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NOTE AND COMMENT.

The views of an officer of such well known ability, practical knowledge and extensive experience as Sir Frederick Roberts, commander in chief of the army in India, must at all times command the attention of all interested in military affairs; and at no time have opinions been expressed which have been more worthy of careful consideration by the Canadian military authorities than the remarks of Sir Frederick upon the great importance of musketry in relation to the efficiency of the British army in India, when recently addressing the members of the Bengal Presidency Rifle Association at their annual meeting.

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The commander in chief in India wants to see musketry brought into play "even during the stiffest of barrack square parades, thus, after a formation from column into line, the officer commanding might point out some object, if possible a moving one, and order company, half company or section volleys to be directed thereon. This would not only give a meaning to the movement which it had previously lacked, but would exercise the skill of the non-commissioned officers in judging distances, designating objectives, and giving commands generally; it would also train the men to grasp the precise significance of an order, to adjust their sights rapidly and correctly, and to maintain their steadiness."

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The introduction of such a feature into the parades of our militia would not only give meaning to movements which they have hitherto lacked, and exercise the skill of the non-commissioned officers, but it would add an interest to the parades of the ordinary rank and file which is sadly needed, and the lack of which very soon induces men to cease attending drills, or to lose all interest in them if they do attend.

The opportunities afforded the majority of our militiamen for training are so few, and of such uncertain interval, that it is impossible to expect them ever to become a thoroughly disciplined or well drilled force. But there can be no doubt that their efficiency as an organization may be very materially increased by the adoption of the views of Sir Frederick Roberts in regard to musketry instruction.

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At present there is practically no instruction in musketry in the Canadian militia.

We say practically, for we know that it is laid down in orders that class firing is to be carried out by all forces detailed for drill, but though this order may be observed in letter, in spirit it is almost ignored, and might in many instances be as efficiently observed in the omission as in the performance.

Militiamen who have not been trained elsewhere usually complete their class firing knowing as much about their rifle when it is over as before they began—and that is, nothing.

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The Government might very materially increase the standard of efficiency in this respect, at comparatively slight cost to the country, by increasing the annual grant of ball ammunition to 100 rounds per man, and requiring a certain standard of efficiency to be reached on the range before paying the annual drill allowance, or by regulating the amount to be drawn by the number of drills performed, and the class obtained by the man on the range.

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Militiamen who were congratulating themselves and the force upon the appointment of the Hon. Mackenzie Bowell to the position of Minister of Militia, and who were hoping to obtain the introduction of reforms and improvements urgently needed, will regret to hear

that it is currently reported to be the intention of the Ministry to endeavour to reduce the militia expenditure rather than increase it.

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The time is rapidly approaching—if not actually here—when it is apparent the Government will be obliged to adopt one or two courses, unless they are prepared to shoulder the responsibility of squandering the people's money. They must either face the necessity of providing sufficient in the estimates to enable the Militia Department to drill *annually* the forces which they have enrolled, or they must be prepared to inform the militia that their services are unnecessary and disband them.

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There is not an officer in the force from the Major-General himself down who will not coincide in the view that it is a shameful waste of good money to spend it in mustering men for ten days once in two, or in many cases, once in three years. Such a course can do little more than keep the men together, and if this is all that is desired it may be done in a less expensive manner than the present system.

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Militiamen have no one but themselves to blame for the present unsatisfactory arrangements as to drill for the majority of the force. If the question of annual drill for the whole force was once brought before the House, and the matter urged by a few of the commanders of rural corps who have seats therein, neither Government nor opposition would oppose it, and the matter would be settled without difficulty.

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It is usually urged in opposition to the plea for annual drill for the whole force, that the expense would be too great, but it is seldom taken into consideration that annual drill for many corps now being