

## GOSSIP OF THE MILITIA.

## Sketch of the History of the New Brunswick Garrison Artillery.

Holiday Festivities of the Toronto Corps—Regulation breakers in the Household Troops—Death of prominent ex-militia officers—

## A criticism of Artillery Equipment.

ARCHIBALD PONTON, formerly a zealous militia officer, and for many years one of the most respected citizens of Belleville, Ont., died on Saturday the 17th inst. The *Intelligencer* says: "Mr. Ponton was the son of the late Dr. Mungo Ponton, Captain and Surgeon in one of H. M. Highland regiments of foot. Born at Inverness (near Culloden Moor) in 1805, he left Scotland for North Carolina to take charge of an elder brother's large plantation there. He subsequently received an appointment in the West Indies and resided there for some time. After his father and family had emigrated to this country (having received, with other British officers, 800 acres of land near Campbellford) he decided to cast his lot in with them and with the hope of youth face the rigorous hardships of backwoods life. Some years after Mr. Ponton removed to Belleville, where (or on his farm in Thurlow) he has since resided. Besides two sons and a daughter who died in childhood, and his widow, he leaves a large family—Edward George Ponton and Archibald W. Ponton, Mrs. Sharpe, of Chicago; Mrs. Armour and Mrs. Sankey, of Toronto, and two unmarried daughters residing with him at the time of his death. Col. Ponton, as he was generally known, was a born soldier, his active, athletic and erect figure being maintained in his old age almost to the last. He served in the rebellion of 1837, and on the frontier. He was captain of No. 1 Co., 49th Hastings Rifles (the oldest company of foot on the rolls of the Canadian militia) in 1856, 1857. He was the first lieutenant-colonel of the 15th Battalion in 1863, 1864, 1865, and brought the battalion to a high state of efficiency."

Col. Otter says that he will recommend that city corps go into camp for twelve days every third year. If by this he means that the members of city corps should go into the regular camps of instruction every third year then he will, we believe, find that the city corps will object to his proposal. The members of those corps will not consent to spend their holidays in the regular camps of instruction. They may go into such camps if they happen to adjoin their homes so that they can attend to their business every day, but when it comes to surrendering their holidays for the purposes of drill the men are sure to object. Country battalions take to camp life often as they take to a picnic, but with city young men it is different, and Col. Otter's suggestion is not likely to be popular among them.—*Star*.

At a meeting of the 90th Winnipeg Rifles' snowshoe club held last week, the following officers were elected: Hon. president, Lieut.-General Sir Fred. Middleton, K.C.M.G., C.B.; hon. vice-president, Lieut.-Col. Houghton, D.A.G.; president, Lieut.-Col. Boswell; first vice-president, Capt. Campbell; second vice-president, Lieut. Howden; captain, Lieut. Tulloch. A committee was formed composed of one member from each company and one from the staff of the regiment, the following being those elected: "A" Co., Colour-Sergt. Geo. H. Merritt; "B" Co., Sergt. C. McMillan; "C" Co., Pte. W. Gallier; "D" Co., Pte. Grayburn; "E" Co., Corpl. Buss; "F" Co., Colour-Sergt. A. Mowatt; Staff, Band-Sergt. Geo. A. Downard.

Lt.-Col. John Ballachey, who less than a year ago was promoted to the command of the 38th Battalion, Dufferin Rifles, has resigned. He was on Thursday evening last entertained by the officers of the regiment at a complimentary supper. It is reported that Lt.-Col. Jones, whom Lt.-Col. Ballachey succeeded, is about to again take command.

## Toronto.

I WAS glad to notice that Col. Smith in his recent lecture objected to any element of civil organization creeping into a militia corps. I little thought at the time that in the very issue of the MILITIA GAZETTE containing my synopsis of his lecture I should find it recorded of No. 6 (?) company of the Governor General's Foot Guards that they elected their n.c.o's. I read there that Private So-and-so retired in favour of So-and-so, and So-and-so were elected lance corporals. Any corps pretending to be soldiers ought to be ashamed of so conducting themselves, but for a Guard corps—for the Household Troops—to do such a thing at headquarters, and under the very nose of the combined authorities, is an affair which ought instantly to be noticed and suppressed. I said "No. 6 Company," for such it is printed, notwithstanding that paragraph 167 says that each company is to be permanently designated by a letter of the alphabet. I, therefore, presume that No. 6 Company is properly speaking "F" Company.

