

## NOTICES.

*Communications, especially on Local Subjects, must be brief and to the point, and written on one side of the paper only.*

*All communications should be addressed*

THE CANADIAN MILITARY GAZETTE,  
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## THE CANADIAN MILITARY GAZETTE,

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22nd, 1878.

### "Welcome the Coming, Speed the Parting Guest."

The departure of His Excellency the Earl of Dufferin, the dawn of a new regime with Royalty in Canada; the change of Government and the advent of a new policy; the fact that the present administrator of the Government, General Sir P. L. Macdougall, is proud to be known as a Canadian soldier, and the early return of our chief, General Sir E. Selby Smyth, makes the present a time of unusual interest to the defenders of the country.

None more than the volunteer militia have cause to regret that a generous nobleman has left our shores, he has done much to encourage a desire to excel in military matters. Many beautiful Dufferin medals have been awarded for literary ability, and for skill with gun and rifle. While we pray God speed the Earl of Dufferin we are fortunate in the prospect of welcoming to Canada a nobleman, well known in England as a volunteer officer and an accomplished rifle shot. The Canadian volunteer militia will be ready with a fitting welcome to the Hon. Colonel of the 105th Lanarkshire Rifle Volunteers, Lieut.-Col. commanding the Argyllshire Artillery Brigade and President of the West of Scotland Artillery Association.

We spoke of the change of Government and the advent of a new policy; those whose sincere desire was to build up in Canada the best militia system it was possible to secure, have become well nigh disheartened. "Experience has made them sage," the policy of the militia is, to be non-political; to them the words "measures not men" are fraught with meaning. The policy of the late Government has nearly economised the force out of existence. The only regret we have at the defeat of the late government from a militia point of view, is the fact that it removes an able and rapidly becoming popular Minister of Militia, his was the unwelcome task of making bricks without straw, and we know he worked diligently in the endeavour. The Dominion Rifle Association and the Dominion Artillery Association will long remember the courteous attention and ready help lent them by Mr. Jones. But, while we regret his removal, we see no reason why we should not welcome his successor; the appointment of Lieut.-Col. Hon. L. F. R. Masson was probably the best that could be made; he has always shown a great interest in militia affairs, and on that question is considered an authority in the House. He has held a commission in the volunteer militia since October, 1862, was appointed Brigade Major of the 8th military district 21st August, 1863. Served on the frontier during the first Fenian raid, March, 1866, and was on active service during the second raid, in the same year; promoted to rank Lieut.-Col. 1867. It is sincerely to be hoped that a more liberal, not to say sensible policy will be inaugurated towards the militia.

## Musketry Instruction.

"A soldier who cannot shoot is useless and an incumbrance to the battalion."—(Musketry Instruction.)

"The tactical value of troops is entirely dependent upon the degree of instruction in musketry that may have been imparted."—(Lt.-Col. Chas. Grossmann, of the Austrian Army.)

We would draw attention to a fact in connection with our militia training. We allude to the neglect of an important part of the musketry instruction, viz., judging distance. Few, if any, of the corps are put through this practice.

The majority are taught firing at targets placed at known distances; an excellent practice to accustom the rifleman to the use of his weapon as a fire arm, but which does not provide for the contingencies of the battle field.

Trainings, tactical or technical, should, we think, be looked upon only as means to attain one end, that is shooting at an enemy under the best possible conditions to inflict injury. Some means, however, to obtain this object are totally ignored and our riflemen are taught shooting at a known range, but no more.

What would be the result in actual warfare? A force drawn up in front of hostile troops and peppering at them at random.

Every one knows that when firing at a short range an error of 50 yards is not of much consequence; the culminating point of the trajectory of our rifle at say 300 yards being about 7 feet above the general level of the ground. But at 400 yards it increases to 11 feet, and at 600 yards to 23 feet, at which range the margin or space within which a man on foot is in danger is about 30 yards, so that a mistake in judging the distance at that range of about 15 yards under or over would result to say nothing more in a waste of ammunition.

If we could in actual warfare resort only to short range firing, well and good, but though some authorities have been much in favor of short range firing exclusively, still experience appears to point out that long range firing must also be resorted to.

The Germans have fully recognized its value, especially since the famous attack on St. Privat, near Metz, in 1870, where they lost 6,000 men in 10 minutes from musketry fire at 1,200 metres (1,313 yards about), and firing at long ranges is now sedulously practiced by them.

