

## The Militia Pastime.

"Smoothbore" in your paper of the 19th April, calling attention to a letter in the *Mail* on the subject of rifle shooting in the permanent corps, states that "notwithstanding the importance which was attached to rifle shooting as part of the modern soldier's education and the large sums of money offered in prize competitions, the men of our permanent corps were noticeable only by their absence from the Dominion and Provincial gatherings."

Being a "man by the sea," one of the soldiers of the "lower Provinces," so called; I can only speak in whispers of the "higher education" of the permanent force (A Company and staff I. S. Corps) in the Maritime Provinces, and of the steps taken annually to ensure good shooting. This is done, not by the firing of any number of rounds by the few (which few have their breasts covered with shooting medals without any great advantage to the corps), but by carrying out target and judging distance practice in the corps, as a whole, after careful attention to preliminary drills—recognizing the fact that "too much care and attention cannot be given to musketry training," chiefly in preliminary drills, "of recruits, as on its soundness will depend to a very great extent their efficiency as soldiers."

In short, avoiding the taking up one particular drill or practice and dropping another (the development of the head at the expense of the feet), but instead taking up each in turn, drill and practice, target and judging distance practice, in order to secure general efficiency.

This course of drill and practice has been carried out with the best results annually in the musketry camp of the above corps since its formation in 1884.

Nor, in carrying out this systematic course both with the recruit and the trained soldier, is competitive shooting outside the corps neglected (would that competitive judging distance practice received attention at the Dominion and Provincial gatherings referred to). The corps sends a batch of marksmen annually to compete with the rifle at the county and provincial matches, where they hold their own in friendly rivalry with their brethren from whatever corps.

And while a "Heaven-born marksman" cannot be produced at the sweet will of mortal man, one marksman sent by the above corps to the Dominion matches in 1884, (Sergeant O'Shaughnessy) was himself so charmed with the ranges, and he, in turn, so charmed (with magic influence of hand and eye in using the rifle) the "fish-tail" winds which have on occasions been observed at the Rideau, that he obtained the highest possible score of 50 in shooting for the Macdougall cup.

It may be interesting to your readers to know the details of the course of preliminary drills and practices to which I have referred. They are as follows:

### Preliminary Drills.

1. Theoretical principles.
2. Care of arms and ammunition.
3. Aiming drill.
4. Position drill (firing exercise substituted).
5. Blank firing (miniature cartridge practice will, I hope, be added).
6. Judging distance drill.

### Target Practice.

#### (1.) Individual firing.

Every n. c. o. and man to fire 10 rounds at 200 yards standing; 20 rounds at 400 yards kneeling, and 10 rounds at 500 yards, any military position.

Those who obtain 80 points will be classified as first-class shots and marksmen; those obtaining 60, but failing to obtain 80, as second-class shots, and those failing to obtain 60 as third-class shots.

(2.) Independent firing—5 rounds at 300 yards, six targets.

(3.) Volley firing—5 rounds at 300 yards, six targets.

(4.) Skirmishing—10 rounds, between 400 and 200 yards, single target.

Judging distance practice, four exercises of four answers each; between 200 and 800 yards, four answers to each register; not more than one exercise to be executed in a day.

Within 20 yards, if not over 500 yards, 2 points.

        30          "          "          "          "  
If over 500 yards, within 30 yards, 2 points.  
                40          "          "          "          "

Those who obtain 16 points and upwards will be classified as first-class, those failing to obtain 16 points as second-class.

Six prizes are given, as follows: Best shot in the corps, who obtains highest aggregate score in the individual practice, prize by the commandant; best shot in company, gold company badge; best shot in each squad, \$4; second best shot in each squad, \$3; third best shot in each squad, \$1; skirmishing, best target, \$5; skirmishing, 2nd best target, \$3; best at judging distance practice in each squad, \$2; second best, \$1.

"THE MAN BY THE SEA."

