilled for fighting purposes only. During a later phase of the discussion Miss Stokes again entered the arena. Without entirely abandoning the principle which she first enunciated, she, in effect, admitted that much really useful work might be accomplished by a medical staff corps composed of women. In this connection, our lady contributor pointed out that the present medical staff corps numbers under 2,000, out of a total of some 220,000 volunteers. As this body—so totally disproportionate to the whole force—would probably never be available at one time, an auxiliary corps of trained women would, she thought, be a welcome assistance. In due course the last word was said on the matter, and it has slumbered until now, so far as it affected the columns of this paper.

That the military-medical scheme for women was not dead, but only temporarily dormant, is evidenced by the circular which we print on another page of our present impression. Like the article which gave rise to the correspondence mentioned above, the article we print to-day emanates from Miss Stokes. This lady now, however, comes before our readers in a character which differs somewhat from that of her first appearance. Her original suggestion of a combatant corps, pure and simple, has been modified in conformity with what, we think, will be generally considered wiser counsels. The project in its revised form is for the establishment of a Women's Volunteer Medical Staff Corps. In launching her proposal in its present shape, Miss Stokes, and those engaged with her in starting the new movement, cannot fail to command much sympathetic interest. Whether they will succeed in their endeavors to enlist that measure of personal and pecuniary support, which they appear hopeful of securing, is another matter, and one on which we have not ventured to form an opinion. We are fully cognizant of the need of a more adequate medical and nursing staff to meet the possible requirements of a mobilization of the volunteer army for active service. We are also aware that there are hundreds and thousands of women in our midst who would be willing, nay anxious, to render service to the cause of humanity and to the state if a plan could be formulated that would square workably with the combining of sentiment and utility. The question is, in these circumstances, can our military requirements, and the desire of a numerous section of our female relatives to be useful, be focussed in such a manner as shall result in the formation of a Women's Volunteer Medical Staff Corps? We leave the answer to Miss Stokes and her coadjutors, as being the most competent judges of the psychical side of their own sex. As will be gathered from a perusal of the circular issued by the executive committee, the intention is not merely to form a band of auxiliary nurses to the V.M.J.C. of the other—we may no longer say *sterner*—sex. The promoters of this new forward movement purpose going much farther than this. They stick in one respect to the first idea of making the corps a military body, which, besides being medically trained, shall march, drill with arms, encamp, be self-existent, competent to take care of itself, and moreover earn a capitation grant. A corps formed on the foregoing lines would, if accepted, be of more practical value than any body of purely civilian nurses, however zealous and highly trained, owing to its disciplined character, and to the fact that the authorities could in times of need command their services instead of inviting them.—*Volunteer Record*.