## AT THE COOK HOUSE DOOR.

Dinners to the right, dinners to the left, etc., is the order of the day. As this is Christmas week—everybody busy—I shall take my little shears and make my "dinners" from newspapers:—

The annual dinner of "D" Company, Royal Grenadiers, was held at the Bodega restaurant. The menu was all that could be desired, and mine host Thomas Anderton, caterer of the Bodega, deserves great credit for the manner in which he served up the choice victuals. The evening was passed pleasantly in speeches and song by members of the Grens and guests. The party broke up at an early hour, well pleased with the manner in which they were entertained.—*Globe*.

The menu of "D" Company Royal Grenadiers was very neatly designed and contained many appropriate mottoes and quotations, one being:

"With his helmet on his head  
"And his sabir on his thy  
"The sojer mounts his galant steed  
"To conker or to dye."

The annual dinner of the Toronto Garrison Battery *alias* "the disbanded," will be held on Thursday the 29th December.

## QUEEN'S OWN RIFLES.

The second annual dinner of the Old Fifteen Northwest contingent "F" Company, Queen's Own Rifles, was held on Christmas Eve at the Reform Club. The chair was occupied by Col.-Sergt. McLaren, and the following members were present:—Corpl. H. R. Boulton, Ptes. A. D. Langmuir, W. Langmuir, A. J. Boyd, J. L. Boyd, A. B.

Mackenzie, J. T. McLachlan, C. F. Harrison, C. M. Nellis, N. P. Dewar, J. S. C. Fraser, A. H. Scott, A. E. Phillips, W. A. Richardson. The toast list consisted of the usual loyal toasts; "The Army, Navy and Volunteers," proposed by the chairman and responded to by Pte. J. S. C. Fraser; "The Ladies," ably responded to by Pte. J. T. McLachlan.

The annual dinner of "G" Company, Queen's Own Rifles, was held Friday night in the Albany Club, and was a great success. The chair was occupied by Capt. Bennett, who had on his right Lieut.-Col. Miller, and on his left Capt. Boyce Thompson, of "A" Company. The other officers present were Capt. Macdonald, Lieut. Brock, Lieut. Nelson, as well as Sergt.-Major Crean. A large number of the members of the company turned out. After partaking of the good things provided, the chairman read letters of regret from Col. Gillmor, Col. Otter, Capt. Bowes and Major Hamilton. "The Queen," "Governor-General and Lieutenant-Governor," were honoured in true military fashion. "Canada," the next toast, was proposed in a neat speech by Lieut. Brock and replied to by Lieut. Nelson. "The Army, Navy and Volunteers" was proposed by the chairman. Col. Miller, who responded, was vociferously cheered, and some time elapsed before he could get a hearing. "Co. G." the next toast, was proposed by Col. Miller and responded to by Capt. Macdonald, who met with a most cordial reception. "Our Guests," the last toast on the list, proposed by Sergt.-Major Crean and replied to by Mr. Denny and Capt. Thompson, brought a most enjoyable evening to a close shortly after 12 o'clock. Songs were contributed by Pte. Doherty, Staff-Sergt. Williams, Sergt. Sanson, Capt. Bennett and Sergt.-Major Crean.—*Mail*.

The examination of those members of the Queen's Own Rifles who have been qualifying under Capt. and Adjt. Macdonald for sergeants' certificates, was held at the armoury on Friday evening last. The result will be announced in due course. The men speak highly of the attention bestowed upon this class by Capt. Macdonald, who has personally attended to its instruction at manifest inconvenience to himself.—*Toronto World*.

The annual meeting of "E" Company, Q.O.R., was held on Friday evening, Capt. W. G. Mutton in the chair. The affairs of the company were found to be in a very prosperous condition. It was decided to hold the annual sleighing party at an early date. The following officers were elected for the ensuing year: Treasurer, Lieut. J. Knifton and Secretary, Colour-Sergt. W. G. Ritchie (re-elected); representative to the regimental rifle association, Colour-Sergt. W. G. Ritchie. Rifle committee—Sergt. J. W. Bowden, Corpls. T. Caldwell and G. Bailey, Ptes. A. Dickson and G. Taylor. Clothing and recruiting committee—Sergt. F. T. D. Haton, Ptes. C. D. Lennox and A. M. Burns.—*Mail*.

