

CORRESPONDENCE.

The Editor does not hold himself responsible for individual expressions of opinion in communications addressed to the VOLUNTEER REVIEW.

Sir—I have read with pleasure your answers to R in your issue of the 9th inst, with the exception of one, namely, the 4th.—with your answer to that question I must join issue with yours—I don't in the least agree with you that the answer to this query is that such a question in statistics is not known. But as Canadian Volunteers are presumed to have brains as well as others, about the same number can judge distance as those who are marksmen. "Now, Sir, in all due deference to you, I must beg to inform you that I have, from my own observation, found many men who are marksmen totally wanting in judging distance, not only in our Canadian Army but also in the Imperial service. I myself was, when in the service a marksman as far as judging distance went and within a point of it in firing: It is a distinct branch of rifle shooting from that of being able to hit the centre at 900 yards with the rifle. It must be taught, because it must be acquired. It is quite a different matter to the eye finding that the distance between yourself and an object, the distance from you of which is unknown to you, to that of running the eye along the sights of a rifle and knowing the distance, being able to hit that object. I have known numbers of men, marksmen as far as firing went, who, when it came to judging distance, failed of entering the select few of the regiment who were marksmen in both branches of musketry.

Take some crack shot who has not practiced judging distance, and put another man 75 yards from him, then 150 yards and see if he will come within 50 yards, at the long range and 10 at the short. I fear not to say he will be far out in both his calculations. Or take any distance you like and not once will he come near it. No, Sir, I don't fear in the least to say I am right. It not only requires teaching but constant practice to make a man a good judge of distance. Why, Sir, take one instance of how far astray even a good judge of distance may go; put a dip in the ground between the judge and the distant object, a dip of say 30 feet from the line of fire and the surface of ground at the deepest part of the hollow, and you will soon see how far astray the judge will be in his calculations. I got caught myself that way once, but it taught me one great lesson, and that was, not to allow too much for hollows. One word before I close. I would suggest that fewer rounds be fired during camps, for we go there to learn manoeuvring and handling men in large and small bodies; allow each man so many rounds ball cartridge per annum to be fired some time between the

15th May and 15th September, in squads of not less than 10 or more than 20 for each target, such squads to be in charge of an officer who must keep the practice return himself on the range, such returns to be sent to the D.A. G's and by them to Head Quarters. The returns must be certified as correct by the officer in charge and the Colonel of the Battalion or officer in command of the corps to which the men belong.

Yours truly,
OLD SOLDIER.

Dec. 10th 1873

Montreal, 19th Dec., 1873.

To the Editor of the VOLUNTEER REVIEW.

Sir—A friend handed me a copy of your paper of yesterday's date, with an editorial on some correspondence signed R, which much surprised me. As an old volunteer officer, and one who has had much to do with shooting and management of shooting matches, as also having had the pleasure of teaching (many years ago) some of our best match shots the wrinkles of shooting, I was much astonished. Surely you do not give it as your deliberate opinion that a soldier who cannot shoot is quite as useful as one who can! If your opinion be correct, why should the British Government sanction the expense of increased pay to marksmen? 1. Again in the present age a bayonet charge is an impossibility against breech loaders. All movements of advance, would require to be covered with a dense cloud of skirmishers. 2. Unfortunately, although the rules of musketry instruction are in the Red Book, they are very often neglected, and very often unread.

3. The writer has a very lively recollection of being guilty of "playing the fool" in one of the late Fenian raids by throwing his sword into a baggage wagon and carrying a short rifle. The men of his company were not of the opinion that he was making a fool of himself, or that the fact of carrying a useful weapon in place of a toasting fork incapacitated him from looking after them.

4. The judging distance drill is a thing that requires a good deal of practice and time, and I am sorry to say I do not think we could get many volunteers to devote sufficient time to it to become expert.

5. As to small bore shooting being of no benefit, as an aid to shooting with the Government arm, I would venture to wager, if the opinion of any of the cracks of the Dominion was asked, a very different reply would be given. I might name as competent persons to express an opinion Larkin of Nova Scotia, Blackin of New Brunswick, Thomas or Worsley of Quebec, J. J. Mason, Murison, or Major Cotton of Ontario. I can assert without fear of contradiction that all of these gentlemen will agree with me. Further, the class of men who can afford to spend \$100 to \$200 on a small bore rifle, are the main supporters of

Rifle Shooting and it is to their exertions and energy that the success of our Provincial meetings is mainly due. In our own Province, Quebec, two years ago I introduced the system of optional matches, Snider against Small Bore, and since then the practice has become quite common. A handicap in which the Snider receives 300 yards in distance from the Small Bore, is as nearly even as possible; the best proof being that during the last two years, Snider in the Optional matches have taken as many prizes as the Small Bores.

6. The reason the Martini-Henry is not used against the small bores, such as the Metford and Rigby, are, first, the poorness of the sights; secondly, the badness of the cocking. Most of the Martini-Henry's being so short in the stock as to severely punish the unfortunate firer. Vail, the only one of the Canadian Team who shot in the second stage of Queen's Prize Match at Wimbledon this year, 1873, was completely disabled by the recoil of the gun.

7. In answer to this question, "What is being done to improve Rifle Shooting in this country?" I am sorry to say little or nothing. Were it not that in most of the large cities there are a few men who are fond of the rifle, and make great efforts once a year to induce their friends and the public to subscribe to Local and Provincial matches, shooting would die out. As to Canadian Army regulations or General Orders helping to make riflemen, those who know the real state (not paper state) of the so called army, Heaven save the name, will know their value. Six years, or even seven years ago Canada had a Volunteer Army any nation under the sun might be proud of. Where is it now? Ask the men who obtained commissions for purpose of lending political support to parties lately in power, who drew pay for hundreds of men who never were in existence. Ask about a battalion whose colonel sent in an outrageous pay-sheet to his Brigade Major who refusing to countenance so gross a swindle by recommending it, was threatened with loss of his office by one who had the power to deprive him of it. Were it worth while I could readily explain why so few men of standing and position now remain as volunteers. As to the Dominion Association no real riflemen or rifle shot could ever conscientiously utter a word in its praise; about the only good thing attached to it being the secretary Col. Stewart, who is deservedly popular with all who are unfortunate enough to be deluded into attending its matches. The dearest wish of the writer is, that the MacKenzie Government will see fit to abolish the annual grant of \$5000 to the Dominion Associations, I had not intended writing so much, but my pen has run away. As you seem rather savage with your correspondent "R" I may state that although his style may be flippant and he asks a good many questions, there does not exist