

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.]

THE MILITARY RIFLE LEAGUE.

EDITOR MILITIA GAZETTE.—I received to-day a circular from provisional secretary Mr. W. R. Pringle, of the proposed "Canadian Military Rifle League." Now Sir, while admitting that the main object of the proposed scheme is a good one, viz, the encouragement of rifle shooting, and with which I am heartily in accord, I must nevertheless dissent from some of the details thereof and ask space in your paper to express my views:

1st. Provisional Officers.—I notice that four-fifths of the provisional officers are members of city corps, while four-fifths of the infantry battalions of Canada are rural battalions; exactly the reverse to what would be a fair distribution, and certainly the reverse to that which would put a spirit of enthusiasm in the scheme. Why not give an officer to at least one colonel of some rural corps instead of entirely ignoring them? If the scheme is to be a broad one, and be general throughout Canada, better give some officers to colonels of battalions which are not styled "shooting" battalions, get them interested, their dollars will go just as far, and do just as much good, as those of an urban corps.

2nd. Teams.—"For the season of 1890 the teams to be composed of 10 men each. For 1891 of 20 men each, and for 1892 from 25 to 50 men each, and so on." Now, sir, suppose our 96 battalions would all enter at \$10 each producing a fund of \$960, of which sum the rural corps would pay about four-fifths or about \$770, while the city corps would pay about one-fifth or say \$190. Say \$500 be expended in purchasing a trophy and other prizes, and the residue, \$460, be expended in paying salaries, printing, postage, &c. So much for 1890.

Now, what about 1891? Would the entrance fees increase at the rate of \$1 per man, or \$20 for that year, and so on, or would the \$10 paid in 1890 entitle a person to compete as long as he could see to shoot at a target? While all the rural battalions might be able to put a team of 10 men in the contest with a very creditable showing for 1890, when forced to enter 20 men for 1891 I venture to say that three-fourths of them would find it impossible to do so with any pretensions at winning. Then, what about 1892? Suppose they would be asked to put forward teams of 50 shooting men for that year, what would be the result? Why it would simply mean the total annihilation of the Ruralites, leaving the battlefield, trophy, and all in charge of the minority (in city corps).

There are good reasons why rural battalions cannot retain men over one period of service, and if the members of city corps were compelled to go into brigade camp they could more readily understand my statements. As follows: Rural battalions get good young men to enrol at 18 years old who serve their 3 years; they then engage in some business for themselves or for an employer and cannot spare or be spared the time from their business to go to camp, no matter what their inclination may be, consequently they do not re-enroll, and all riflemen know that not much of a shot can be made of a 3-year old. How different with city corps! They do their drilling at night, which does not interfere with their daily wage-earning, and men may retain membership until they are grey-headed if they so desire without any material personal inconvenience or loss, and I know this to be the case, especially if they have cultivated a love for rifle shooting. What we want is an equal chance. Allow us to shoot a team of 10 men, which is large enough for any Provincial or Dominion match, or allow us to drill at head-quarters, annually, or drill the city corps in brigade camp, and then we will meet you and defeat you upon a fair field, man for man, any number up to the strength of our battalion. Again, suppose a rural battalion had 50 men for a team, they would in all probability not have shooting facility to complete the firing in an afternoon, and more especially so if the younger shots required instruction, which is the vaunted benefit and purpose of the League."

3rd. Dates.—"The match to be fired Saturday afternoons throughout the season." This again is well fixed for the convenience of urban corps whose membership is largely made up of clerks and students who get a half holiday on Saturday afternoons. But what about the yeomanry who fill up the ranks of a rural corps? Saturday is the marketing day or a day to plant or reap something for market day. Then the 7 matches arranged just in the busy season, viz: haying and harvesting, and what thrifty farmer will expose his crop to the storm over Sunday to go and shoot at a target

4th. Range Officers.—"The range officer must not belong to the corps for which he is acting." What are country battalions to do? Officers residing in the county usually belong to the corps of the

county, and it might so happen that we would have to send 50 miles to get a range officer. It is not every one at that distance who might have the leisure time and inclination to umpire 7 matches of not the slightest interest to him. Why could not a mayor or a reeve be chosen if the colonel is not to be trusted? The whole scheme is framed with apparently such inconsideration for the great majority that unless radical changes be made in the constitution I fear that the rural battalions generally will be prevented from competing.