### Toronto Heard from Also.

Mr. Lynch-pin, the MILITIA GAZETTE's friend in Toronto, forwards the following letter which has been sent to him in connection with "Smoothbore's" plaint:

DEAR LYNCH-PIN,—Did you see "Smoothbore's" letter in the last GAZETTE? He says that "no satisfactory explanation has been given" for the absence of men of the permanent corps from the Provincial and Dominion rifle matches. As for not being at the former gatherings I myself have seen them there. The reason for their non-appearance at the Dominion matches is not far to seek—consider their assets and liabilities!

Tommy Atkins' pay is forty cents per diem, and fifty cents per annum for alteration of clothing, and he is issued a free kit on joining. His daily pay is subject to certain constant and inevitable small deductions for regimental and other purposes; his fifty cents per annum has to be reinforced by about eight dollars from his forty cents per diem to pay his tailor's bill; and, as an instance, the serge jacket and trousers, that are to last him a year, wear out in six, and in many cases, four months; he then has to purchase new ones.

Now—even supposing that he has not to spend another cent on necessaries and that he does not go in for "baccy, beer or beauty"—how is it possible for him to pay his way to Ottawa, board and lodge while there, purchase ammunition and pay fees!

As regards the extract from correspondence in the *Mail*, in the same issue, I think it hardly fair to draw comparisons between men who only fire 20 rounds annually and men who fire 600, and that without stating this difference of circumstances. Further on, surprise is expressed that thirty-eight men of the permanent corps at the annual target practice made less than 20 out of a possible 100 and "Smoothbore" says he could hardly believe it. Who but a Heaven-born marksman, I should like to know, makes much more than 20 per cent. at his first or second or even his third target practice? These men could not have had more.

The present state of rifle shooting may easily be explained. The doors of the school of musketry at Hythe, I am sure, would be thrown open to Canadians if the

proper authorities were asked. Then let an officer and a sergeant be sent there from each school and be trained as instructors; and increase to 600 or more the number of rounds to be fired annually. Then let comparisons be drawn. 'Tis a cheap scheme and would pay.

CANADIAN THOMAS ATKINS.

### Interesting Proposition from the Pacific.

VICTORIA, B.C., 16th April, 1888.

To the Editor of the *Canadian Militia Gazette*:

SIR,—I would like to write a few words in regard to a subject that at the present time is being greatly considered by all classes of military men in all European, and I may say American, armies. I have had the honour and pleasure of serving Her Majesty in uniform something over fourteen years, and in the corps to which I belonged was considered a first class shot. Yet I know that every man in the service should be a better shot than I am or was. I saw a report in *Forest and Stream*, the other day, *re* the shooting abilities of the American army. Now, the Americans are given to blow, but in many things they have the advantage of the English, and Canadians too. In regard to the manufacture of rifles, they certainly are not ahead of English manufacturers, either as regards range, force, trajectory, or workmanship. Indeed, though I have handled and fired a large number of American rifles, I have never seen one with the fine gunny finish of some of the English makes. In regard to heavy ordnance, they cannot compare with English manufacturers. But in rifle shooting they are certainly far ahead, that is the army. The scores made by the different "Posts" in competition for the "Nevada Trophy" are something to be wondered at (and appreciated) when it is considered that 80% of the whole strength of a company, officers and men, present and absent, must be reported to be considered as competing. Company B 21st U. S. Infantry, 36 men firing, made an average percentage of the possible of 87.75, in their competition for this trophy last year. I have not yet heard whether this was the winning company or not, but the year previous, 1886, this company won the Trophy with 87.40%, 38 men firing.

