

# THE CANADIAN MILITIA GAZETTE

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## Topics of the Week.

An artillery commanding officer stopped his subscription to this paper last week, complaining that rifle matches monopolised too much of its space. He is perhaps a type of those commanding officers who, as the *Victoria Warder* says, do not represent the sentiments of their corps, for his brigade has long been noted as a nursery whence emanate many of the best shots of the Dominion, and has had a large share of the glory of a recent decisive victory in a team competition with the rifle. Had he only been patient he might have revelled in artillery literature, for the rifle season is about at its close, and artillery returns of all sorts are due. A batch of these, just received from the secretary of the Dominion Artillery Association, we publish this week. They include the results of the Field Artillery general efficiency competition; the prize lists and detailed scores of the Field firing practice; and the results of a drill and driving competition between two batteries of our regulars, the Regiment of Canadian Artillery, for a challenge trophy kindly donated by the officer commanding.

Apropos of the general efficiency competition, the officers of the Hamilton Battery will doubtless be interested, and grieved too, to note that but for the absence of two officers from inspection the battery might have been easily first, whilst now it is but third. We know nothing of the circumstances producing the absence of these officers, and likely it was altogether unavoidable, but that would make the fact none the less regrettable. The highest score was 260 points, and Hamilton had 254. The non-commissioned officers and men received 62 out of 64 points possible for their answers to the questions asked by the inspector, but the officers received only 19 out of 40 possible for their replies. Those who were present were well up, but they could not answer on behalf of the absentees. The prize for general efficiency is annually a cup presented by the Governor General. The winners this time were No. 1 Battery of the 1st Brigade, Guelph. This is their fourth victory in eight years, the former occasions being in 1882, 1884 and 1888. We congratulate them upon demonstrating this year their ability to make good their title to the Dominion championship, last year the subject of such fierce dispute.

We have to hand, and will in a future issue publish extracts from, the Instructions for Horse and Field Artillery, Practice issued to the Royal Artillery for 1889. These extracts we would recommend to the attention of battery commanders or instructors as an assistance in preparing for next season's competitions, which will probably be carried out on the lines here laid down.

A new manual of infantry drill for the Austro-Hungarian Army has been issued. It supersedes the one that has been in use since 1874, and aims at introducing a greater simplicity and rapidity in all exercises. It says: "The soldier must be able to load and fire in every attitude, in every circumstance, and under any condition, day or night, with the utmost rapidity and steadiness. He must be able to give his whole attention to the word of command." The new manual insists much on troops keeping to the closest order when in line. Although the French issued a new volume of instruction on field exercises in 1884, they already find a new manual required by modifications in the drill and tactics of infantry necessitated by the latest improvements in firearms, and the increased fire effect. Doubtless the lead in this respect set them by the Germans had a good deal to say to their decision. The French having just introduced a smokeless powder for the use of their new rifle, are in advance of all the other nations of Europe in this respect.

During the recent encampment of the Maine militia, the Frontier Guards were credited with making the best record in skirmishing under the conditions laid down in Blunt's Manual. Major E. E. Newcomb, I. R. P., 1st Brigade of Maine, gives the following particulars regarding the score made by the Frontier Guards. "With 30 men: bullseyes, 30; centres, 139; inners, 93; outers, 18; 280 hits out of a possible 300; total, 1,021 points, and with an average of 34 out of a possible 50 or 68 per cent. It will be observed that the centres exceed the inners by two-thirds; that the inners exceed the outers by four-fifths, while the bulls average one per man. In regard to the grouping of shots, it is found that had an ordinary sized man been standing in front of the bullseye he would have been hit by 196 of the 280 bullets which struck the target. I know of no such shooting being done by the same number of men, all *bona fide* members of the same company, either in the Regular Army or National Guard of this or any other country."

During the German manœuvres a trial was made of the smokeless powder, the troops representing the enemy using the old powder, so that the comparison was made between the old and the new. Correspondents of the London papers who attended the manœuvres describe the results as most striking. The enemy found it impossible to determine the position of their opponents, who were constantly getting to within 200 to 250 yards of them. Under the protection of cover they were frequently taken on the edges of a forest in flank, two or three companies being sent forward at double-quick and compelling them to withdraw under a murderous fire from their rear and right. So much in doubt were they as to the direction of the fire that they would, had the engagement been a real one, have been nearly annihilated before discovering the position of the enemy. The fire of a whole company only showed faint brown puffs of smoke, which would have taken keen eyes to discover. In fact, a whole battery of artillery with the new powder does not make half so much smoke as that made by a company of infantry with the old powder, and a whole company of infantry firing a volley with the new powder does not make half so much smoke as a single gun makes in firing with the old.