

The insurrection claims commission have finished their work at Winnipeg, and the members have returned to their homes for the holidays, after which they will reassemble at Ottawa, to complete their work and submit their report. The commission consists of Lieut.-Col. Jackson, D.A.G., M.D. No. 1, President; Lieut.-Col. Whitehead, late commander of the Vics.; and Hony. Lieut.-Col. Forrest, Paymaster of M.D. No. 7. On a special case Hony. Lieut.-Col. Peebles, Paymaster M.D. No. 10, replaced Col. Whitehead. Mr. Holt is Secretary and Hony. Major Guy, Paymaster and Auditor to the Commission. Mr. Alex. McGibbon, who was government transport and supply officer, is now in the city and states that over a thousand claims have been considered and that only two-thirds of the work is done; also that the amount paid out at Winnipeg so far, as contingent expenses of the campaign including claims liquidated, is about three and a quarter millions of dollars.

An old hand gives us this week some valuable notes on infantry annual training, and albeit some of our wiseacres may meet them with the remark "*connu, connu*," it is not a bad plan to remind men of that which they knew before. The problem of what can be most profitably taught in the few days for which our militiamen are biennially brought together is yet unsolved, and the more discussion we have upon it the better.

Everything shows a growing tendency to increase the number of medium shots in a corps and in the country, rather than to secure extraordinary proficiency on the part of a few. Col. Martin's letter in this issue suggests one means of attaining this desirable end, and his proposition is worth considering. In a week or two we shall have something further to say on this important subject.

As promised last week, we now give an instalment of the syllabus adopted for the various military schools, and commend it alike to those who propose going to those excellent institutions, and to those who are already qualified. If every officer would this winter go through a course of reading in the various subjects laid down for study at the schools in his particular arm of the service, its good effects would be very apparent at the next camps of instruction.

Our readers may have noticed in last week's comments a *chef d'œuvre* of the "intelligent compositor." One sufficiently ingenious to change "the piping times of peace" into such a picturesque contrast as "the *fighting* times of peace," if not promptly suppressed, might perpetrate something that would draw down dire consequences on the innocent editor's head.

"NOTIONS OF A NOODLE."—VII.

"DEAR MISTY,—Before taking up the thread of my argument again I must tell you that I was 'charged' privately the other day by a Royal Grenadier regarding the 'bayonet' question. He styled me 'uppish,' and states positively that he saw a man 'stuck' at 'Batoche.' Well, as far as that goes, most of us have seen our best friends 'stuck' at some period of their lives; in fact few of us have escaped the trying ordeal of being stuck for something.

"What they managed to stick the unfortunate Breeds for he does not state, but adds rather coarsely that they would have stuck more if they had only waited. There must have been liquor somewhere.

"I have only space in this letter for a short appeal to your feelings, so request that you will get hold of a regimental 'canteen' or 'mess tin,' and take it to pieces; the operation won't take very long, and when finished you will discover three portions, for each of which theory lays down a use. As a rule the sensible soldier lays down the cover and inside scooper with the handle and does not take them up again. For generations Middleton's march may be readily traced by pieces of old canteens dropped on the way. It may seem foolish for me to launch into a lecture on such an apparently trivial thing as a mess tin,

but please, if it does not make you too sick, hear the 'troubles of a canteen.'

"The only regulation way of carrying it is in marching order, when it is kept secure by heavy strapping, therefore on all occasions when packs are not carried, it becomes necessary to invent a way for its transport.

"These plans are various: some keep on the shoulder straps, and so fasten the tin between their shoulder blades behind. Apart from the inconvenience and folly of wearing this gear to keep on so small an article, the problem has to be solved, as to the most feasible plan of recovering it from such an unhandy position, when hurriedly required for a drink of water. A Scotchman can remove a smaller article from that locality by backing up against a mile post, or cart wheel, but it requires prolonged and weary scratching to loosen a mess tin from the spot where it is laid down to be in 'fighting order.' Other ideas were tried, especially attaching it to the waist belt, in order to save the inconvenience of carrying the shoulder straps, and to locate the thing in a more 'comeatable' position. Here again we were foiled, the shape is wonderfully constructed only to fit in one place, and when hung by the handle it turns every way, and requires a strap round it to keep the cover and internals in their place.

"Now, as we tramped gaily along in the mud, slush, or snow, the desire for drink naturally arose at intervals, and at each slough or creek those who required a sup of water would drop out and get it.

"The irregular corps, equipped on the principles of common sense, fell out, and had their drink, while many of our poor fellows, simply because it was impossible to get at the canteens, unstrap them, take them apart, put them together, and make fast again inside of an hour, would trudge on thirsty rather than go to all the trouble. In fact, it could not be done unless the whole column halted.

"What then had our more fortunate comrades? you may ask. They had, don't be startled, tin cups, that can be hung anywhere, and a man gets his drink of water or bowl of soup far more comfortably than the apparently luxurious possessor of the shapeless mess tin. As far as I can learn from others who have taken part in foreign campaigns, the same thing is done; men throw the insides away, keeping only the outside piece, which then really becomes a tin cup, but of such an inconvenient shape that it is not adjustable anywhere on a man's person.

"The theory of a soldier having three articles to take his food from on a march is worthy of a more practical result. Unfortunately, the men who invent these monstrosities do not follow up their productions to the final test, and thus learn the actual facts. If they do, I cannot comprehend the spirit that retains these defects in the service, and bars the way to improvement. All a soldier requires is a cup to bale out his tea or soup, which really would appear to fulfil the idea of our outfitters, for with the camp kettles, the only cooking appliance, it must be either 'soup' or starve. I should like here to put the question to some of the recent campaigners, 'what would we not have given for a good frying pan,' and when one was begged, borrowed or stolen, how sweet was the change it presented to the hungry corps.

"It does not require a Parisian cook to understand how many nice dishes can be turned out in a hurry from a good 'fryer,' that could never be got from a pot. The bacon that was served out, in numerous cases, was almost wasted for want of some way to prepare it; boiled bacon is no great treat, and the fat, the greatest blessing, is nearly all lost. I don't think a picnic company or hunting party ever departed minus a frying-pan, and yet there is no such thing on our list of service kit. If some of the officers' messes were in the same fix as the privates, we should probably hear more of it.

"Another consideration is to be taken into account; on the plains there is little or no wood on most of the trails, consequently, on all our halts, the scouts and others would be happily smoking their after dinner pipe or finishing the dessert before our meal was half cooked, because it is hardly necessary to state that a fry can be got up in half the time with a few sticks, and provides a far more palatable dish. All these small details will be voted 'rot' by some people, but I venture to say, Misty, that I will have some supporters, who with me will uphold the importance of even such trivial questions. It makes a terrible difference to a tired and hungry stomach, when from want of time or fuel a meal cannot be got up before the fall-in sounds, after the mid-day rest. Often our hungry fellows have had to munch a dry hard-tack, while our fortunate neighbors of 'Boulton's' sumptuously partook of the same article delicately prepared, fried in pork fat. If any one maintains that this is not a difference, just try it. If plates are wanted, ordinary flat pieces of tin slightly turned up could be packed in the kettles, these with the cups each man should have slung on his person, and a jack-knife, is all that he requires. At present he is the proud possessor of a knife, fork and spoon, carefully packed in his *lost valise* away back two miles at the tail of the column. 'Required in addition to kettles one big frying-pan.'