

THE CANADIAN MILITIA GAZETTE

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Topics of the Week.

Death has been busy with the military staff at Montreal, having taken off two members within a week. These were Lieut. Col. de Bellefeuille, and Lieut.-Col. Lamontagne. They were both comparatively young men, being several years short of three score. They led useful and honourable lives, and their memories will be fondly cherished by many a brother officer of the force.

The British War Office appears to be getting quite an unenviable character for crooked dealing on the part of its employees. Of course the department should not be condemned for the acts of a few black sheep. One of the most serious complaints made is of a system of blackmailing upon persons having business transactions with the department, especially those who have inventions to bring to the notice of the authorities.

In the press of other cities not a little fun has been indulged in at the expense of the Toronto papers for the praise lavished upon the Queen's Own Rifles upon the occasion of the visit of that corps to Montreal. The thing should not be overdone, but there is no disputing the fact that the generous praise received by the Toronto corps from the press of the Queen City has been no unimportant factor in raising them to their present standard. The best young men have become imbued with the idea that it is the correct thing to join the militia, and they are working zealously to win credit for their respective corps. In Montreal there is the same incentive to membership and proficiency in the militia. True, the papers are more modest; but it is quite touching to hear the comments of the Montreal citizens, especially the ladies, upon their respective favourites when the corps parade for a holiday review. The number of regiments Montreal supports, and supports handsomely too, is surprising to anyone acquainted with the private expenditure involved.

Greatly to the regret of all interested in this year's team for Wimbledon, Capt. W. S. Russell, of the 45th Battalion, has been compelled by business necessities to withdraw from it. He is a well tried shot, having twice already represented Canada at Wimbledon, and all this season he has been making exceptionally good practice. His place will be taken by another member of the 45th, Pte. J. Horsey, who now goes to Wimbledon for the first time. Had the best men of those eligible gone, Canada would this year have had an exceptionally good chance for the Koapore cup. Those who refused the proffered places were Capt. Hart, St. John Rifles; Staff-Sergt. Clarke, 53rd; Capt. McMicking, 44th; Sergt. Short, G.G.F.G.; Capt. Russell, 45th; Pte. Burns, 3rd (formerly 62nd), Capt. Corbin, 63rd. While, however, it has been weakened by the refusals, the team is still strong, and should the "old reliables" on it shoot in their usual form, it may be depended upon that enough new talent will be developed to fill an eight that will be formidable even against the picked team of the mother country.

The Field Artillery Gun Practice.

The annual gun practice of the field artillery for this year, which is to be carried out in accordance with arrangements made by the Inspector of Artillery, presents some points of interest which are deserving of special mention. We have already, in our issue of the 18th April, published copious extracts from the Royal Artillery Regimental Orders on this subject, and it will be observed that the system of instructional practice, as detailed in a circular from the Inspector of Artillery which we publish in this number, is based upon the principles therein laid down, as far as they can be carried out at present by our own batteries, and with a limited supply of ammunition.

The advantages which it is hoped will be derived from this practice are, briefly, as follows:—

1. More general interest in, and attention to gun practice when carried out, as it is intended to be in this instance, by the whole battery, and under service conditions as nearly as possible, than when it is confined to a detachment firing under abnormal conditions at a known range.

2. Increased practice in range finding, and in the actual necessary observation of the effects of fire—no signalling being allowed, and each gun acting as a unit in the effort to obtain an accurate fire as rapidly as possible.

Should the results of this year's practice prove satisfactory, we understand that it is intended, at the next annual drill, to take a step in advance as indicated by the 'bracket process' of ranging a battery, and to ascertain the range by the combined fire of all four guns in the battery, under the direction and observation of the Major commanding; these, and further problems in artillery practice, such as laying by an auxiliary mark, practice at moving targets, etc., will furnish abundant material for the keen intellects of our zealous and efficient gunners.

In addition to the above practice, which has been aptly termed instructional, but which, from the nature of the case, can only be participated in by those batteries who are fortunate enough to encamp in the vicinity of an artillery range, a central competition has been arranged for, to be held at Kingston during September, and at which it is hoped that representative detachments from nearly every battery in the Dominion will be present to compete, for the honour of their corps and for the valuable prizes which have been offered by the Dominion Artillery Association. Similar meetings for garrison artillery only have thrice been held at the Island of Orleans, Quebec, and will be continued this year, and their success has been such as to warrant similar anticipations with regard to the one for field batteries now in prospect. The actual gun practice at this meeting consists of firing at a target at a known range—apparently a somewhat simple performance; but when it is considered that to ensure a good result the gun has to be most accurately laid, the result of each shot noted, and corrections made for varying conditions of wind and weather, etc., and that the time must not, under certain penalties, exceed one minute and a half for each round, it will be seen that there is sufficient scope, not only for individual efficiency, but also for the most careful coaching on the part of the officer who undertakes this important duty.