

“NOTIONS OF A NOODLE.”—VI.

“MY DEAR MISTY,—If you will observe the next man you meet arrayed in marching or fighting order, you will notice the other accoutrements, for the support of which the pipe-clayed waist belt is worn.

“The pouches are an important portion of the outfit, seeing that they contain all his ammunition, the expenditure of which effectively has frequently something to do with the issue of battles. Now, the first fault to be found with them, most decidedly is their number, three, all hanging to this belt, so that when off the body the chances are greatly in favor of their getting lost or mixed up with others. Who has not seen the confusion occasioned, even while quietly at home in barracks, over the loss of a pouch? Frequently the best part of a day is taken up, while all, from the sergeant away up the chain of responsibility to the commanding officer, are thrown into grave perturbation as to how John Smith became the temporary possessor of one of Tom Brown’s three pouches. When such harrowing cases occur in quarters, what must happen on service? Well, the consequence on service is about the same, with the difference that poor Smith has nothing to put his cartridges in. As it happens, this calamity to Smith is not so overwhelming, for the reason that he would rather put his cartridges anywhere than in the said pouches. I wish, dear Misty, you could see them full of ammunition when they hang over to the front, when the button that holds the cover is gone, or when one of the loops, through which the belt passes, gives way; you would then grasp all I want to indicate by so much writing, and grasp it so very much better, in fact to such an extent, that you would rush home as I am doing and write to any fellow your troubles regarding such idiotic things as they prove to be for actual work. All this breaking and cracking is mild when compared with the struggles of some poor fellow vainly trying to creep, or crawl, or shoot off his stomach; you would say at once ‘Why does he not kneel?’ That is the position I like to see a man shoot from; sink at once on the right knee; left elbow six inches from and square with &c., &c.’—(See rifle exercises.)

“Well, all I can say is that the mortal agony of that favorite position (which every man has experienced at some period of instruction) is in no way appeased by the swishing of buckshot or the ping of the bullet. And though the kneeling position is admirably adapted for the pouches, the stomach has a strong claim on our feelings while in the company of aggressive Indians or any other man who is shooting at you from—well! That is the question, from where?

“I think you will find Misty that there are some advocates for the mode I mention of firing from the lying position, as I don’t like the expression of ‘firing from the stomach’ it misleads, and some of your readers might try it and get kicked there.

“You can imagine, while shooting lying down, how conveniently situated the two pouches are, aiding a painstaking marksman much in the same way as the assistance he would derive from two bricks strapped on in front.

“Try firing off two bricks and then advance a little without rising; don’t retire, it is most disastrous, for in doing so you are certain to get foul in some way of the expense pouch, which we must not forget. It has plenty of play with quite a long strap, so that it is not quite safe to say where it will exactly crop up, but at all events look out for it. And this reason against retiring is, that if you do, the cartridges must be left, for all expense pouches empty themselves automatically when the soldier lies down; they are ingeniously made so for the purpose and seldom fail to act.

All the pouches, as a rule, split at the sewing when filled, their great age, as a rule, encourages this, and even those that are not relics of Waterloo, from continual cleaning and disuse about barracks give out very frequently. The idea of the two front pouches is to keep the packages of cartridges intact till required for immediate use and transferring to the expense bag. This is all very good in theory, but on a long tramp the paper tears and the ammunition gets loose and either falls out, for once free from the nicely arranged condition of the made up package it won’t all fit into the pouch. Numbers of rounds are thus lost, and the remainder grind together heads and tails till they are damaged, the bullets parting from the rest of the cartridge, or, at all events, becoming very loose.

“One absolute certainty about the pouches is that if in a hurry, they are not buttoned up, the slightest movement will throw the contents out on the ground.

The entire weight of the articles around the waist is as follows:—

Waist belt.....	10 oz.
Frog.....	3
Pouch.....	8½
“.....	8½
“ Expense.....	7½
Sword and scabbard.....	40½

Total..... 4 lbs. 13½ oz.

“This gives us a total of 4lbs. 13oz.; out of this let us take the 13oz. that would be the weight of a frontier cartridge belt or one like it, in fact it would cover that of two, and the remaining four pounds will represent the load that would make a different man of our poor soldier if he was allowed the privilege of arraying himself according to common sense instead of H. M. dress regulations.

“The advantages of the belt are hardly necessary to mention here, as I never yet met a man anywhere who did not know all about it and ridicule the present plan. One of the greatest blessings, however, is this: That the load of ball cartridge is so distributed, and fits so firmly on the body, around the waist or shoulder (the waist is best), that the weight is hardly noticed, no damage is done to the ammunition, it is never lost, and can be readily handled if wanted.

