

THE CANADIAN MILITIA GAZETTE

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COMMENT AND CRITICISM.

We publish to-day, with the permission of the authorities, the results of the class firing in the brigade camp of the Fourth Military District, held at Brockville in September last, and commend it to the careful study of the whole volunteer force, and for the sake of comparison, as well as for the information of the force, we should like to publish similar returns from the other military districts, if the musketry instructors would kindly obtain the requisite permission and forward them. It will be seen that the average figure of merit of the camp is only 19.40 points, or less than one point out of a possible four for each shot fired. Probably the wind and rain which prevailed may have somewhat lowered the scores, but the average is not much, if at all, less than in previous years, and is sufficient evidence that the efficiency of our volunteers, so far as shooting is concerned, is very poor.

Now something ought to be done to improve, and improve materially, this state of things. We give General Donner's remarks on a similar matter in England, which may convey some hints as to the means to be adopted, but we know that in Canada this would not cover the whole ground. Here the whole system of official practice needs re-modelling. It is wrong to limit the shooting to twenty rounds; it is

wrong to have the time so limited that a man cannot be set back for further instruction if he proves ignorant of how to handle his rifle or align his sights; and it is wrong to carry a man back to a longer range if he proves unable to hit the target twice successively at the shortest.

Above all, it is wrong to have no provision for musketry instruction in the several battalions themselves. It is all very well to say that it is the duty of the company officers to instruct their men in the rudiments of musketry, but nine out of ten have not themselves the necessary knowledge, for no man who is not a practical shot can instruct, and many who can shoot have not sufficient theoretical knowledge. It is impossible for the camp musketry instructor and his sergeant to do very much, as all their time will probably be fully occupied on the range. It therefore seems desirable that an instructor of musketry and a sergeant instructor of musketry should be appointed to each battalion. An officer of this kind, at least for annual training, is infinitely more required than a paymaster or a second surgeon. And to ensure their efficiency there should be a special course for them at the military schools, and they should hold a special certificate.

We heartily commend, not only to our regular readers but to the Indian Department, the remarks of a valued correspondent on the Indian question as it just now affects the North-west; and we endorse every word he says. We see now that our remarks of last week were capable of misinterpretation. We had no intention of advocating force as the best means of keeping the Indians quiet, but as we were specially interested in the military aspect of the case, we suggested the points which struck us as wise precautionary measures in case just and liberal dealing on the part of the Government should fail. By all means let all the Indians be kept from starvation this winter, and let the Government ever bear in mind that there must be many in the Territories who would be only too glad to see another disturbance this year, and whose representations must be guarded against.

The Victoria, Australia, Government has represented to the Imperial Army and Navy authorities the advisability of abolishing the present rules and regulations which prevent officers in those services from seeking Colonial employment, except at a great disadvantage by the loss either of pay, promotion or pension; and has officially requested the co-operation of all other Colonial Governments, including that of Canada, in the matter. The regulations at present existing are that: (1.) A naval officer on half-pay, while so employed, loses his promotion for the time, but receives his half-pay; (2.) A military officer on the active list "seconded" for Colonial service forfeits his pay but receives his promotion; (3.) A naval officer on the retired list (in some cases at least) receives his retired pay; (4.) A military officer on the retired list forfeits his retired pay.