

THE CANADIAN MILITIA GAZETTE

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

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CORRESPONDENCE.

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COMMENT AND CRITICISM.

In our correspondence columns will be found a letter on military schools that is worthy of the most serious consideration, as it suggests a means of instructing a greater number of officers than is possible under the present system. We do not go so far as to endorse the scheme, but at least it is one way out of the difficulty that now undeniably exists. The letter brings up the question whether the infantry schools are doing all the work of which they are capable. The attendance at them seems to be limited to the accommodation of the barracks, but surely this should be no obstacle. Look at the old military schools under the Imperial regiments; it will not be denied that the great majority of men turned out by them were thoroughly instructed, and that a military school certificate meant that its holder possessed knowledge that any commanding officer was glad to secure, and yet these men did not live in barracks. The staffs of the military schools were no larger than those of the schools of infantry, but they were able to take in classes of twenty every fortnight and turn out a corresponding number, say between four and five hundred, in the course of a year.

Now, why should not the schools of infantry do as much? We are sufficiently democratic to venture the assertion that a knowledge of mess room conventionalities is not indispensable to the subaltern of a rural battalion, and it is hard to understand how the knowledge acquired of the interior economy of a barracks would be of use to any Canadian troops on any active service—for instance how did it come in

when we marched against the Fenians, or against the Halfbreeds? Why then should not the capacity of the schools be augmented during the summer months by quartering the candidates in camps convenient to the barracks, where they would learn interior economy likely to be very much more serviceable than that acquired under wooden roofs? We would suggest, as another crude idea, to be cogitated with that propounded by "Fifty-fourth," that militiamen desirous of attending the schools should be allowed to board in their neighborhood, or that they should be formed into camps under canvas during the summer, and that sufficient allowance should be made them to induce as many to attend as the instructional staff of the schools could by any possibility handle.

There is no class of the community that is so well fitted out for a roving life as our surveyors, and for active service the nearer our militiamen are made to resemble the surveyors the more comfort they will have. This is the ultimatum at which "Noodle" has been driving in all his letters; the devices used by surveyors to save weight and trouble he praises, what the surveyors have discarded he condemns. Take for instance his tirade against valises in this week's issue. Can you imagine a surveyor hampering himself up with a lot of straps so as to keep his kit on his back? On the contrary, he shoves everything into a stout canvas bag, and that bag is carried by a canoe, by a horse, by an Indian, and only on a pinch by himself, and in a small space it contains a wonderful assortment of conveniences. His clothing, too, is suggestive of convenience, from the broad trimmed hat for summer wear and the heavy tweed shirt, with its breast pockets, down to the shoes, conveniently arranged with holes to let the sleugh water run out. Where generations of men have had experience in camping out, untrammelled by precedent or routine, we may be sure they have "got the thing down pretty fine," and the more nearly like them our troops are equipped the more comfortable they will be and the more they will be able to accomplish on actual service.

The rifle shooting season is opening, and the ammunition problem is still unsolved. All winter we have been assured that there would be no cause of complaint with this year's cartridges, but we have yet to learn that a satisfactory supply is forthcoming. What the rifle associations, and they represent the shooting portion of the militia, want, is ammunition, at least as reliable in its action as the last supplies imported, and ammunition that will remain constant in quality throughout the whole season; which can only be secured by having sufficient good powder of exactly the same brand to fill the whole supply required, roughly some 600,000 rounds. If this year's Snider cartridges are as erratic as those manufactured last year we can promise the Minister of Militia and the officials of his department, the superintendent of the cartridge factory, and the members of the commission, a lively time of it, for now there is no English stock to fall back upon, and when "the boys" have made up their minds that they want a thing they have a faculty for making themselves heard.