“There are no pouches to lose, and if required there is no trouble whatever in sleeping with belts on.

“You should see a night alarm in a dark tent, Misty dear, when the picquets suddenly begin popping, and with the vision of scalping knives and redskins before the eyes, it becomes a perfect bedlam in a crowded tent when the ‘turn out’ is the signal for a general grab for the rifles and belts. It is then we see the wonderful pull the British soldier has over his enemies.

“It is surprising how in a country like this, where in all other subjects we rather pride ourselves on the improvements and devices which are doubtless superior for us at least to the old ideas so stoutly adhered to in the Old Country, we are still victims to ancient customs. If we require a better sewing machine, or notice a defect in an English barber’s chair, we don’t plug along in the same way, because John Bull has himself shaved on a biscuit box.

“The lawyers no longer carry on their operations in wigs, and why in the world should we poor soldiers do so? It is true we are not compelled to wear wigs, but if the British army saw fit to-day to put them on, the permanent corps would immediately be issued out, or perhaps, I should say, ‘cauled’ out with, the same articles so that they might be an example of perfection to the outside militia. As I said before we are not served out with wigs, but some things are quite as bad, the pouches date back to the time of the wigs and pigtails, regarded now in the British army as useless, but really for our Indian warfare quite as necessary as bayonets, and I am not at all sure that a good wave of wigs, all together by Middleton’s column, would not have had a demoralizing effect on the rebels, and gained for our arms a bloodless victory.

“You may rail away Misty at all this till you are black in the face, but I maintain that we know in Canada, even among our own wooden headed Colonial officers, what is required for service on the plains far better than they do in England. There are a few things that we can improve on when required for use on this side of the Atlantic, and among these is the outfit of a soldier.”

Where this young man will fetch up is hard to say. Do you, Mr. Editor, think there is anything in all this stuff he writes me? I was not in the North-west, but is it such a place that a complete re-organization is necessary in the equipment before our troops can fight on a par with savages?

MISTY.

DOMINION ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION.

RESULT OF 9-PR. R.M.L. FIRING COMPETITION FOR FIELD BATTERIES.

We publish the official list of prize winners in the Field Battery competition, of which we gave details in our issue of the 27th October. This, with the shifting ordnance results, published on the 24th November, completes the programme for field batteries; we shall publish the results of the other prize competitions announced in our issue of the 25th August as they are made up after the completion of the competitions.

INDIVIDUAL PRIZE WINNERS.

	Pts.	m.s.		Pts.	m.s.
\$ 15 Br. Snyder, No. 1 Batt., 1st Bde	33	5.43	\$ 3 Br. Tinney, Gananoque.....	29	4.31
10 Gun. Armstrong, Richmond....	37	4.15	3 Trp. Crites, Hamilton.....	29	5.29
10 Gun. Burkett, Kingston.....	37	5.50	3 Gun. Dillabrough, Hamilton....	29	6.27
8 Gun. Gagnier, Toronto.....	35	5.43	3 Sergt. Campbell, Richmond....	28	3.59
8 Gun. Heyworth, Montreal....	32	3.32	2 Sergt.-Major Maltby, Newcastle	28	4.30
8 Br. Moore, Ottawa.....	32	4.45	2 Sergt.-Major Lloyd, Gananoque	27	3.25
5 Br. Cliffe, Gananoque.....	32	4.50	2 Corp. McLean, Richmond.....	27	4.06
5 Sergt. Hood No. 2 Batt. 1st Bde	32	5.13	2 Sergt. R. J. Kendall, Montreal	27	4.16
5 Staff-Sergt. Fox, Toronto.....	32	5.41	2 Corp. Bradt, Welland Canal....	27	5.51
4 Gun. Horner, Hamilton.....	32	6.00	2 Br. Cowan, Ottawa.....	26	3.49
4 Sergt.-Major Moore, Kingston	30	4.12	2 Br. Rankin, London.....	26	3.58
4 Br. Collett, Hamilton.....	30	5.32	2 Gun. Gibson, Welland Canal....	26	4.00
4 Sergt.-Major Bertrand, Quebec	29	3.26	2 Corp. Dempsey, London.....	26	6.15
3 Br. Page, Quebec.....	29	4.05	2 Gun. Kincaid, Durham.....	25	3.52

WINNING BATTERIES.

\$ 30 Montreal, Lieut.-Col. Stevenson....	82	\$ 15 Richmond, Major Hon. H. Aylmer..	543
20 Quebec, Major Lindsay.....	536	10 No. 2 Batt., 1st Bde., Major Hood...	476