

## Correspondence.

[This paper does not necessarily share the views expressed in correspondence published in its columns, the use of which is freely granted to writers on topics of interest to the Militia.]

## ENCOURAGEMENT FOR YOUNG SHOTS.

EDITOR MILITIA GAZETTE,—Will you kindly inform me if there is any chance in the future of having D. R. A. rules so changed, that "old shots" will be debarred from carrying off the majority of prizes at the association matches. Year after year the same set of men generally attend those meetings, and it is not uncommon to see the same men chosen (of course legally as the rules are now) to go to Wimbledon. What sort of a college would permit a scholar to compete for a gold medal year after year? When a scholar gets all the degrees he can, he steps down and out, and makes way for others to win scholarships, medals, &c., but not so with our "old shots." They keep on year after year, generally scoring the same and discouraging young shots. As the rules are now a glance at rolls of competitors on ranges would lead one to believe that Canada had only about 100 good shots, as on an average that number will cover those who year after year attend the range meetings as religiously as they would church parade. I have heard dozens say, "Oh what is the use of going to the range this year, So-and-so will be there and carry all off." I should think when a marksman has had the honour of being once on the Wimbledon team, his ambition should be satisfied, but such is not the case and consequently old England must think our *shots* are composed of about 100 men.

There is no doubt if a rule of some sort bearing on the case could be framed, that our annual matches would be better attended, as it would draw out, without fear of defeat, those who will not attend the matches now. Rifle shooting has got down to a science now, in fact to such an extent that in order to assist the "crack shot of the range," were he on active service, the quarter-master would have to have all sorts of appliances in store. Imagine a skirmisher—under fire—touching up his fore and back sights, and placing on wind gauges, &c. No sir, to my mind the steady old shot, of the old school, with a good Snider, who carries his yearly score right along between 65 to 70 and 75, all shots on the target, is *the* man in the field. He does not use these "assistors," but takes a pull at his pipe, looks around to see how the sun is, and like a sailor squints at the direction of the wind, and then gets down to work—not to make a big score, but every shot *hits*. This is the man who will use the rifle, *as it was made*, and to good effect, in the front of the foe. Four times under fire in defence of our Canada has taught me that this scientific shooting is no use when you have to draw a bead on a human being. You know the fellow you have your eye on will shoot you unless you "pink" him. Then comes the cool shooting—the coolest man generally gets an "inner," not the man who on the range, using all appliances, carries off the prizes. I do not think it fair to put a man in the front of an enemy and expect him to shoot as well without these appliances, to which he is so accustomed. This puts him to a disadvantage and yet these appliances are not in his quarter-master's store list.

I presume a discussion on these points is not wrong. I have only the honour of our Militia at heart, having served in it for over 24 years—and am good for 24 years more.

"OLD SCHOOL."

Winnipeg, Man., 28th Dec., 1889.

## THE CANADIAN MILITARY RIFLE LEAGUE.

EDITOR MILITIA GAZETTE,—In your issue of December 26th, I read with interest, and I must say surprise, the letter of George A. McMicking, Niagara Falls, on the Canadian Military Rifle League, and I cannot allow the opportunity to pass without challenging some of his suppositions. He seems to have taken a dislike to the personnel of the League, otherwise this morbid fault finding could only be ascribed to a desire to throw cold water on a red hot stove. Now, every one knows our friend lives near the rapids, but that is no reason why he should throw cold water. We are not needing any this winter.

With the list of provisional officers before me I find that one is on headquarters staff, one on retired list, seventeen from city corps and twelve from rural, without counting the secretaries or treasurer, who for purposes of prompt action should be together, and in a city within easy reach of telephone and telegraph. Again, does my friend suppose because we have 94 battalions we should have 94 officers on the league staff. "What an aggregation." If we require not 94, but only 34, as the circular states, what are we to do with the other 60. They must be left off. Can our friend suggest a personnel that would work better than the one named: for as there are more rural than city corps there must be more colonels of rural corps left off the list. What would the League accomplish with officers from rural corps who do not shoot. What help could they give superior to that of such old tried shots as we find on