## THE EQUIPMENT OF THE ARTILLERY.

My remarks of last week regarding the engineers are also to a certain extent applicable to the artillery, whether field or garrison. In order that artillery may efficiently perform the various duties required of it, it is necessary that it should be well organized and equipped, for otherwise it would prove more embarrassing than useful to the troops of other arms. In consequence of the continual movement of a force in the field, the field artillery is obliged to carry not only a large amount of ammunition, but a great variety of stores, so that all repairs to carriages, harness, etc., may be executed without delay; the equipment is therefore not only extensive but complicated, and a good organization is essential to prevent confusion in a battery.

Cavalry and infantry may by dash and pluck partially make up for faulty organization, inferior equipment and want of training, but such is not the case with artillery, everything depending upon the armament and equipment being in good order and skilfully employed. In corroboration of this let me take an extract from the annual report of the Secretary of War for the United States: "In no branch of the service is technical instruction and daily experiments and practice in the use of its weapons more demanded than in the artillery. Infantry can be rapidly organized and soon made serviceable; but the trained and well instructed artillery soldier, whether officer or enlisted man, is only obtained by long and patient work."

A field battery has three requirements: Matériel, consisting of ordnance, ammunition and stores, and carriages for guns, ammunition and stores; personnel—officers to command, n.c.o's. to carry orders out, gunners to work the guns, drivers to take care of horses and drive, artificers to repair harness, carriages, etc., shoe horses, etc., and transport. I hardly expected that in Canada the artillery would be armed with the most approved type of modern gun, but what little we have in matériel I expect that little to be good. Regarding the personnel of the artillery, I have nothing to say against it, the officers and men being as efficient as they probably ever will be under existing conditions. Concerning transport, the less said the better—not that the horses are so inferior, but if a battery is well horsed it is no thanks to the authorities.

Respecting the matériel, all our batteries are armed with the 9 pr. M.L.R.—no, I won't say that, but that the majority are. The weight of this gun is 8 cwt., and it throws a shell of 9 lbs, with a muzzle velocity of 1,381 feet per second, the charge being 1 lb. 12 oz. This gun, then, is all we have in the field batteries. England and most of the Continental powers have a proportion of heavy field batteries possessing sufficient mobility to accompany an army in the field. With the 9 pr. M.L.R. in England went the 16 pr. of 12 cwt. as the heavy field battery gun. The new English field gun is a breech loader of 7 cwt., throwing a 12 pr. shell with a muzzle velocity of 1,700 feet per second, the charge being 4 lbs. What a difference there is between the 9 pr. M.L.R. and the 12 pr. B.L.R.! Then there is the corresponding gun to the 16 pr. M.L.R., namely the 22 pr. B.L.R., of 12 cwt.—the same weight, but throwing a shell 6 lbs. heavier, and with a velocity of 1,760 feet per second, as against 1,350. I won't go any further with new guns, otherwise the powers might take a sudden fit and purchase, which would never do, for what was good enough for our fathers must surely be good enough for us!

To come to something of every day occurrence. We find one very familiar remark, "Harness very old," a remark constantly occurring, and one of which, when left out of reports, the printers I am told pause and ponder over the omission. Condemn the harness and issue drag ropes instead, it would be a great saving. As the greater part of the militia harness was originally issued in 1857, I am not surprised at its decay at this day.

Another remark, which, thank goodness, is growing less frequent, is: "This battery is still armed with an obsolete equipment," the writing of which, year after year, must make the Inspector heartily tired—to say nothing of the want of encouragement to the battery itself. I trust that I shall never see this remark in print again, the battery being in the meantime supplied with something more modern.

The previous remarks have been taken out of reports made since the rebellion. At Cut Knife this was the state of affairs with the artillery: "The trail of one of these guns now unfortunately gave way, rendering that valuable arm practically useless. The other gun shared a similar fate later on in the day." That is, in six hours—for such, I believe, was the duration of the fight—two guns were placed *hors de combat*.