It appears, in fact, that much steadier practice is made in the field at long than at short range. Notwithstanding, volley firing at say 300 yards would still have to be used by compact bodies of troops supporting, for instance, a final advance, and from the mass of missiles thus delivered great effects could be expected. Our drill instructions are very explicit on this point. But for the gradual approach of a fighting line (in extended order) independent fire beginning at long range would have to be adopted, if it were even only for the purpose of unsteading the enemy's fire. Granting, therefore, that long range firing is a necessity, is it not evident that a force, each individual of which is well trained to accurately estimate distances, should gain great benefits thereby, as the proper elevation could be given at every stage of the advance, each man being able to judge the range himself would not have to depend upon the ability of his leaders for this purpose, and the leaders would have more liberty of action in keeping their men well in hand.

Target practice, in skirmishing order, is a complement of judging distance. Very little attention is paid to this by our active militia instructors. This is to be regretted all the more, as that practice reproduces in the best possible manner the actual conditions of battle: firing at a constantly increasing or diminishing range, obliging the riflemen to alter their elevation to suit.

Perhaps, the following additional practice could be introduced to advantage: We mean firing at a moving object or dummy advancing obliquely across the range, thus altering both

range and direction, always striving to represent as closely as possible the circumstances of actual conflict.

Now that fire is the great factor in successful engagements, would it not be advisable to take every opportunity of improving our militia in this most important part of military training? What is the object, let us ask, of drill and tactics generally, if troops cannot by their fire injure and demoralize the enemy?

To conclude, without judging distance practice we think we are right in saying that all the rifle practice in the world becomes comparatively useless, and that it is desirable that some other system than the present one be inaugurated for the militia in this respect. Very small powers of maneuvering can at the best be imparted to the militia generally—the main point, it seems, would be to give such training to the mass as would make it a *useful* organization.

## A Novel Gun.

The following extract from a letter from the East to the West written by Lt.-Col. Cecil B. Le Mesurier, R. A., Bengal, to a brother officer in Canada, will be read with interest, especially in view of the Anglo-Indian expedition now facing Afghanistan. The wonderful advances wrought by science and skill towards the perfection and deadly power of fire-arms, great and small, would not have been considered possible at the time of Sale's disastrous expedition not forty years ago, when the new musket with the percussion cap was used for the first time. Our attention is, however, now directed to a recent ingenious invention applicable to the guns of the Artillery Service, which, considering the nature of the country likely to be invaded, will no doubt receive the attention it merits.

The letter above referred to is dated Simla, Bengal, 12th July, 1878.

"On my way back from Bermuda to this country I started Major Noble and Sir William Armstrong of Elswick, in a new system of gun-making, the Le Mesurier system, notably for mountain artillery but applicable to any piece of ordnance of moderate weight; my object being to make possible the transport of powerful guns—field, position and even siege—over any ground practicable for pack animals, and this has been obtained as far as mule transport goes. The gun is made in two parts which fit together and are connected by a screw cap over the joint, which on being turned, brings the two ends firmly together and prevents any escape of gas. To ensure this, the ends are fitted with gas checks, each length of gun forms an easy load for one mule, viz: 192 lbs. and 180 lbs. total weight of gun 372 lbs. The operation of putting the gun together takes about 40 seconds and taking it to pieces 30 seconds. The guns (two have already been made), have been thoroughly tested at Woolwich and Shoeburyness, and the official report is that 'they worked perfectly, without a hitch.' With regard to their shooting—the one point to be considered in a gun—I send you the result of the trials with them at Shoebury for range and Accuracy, from which you will learn the astonishing fact that two guns have been made, one of 372 lbs and the other of only 322 lbs, which can easily be carried by two mules—the lighter one even by man transport—whose fire is equal in power and superior in accuracy to the 9-pr. field gun of the service weighing 8 cwt. and drawn by six horses. There is the fact that the light gun fired a charge of within 2 oz. of the service field piece and gave an initial velocity of over 1400 with a shrapnel shell containing nearly twice as many bullets as in the service shell and consequently a much more powerful missile. The most astonishing thing is that it was fired on the same carriage as the service 7-pr steel gun of 200 lbs. weight. Sir W. Armstrong writes to me that the carriages were somewhat shaken as they were made only to withstand the