

# THE CANADIAN MILITIA GAZETTE

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No. 7, of 31st October, 1889.

MISCELLANEOUS.

## Topics of the Week.

Noticing our warning to the Toronto militiamen against allowing their rifle range to be closed by fair promises of compensating benefits to be conferred, the advocates of the measure reiterate their cry of alarm about the density of population having made it dangerous to continue the use of Garrison Common as a rifle range. Granted that this is so, a new problem presents itself: Is it possible to make the range one safe to use? We believe it could be made absolutely safe, and this at a cost which would be nothing compared to the expense to Government and to all shooting men involved in the carrying out of rifle practice on a range many miles out of the city.

Sir Adolphe Caron recently intimated that the extension of the militia system to the Northwest Territories is one of the probabilities of the near future; and it seems not unlikely that a proposition of that nature will come before Parliament at the approaching Session. This will be in response to a general demand from the Northwest, which constitutes a guarantee that the country is quite ready to take up volunteer soldiering, recognizing in it a healthy pastime as well as a safeguard against disorder. There are now in the territories a sufficient number of men, who in the East were known as enthusiastic volunteers, to form a well-trained nucleus for the territorial corps.

The Brigade Major of the Third and Fourth Military Districts has just set a worthy example to the officers of those districts. As will be seen from the General Orders published in this issue, Col. Lewis has, to brush himself up in the new drill, taken a course at the Royal School of Infantry, and has passed a very creditable examination, as might have been expected from an officer of his aptitude and experience, even though he has long-passed the age when men readily take such studies.

A reminiscence of the inception and first prize meeting of the Dominion Rifle Association, which appears in this issue, will be of great interest to the surviving marksmen of that period, to whom it will doubtless bring back many long forgotten pleasant incidents; and to the rifle men of the present as well, who cannot fail to note with surprise how radical has been the change in methods during the twenty-one years which have since elapsed. That the change has been for the better, no one will dispute. With, as then, only a few prizes for a multitude of competitors, the game was one of chance rather than of skill; for in rifle shooting no one can enter a single match with any confidence of being first, second or third, or even tenth or twentieth, out of three or four hundred competitors; but with the rewards more widely distributed, as

they have been of late years, the skilful man who has been faithful at his practice may be reasonably sure of obtaining a fair share of the prize money in compensation for his trouble and expense. The fact that the reminiscence is from the pen of Major Henry F. Perley, H.Q.S., an officer to whom the Dominion riflemen are not a little indebted for his unselfish devotion to their interests, will, we are sure, add largely to the interest with which it will be read.

Major-General Edwards, commanding at Hong Kong, has completed his inspection of the Australian defences. He recommends the federation of the forces, and the appointment of a lieutenant-general to act as adviser in time of peace, and to take the command in war time. Among General Edwards' other recommendations are the adoption of a uniform system of organization and armament, the establishment of a federal military college, the extension of rifle clubs, and the introduction of a uniform gauge on the railways. Sir Henry Parkes, the Premier of New South Wales, has addressed a communication to the Premiers of the other Australian colonies, in which he suggests that a consultation should be held with a view to federal action upon Major-General Edwards' recommendations.

Sir Frederick Roberts has once again been calling public attention to the lamentable lack of accurate shooting amongst the rank and file of the British regular army. The new rifle with which the army is about to be armed is reckoned the most perfect arm of precision yet placed in the hands of the infantry soldier. Used by a trained expert, it shoots well up to 2,500 yards, and perfect accuracy is guaranteed at medium ranges. But, says the *United Service Gazette*, "satisfactory results, even with this arm, ought not to be expected from the average soldier, so long as he is allowed so lamentably few opportunities per year of spending ball cartridge at the "butts." A certain proportion of our volunteer soldiers become good shots, chiefly because of the fact that they are, out of their own pockets, able to purchase ball cartridge. A regular soldier, whom his country expects shall acquit himself well on the field of battle, cannot afford, out of his limited pay, to get himself up at the butts, and hence it happens that, in the Transvaal and elsewhere, he has been placed at a great disadvantage in the presence of an enemy who can shoot straight at wonderful distances. A little less drill in the barrack square, and much more practice at the ranges than they get now, would tend to make our regular infantry considerably more efficient in the field than they at present are."

The defences of the rivers Thames and Medley against naval attack are to be strengthened by the construction of a new earthwork fort at Scarp's Gate, near Sheernees. The site of the present rifle butts, which is about forty yards from the sea wall, has been selected for the proposed fort, which will, therefore, immediately face the Nore light vessel, and will command the entrances to both the Thames and the Medway. The armament will consist of two 10-inch 30-ton steel breech-loading guns, and two 6-inch 5-ton breech-loading guns.