

THE CANADIAN MILITIA GAZETTE

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CORRESPONDENCE.

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COMMENT AND CRITICISM.

As we supposed, the past week has seen the end of the campaign decided. Big Bear has preferred flight to resistance, and having retreated into a country through which it would be useless, if possible, for troops to follow him, General Middleton has relinquished his pursuit, and is on his way home, leaving the further movements of the troops to be conducted by the other commanders. Difficulties are not at an end: the fact of Big Bear being still on the warpath is in itself a most serious thing, and his possession of the McLeans and other captives demands that everything possible should be done for their relief. But at present everything indicates that the end of the campaign must be a waiting game, and the troops are more content to wait now that it has been proved that the horrible stories about Mrs. Delaney were utterly baseless, and we hope that the lately published stories respecting the Misses McLean may be placed in the same category. In any case just at present the safety of Mrs. Delaney and Mrs. Gowanlock has caused quite a revulsion of feeling in Big Bear's favor.

One of the blanks in the numeration of our infantry battalions has been filled, as will be seen on reference of the last general orders, by the formation of a five-company battalion in Essex, the westernmost county of the Ontario peninsula, and the southernmost county of the Dominion, which was a long time ago the headquarters of the Twenty-third battalion. The original Twenty-first battalion had its headquarters at St. John's, P.Q., and was disbanded in November, 1882. The numbers now

wanting to complete are the Fourth and Forty-eighth battalions. The newly-formed battalion should be a strong one, for it is located in a well-populated district, in one of the most fertile parts of the country, peopled by an enterprising and intelligent lot of farmers and merchants. Col. Wilkinson is to be congratulated on the organization of his battalion, and he and his command may confidently rely on a hearty welcome from the whole of their brothers-in-arms.

It has been noticed that Col. Scott's and Col. Smith's Winnipeg Provisional regiments are often called the Ninety-first and Ninety-second battalions, each of them in turn being assigned the lower number. There is no authority for the use of such numerical designation for either of them, as they are at present simply temporary battalions, and it would seem preferable, if they were permanently added to the militia list, to utilize one of the present blank numbers. In the meantime the simplest way of distinguishing them would be to call Col. Smith's which was the first organized, the First and Col. Scott's the Second Winnipeg Provisional Battalion if the designations which are used by the Militia Department of "Winnipeg Light Infantry Battalion" and "Winnipeg Battalion of Infantry," respectively, did not seem distinctive enough.

The County Council of Lincoln have shown an appreciation of the militia force of their locality that is alike worthy of praise and imitation. At a late meeting they voted to provide all the troops in the county, amounting to nine companies, with white regulation helmets; the Militia Department only serving out forage caps, which are unsuitable for summer wear. The council evidently acted on the principle that the men, after giving their time to volunteering for a mere nominal recompense, should not be asked to put their hands in their pockets for actual necessaries, but that they should be aided by those, the property holders in the vicinity, whose interests, in case of any disturbance, they would be the first to guard. There is no doubt that the North-west trouble, bringing forth the prompt response and admirable achievements of the troops, has instilled into the whole country a more lively appreciation of the militia force than has perhaps ever before existed, and possibly the Lincoln companies have this to thank for their success; but whatever the motive the action is eminently praiseworthy, and we would suggest to other municipal authorities that they might, with the approval of their constituents, go and do likewise.

This brings up again the question of headdress, and leads us to remark that we do not consider the regulation helmet a perfect summer hat for Canadian troops. Unless made of very expensive materials it is almost as heavy as some of the fur arrangements that provoked our previous criticism; it is ruined if it meets with rough treatment; it is troublesome to keep clean, and a shower of rain is as fatal to its pipeclay veneer as to a lady's bonnet; and it makes a man look squat, one of medium height who would pass muster in a busby looking in a helmet a mere boy. This is a formidable array of objections, and one that