Now, Mr. Editor, you must pardon me for occupying so much of your valuable space.

And believe me to be, Sir,

Yours, very truly,

GEO. A. McMICKING.

Niagara Falls, Ont., Dec. 16th, 1889.

Volunteer Schools of Arms.

(By an "All-round" Man—In "Volunteer Record.")

Among the best characteristics of volunteering is the physical development of those who attend assiduously the recruit drills, especially in those corps where the new physical drill—with and without arms—and the new bayonet exercise are practised. It is astonishing to see the marked improvement in some of the recruits. They become well set up, with shoulders back and head erect, and with the marching practice soon acquire an easy carriage, moving easily from the hips instead of, as one very frequently sees, almost from the knees. But another good arising from a young fellow joining a volunteer corps is the facility of becoming a member of the School of Arms attached to most regiments of standing. Therein is taught the practical use of the weapon carried by the volunteer, and in addition fencing with foils, rapiers, etc., and the more robust single sticks and sabres, while bayonet v. bayonet and v. sabre, and sabre v. sabre receive a considerable amount of attention.

In nearly every instance, the instructors in these subjects are old army professors, teachers of swordsmanship in their respective regiments, and who are thorough masters of their weapons. In addition squads are formed for instruction in dumb-bell and club exercises and gymnastics. Last, though by no means least, the "noble art" also finds many devotees. Any man, therefore, who follows out strictly and thoroughly the course of training above sketched, will have his leisure time well occupied, but in the end he will find himself very much better in health and physique. Many who now spend the evening in a close and stuffy billiard room, would do much better at a school of arms.

The Council of the Royal Military Tournament have also opened their competitions to what are called the auxiliary forces, which include the yeomanry and volunteers, and many of the most spirited bouts have been witnessed at the Agricultural Hall by their representatives.

In connection with these schools of arms, an association has been formed for the purpose of encouraging and promoting the formation of schools of arms in volunteer regiments, and as a means whereby the Council of the Tournament can ascertain the views of volunteers upon any subject connected therewith they may consider it necessary to refer to them. The preliminary competitions to select men to represent home district volunteer regiments at the annual military tournament, are now placed under the superintendence of this association. The competitions consist of foils, single sticks, sabre v. sabre, and sabre v. bayonet, and four medals are given to each subject—gold, silver with gold centre, silver, and bronze; in all 16 medals. The competitions are held at the headquarters of one or more of the associated regiments, and in the presence of many interested spectators, including several officers of the regular regiments in London. The judges are gentlemen thoroughly well versed in the use of the particular weapons, and generally give their decisions with a view to the well-being and advancement of the various sports.

Sometimes, however, it would be well for the judges, by their decisions to discourage the displacement of science and skill for what is termed "knocking out" tactics. Where men go in for this sort of thing, the judges should in our opinion promptly disqualify any one resorting to this mode of "playing," as whatever may be the rule of the prize ring and the effects of a "knock-out" with gloves, it may be highly dangerous, and even serious when resorted to with a heavy sabre or rifle, and we hope the association will at once set its face against any such endeavours on the part of competitors under its supervision.

The association has an excellent future before it; certainly its objects are most praiseworthy and deserve every support. The season of Schools of Arms is now beginning, and every school should at once affiliate itself to the Metropolitan School of Arms Association, of which Col. Villiers, 1st Surrey R.V., is Chairman of Committee, and Sergt.-Major Clark, 18th Middlesex, Paddington, the energetic Secretary.