the list. Geo. A. thinks the rurals' money would go just as far as citizens'. I say yes; but money is not the object of the League. I do not see how, if every rural corps were given an officer on the staff, it would cause them to spend \$10 to join a league to which they could not send five, let alone ten men who would have any chance of success. Geo. A. is always supposing, but he is mistaken if he thinks the C. M. R. L. is. It is basing its operations on facts. D. C. R. A. reports show that less than 50 corps are represented at the annual prize competitions, where the fee is much less than \$10, and rural corps are not generally made of such stuff, if not shooting corps, as to enter in a competition in which they have no possible chance of success. Then again he supposes 94 battalions at \$10 each. Absurd! Say 30, a high estimate, which would give \$300, every cent of which would be used to buy a trophy and pay other expenses. As it appears to me, the whole drift of the circular our friend writes about with such alarm is to show the possibilities of the League in future, naming a fee of \$10 per team per annum, number of men on team as may be arranged, 2nd and 3rd teams \$5 each.

I am afraid our friend Geo. A. used the small hole in the orthoptic when reading the circular. What rural or other enthusiastic rifleman would miss the time spent in a league competition, and let me tell Geo. A. that a league competition would not be the place to give instruction to young shots. They would have to be past the instruction period before they could hope to get a place on the list of teams that would win. But, "ye trojans of war," listen to what he says in the last part of supposition No. 2: "In rural battalions good young men enroll at 18 years and serve 3, and then leave because their business prevents them going to camp." But this only when they have not been taught to shoot. There has been no one in their corps with enough enthusiasm to teach them. If so, the 3 years would run to 6, 9 and longer.

What does a rural lose when he goes to camp—not much over 50c per day, once every two years. Generally he just makes 50c per day, or \$6.00. The city man loses his pay to the company fund, \$6.00, and in many cases has to buy his uniform; but, "by the powers that be," here is where the comparison shows the advantage the rural has over the city shot. The rural gets \$6.00 drill pay, free ammunition, can have a range on his farm, practice when he desires, nothing for marking or carfare, and the pick of a rifle that has never been used. Man of a city corps loses his drill pay, \$6.00; ammunition for 3 months, \$12.00; car fare, \$4.00; marking, \$3.00; practice at 5 p.m., to which he has to walk 4 miles, and often loses his Saturday afternoon pay, and on top of all this he has to pay \$26.00 for a new rifle to be on the same footing as the rural; total, \$51.00. Then Geo. A. finds fault with Saturday afternoons being set for the various competitions, and has arranged for a thunderstorm to arrive precisely on Saturday nights to destroy the farmer's crops because he wasted a couple of hours in a League competition. Now, what crops are harvested in June and July, and what could the time lost in our August competitions lose to the rural. And does not Geo. A. know that all marketing is done before 12 o'clock, when markets close. So much for supposition; but when will the 44th trot out the 50 Leaguers, nay, "10." I only know of one—but bring on your ten and we will defeat them first. The League says it does not require an umpire to be an officer of any corps, but may be an individual who understands scoring, and who is approved of by the League, and may act on one or all occasions. It is to be regretted that such an old tried shot as Geo. should make such hostile criticism as appears over his name. All ridiculous supposition bordering on romance, equal to Jules Verne's tale of "Thirty Thousand Leagues under the Sea," implied paying of large salaries to someone or a scheme to bring benefit to city corps. What on earth can the officers of the League, whether city or rural, have to do with its object, so long as they are men who understand rifle shooting and will work? I am told that the League is endorsed by riflemen over the length and breadth of Canada, and must be worthy of support. I will conclude by supposing just one gigantic supposition equal to our friend Geo. A. Supposing that city corps have done all that has been done in Canada to uphold rifle shooting, and supposing they have always been first to do so, and supposing they have still the enthusiasm to do more, should they be condemned for it?

W. S. DUNCAN.

Toronto, Jan. 7th, 1890.

The Queen has presented Sir John Commerell with a large bronze medal, struck to commemorate the late naval review. The obverse bears the portrait of the Emperor of Germany, and the reverse a miniature portrait of the Queen and a representation of the fleet.

Whilst death by suicide is increasing in the foreign armies, the number in the British Army is decreasing. From a return just issued it appears there were eleven cases during 1887, the number during the previous year having been twenty-nine.