Now, sir, I would like Canadians to take this matter up, and the authorities to give more attention to, and make more provision for shooting with the rifle. I saw, a short time ago, in the *Colonist* our leading city paper, an article, complaining of the hardships of the local militia here, in being unable to obtain long rifles for practice, though they needed them for the D. R. A. matches at Ottawa, and there were plenty of them lying idle in the district stores. I am credibly informed that the officers of "C" Battery, stationed here, have offered subscriptions, and invited the officers of all permanent corps to co-operate with them, for a trophy to be fired for annually, and awarded to the corps making the highest percentage for that year. This, Mr. Editor, is taking hold of the subject in the right way, and, though I have not heard the result of these gentlemen's endeavour, it cannot fail, if carried out, in making a great difference in the shooting of these corps. I have met some of these gentlemen, and I feel and know that it will not be their fault if they do not develop a taste for rifle practice in their corps which will be a credit to themselves and to the service, for there is no doubt of the result of intelligent instruction and practice.

I was a witness, on Good Friday last, of a team shoot in response to a challenge from the city brigade to the regulars, and it would have done a shooting man good to have seen the interest exhibited by those present, and the care taken by the officers and n.c.o.'s to coach and instruct their men. (The regulars' team, was, I believe, a scratch one, as they had not then found out their best shots.)

I would ask, through your paper, first, that the Government make a larger allowance of ammunition for practice (to the permanent corps especially) as their pay of 40c per diem from which they pay for messing, washing, library, hair cutting, etc., will not allow them to purchase much ammunition for practice) and to furnish ammunition at a lower price (I am informed that the charge is 16 cents per package of ten rounds), or, if possible to furnish corps re-loading tools similar to the plan adopted by the Americans, whose allowance gives them something like 600 rounds per man per annum, as against 40 issued to the Canadian regulars. Either of these plans would be an improvement on the present system.

Secondly—Amongst all the militia of Canada there are hundreds, I hope thousands, who would subscribe to a suitable trophy, to be shot for annually by any troop, battery or company in the Dominion, under conditions to be arranged by the donors, or a committee appointed, to consist of practical shooting men, who could judge what would be for the best interests of the service.

I am willing sir, to aid in this last proposal, and if it will be taken up by some of the leading shooting men of the forces, I feel that I can prophesy success, and a gain in rifle shooting such as has not been dreamt of by those at present uninterested. Of the good done by the Dominion and Provincial Rifle Associations already, I need not speak, but I think my plan would, to a certain extent, appeal to a far greater number of men, in that every troop, battery or company in the Dominion would be eligible for competition, and it would engender a greater amount of practice by all ranks. Then the country corps would feel that they did not intend to let their city comrades have a walk over them, and metaphorically speaking, would put their best foot forward. Rifle ranges would multiply rapidly, Government, of course, granting aid as approved by competent authorities, for their maintenance, and if necessary for construction. Then in a couple of years, I may safely say that the country would have twenty or more good shots for every one now, and by officers and n.c.o.'s taking an interest, commanding officers in their battalions or batteries, and captains and subalterns in their troops, batteries or companies, in five years we would have an army of sharpshooters, able to hold their own with the best.

I see that shooting is to be made the subject of more special attention in the British army. We should follow the lead.

I would that every one in Canada, who has the honour of wearing Her Most Gracious Majesty's uniform, might read Major-General Middleton's recommendation that more attention be paid to rifle practice and less to marching past, etc., *and act up to it*. Then there would soon follow a revival in shooting that would astonish even our neighbours the Yankees.

I send you enclosed the article I mentioned from *Forest and Stream*, published March 22nd, 1888, for perusal, or publication if you see fit, pointing out as it does the attention which is being paid to the use of the rifle across the border.

I would like to hear from shooting men in general. Many may be able to advance opinions and offer plans superior to mine, and I shall feel well rewarded if the result should appear in greater facilities for and interest in this, to Canadians, important subject.

FEU-DE-JOIE.

### Practice in the United States Army.

The following is the article in *Forest and Stream* to which our British Columbia friend refers in the above letter:

"Another interesting talk on topics connected with the rifle was with Capt. Chas. R. Huntington, of the regular army on post in Arizona. He pointed out that, within the last three years most noticeably, the soldiers of the regular army have developed a skill in marksmanship which makes them the best shots of any military force in the world.