

# THE CANADIAN MILITIA GAZETTE

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## Comment and Criticism.

AFTER the Dominion rifle association matches at Ottawa, the scene of militia activity will be changed to the picturesque Island of Orleans, in the St. Lawrence immediately below Quebec. There garrison batteries from all parts of eastern Canada will assemble, to take part in the series of competitions arranged by the Dominion artillery association, and for which suitable prizes have been offered. The list of these as well as the programme of the meeting, appear in another place in this issue. Monday, the 5th September, has been chosen as the opening day, and the competitions will be in progress all that week.

RIDEAU rifle range, the place of the annual gathering of the Dominion riflemen, is not the property of the government, but only rented for use as a range. The growth of Ottawa city southward has been very rapid of late, and building operations are now being actively prosecuted in such proximity to the range as to cause some anxiety for fear it should eventually be disposed of for building lots. With all its faults, it would be hard to find another range in the vicinity of Ottawa superior to Rideau; while none could possibly be procured nearly so convenient for the participants in the Dominion matches, or for practice by the city militiamen. Would it not be well that steps should immediately be taken to secure the land in perpetuity for a range. If anything of the kind is to be done, it should be at once, before any further increase in value takes place.

UPON the subject of the expediency or otherwise of officers participating in rifle matches, in competition against the non-commissioned officers and privates, we are decidedly of the opinion that the view expressed by our Halifax correspondent, whose letter appeared in last issue, is the correct one. It will be a bad day for rifle shooting in the force when another view comes to prevail. Take any regiment in which the officers are enthusiastic riflemen. Enquire of the shooting men of that corps, those whose pockets suffer in proportion to the prizes won by the officers, whether they desire to have the latter excluded. The answer in nearly every case will be found to be emphatically in the negative. Shooting is not a profitable business, and very few of those who engage in it may be classed as pot-hunters. Without substantial money prizes to cover the heavy incidental expenses, the number engaging in the provincial and dominion matches would be comparatively few, but the proportion of competitors who win more than enough to clear expenses is very small.

IT is the honor of a place upon the prize lists that is mainly striven for. The crack corps are pitted in friendly rivalry against one another at the range, and every competitor takes pride in a victory secured by a member of that to which he belongs or a team representing it. The presence of their officers on these occasions is always an encouragement to the men, and exercises a very beneficial influence upon them. Take any regiment in which the officers act upon the principle that rifle shooting is not for them, and see how many of the men they command are taking any interest in making themselves proficient in the use of the rifle. By all means let officers have competitions with swords and pistols, but at the same time let no discouragement be placed in the way of those who devote time and money to the promotion of rifle shooting.

THE *Forest and Stream*, a United States paper which gives great attention to sport with the rifle, fully recognizes the fact that amongst Britishers the pot-hunting element does not prevail. It says: "A glance over a Wimbledon report of 1887 notes the old time names of Fenton, Rigby, Halford, Milner, and many others who may be found mentioned as leading marksmen far back one or two decades ago. These long-range experts find a perennial source of enjoyment in the rivalry and keen competition of the rifle field. They do not think they have exhausted all the pleasure a good rifle can bring when a single season's shooting is over. Each opening year brings a new zest for the sport and each closing season only brings a determination to be ready prompt and early for the following year of pleasurable duty. Again and again they meet, and undismayed by defeat they press on convinced that victory must come to the one who works long and faithfully."

THE same paper continues: "The difference between the long-range men of Creedmoor and Wimbledon is clear, sharp and nationally characteristic. The American marksmen shoot through their meteoric career and drop from sight. The British marksmen shoot on, and are finding always something new and fresh in the game, and when finally they drop out of the active front line it is to become advisers and coaches to the rising company of young men who have learned to respect the 'old uns' for the long and honorable record they have earned for themselves. In the one country fine marksmanship of this type languishes and dies. In the other a challenge shield flung open for competition over twenty years ago is still fought for with the true, vigorous sportman's spirit. Creedmoor exists, Wimbledon flourishes, and solely because of the different sort of support given them."

HOW is it that the Canadian regulars—the men of the batteries and of the infantry school corps—take no part in the rifle competitions which are all open to them? is a question very often heard, and seldom satisfactorily answered. What is the proper answer? Is it that they cannot become marksmen by firing the government annual allowance of twenty rounds of ammunition, and that they cannot afford to practise at their own expense? Very likely. The pay of these men would very soon be exhausted were they to set about the purchase of ammunition