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Topics of the Week.

Those members of the Canadian militia interested in the Dominion Messenger Pigeon Association, promoted by Major-General Cameron of the Royal Military College, may read with profit the report, printed in this issue, recently made by Major Allatt to the British Naval Volunteer Home Defence Association upon the use of messenger pigeons on coasts. Major Allatt is the leading British military authority on messenger pigeon service. His report makes plain the great possibilities of usefulness of pigeon service in military operations, and the encouragement thus afforded should give renewed impetus to the movement to establish in Canada the pleasant sport and valuable military auxiliary it is the aim of the Messenger Pigeon Association to create.

Major Mayne's lecture on Infantry Fire Tactics for the Canadian Militia, recently delivered at the Military Institute, Toronto, has been printed in pamphlet form for circulation. It has been distributed gratuitously by the Institute to all commanding officers, and we are informed that others desiring copies may secure them for the modest price of fifteen cents each. Major Mayne is known as an eminent authority on the subject of his lecture, and it may be perused with profit and interest alike. The production and dissemination of lectures such as this will be amongst the most beneficial of the undertakings of the Institute, which, we are glad to learn, is already a pronounced success, having now a membership of upwards of two hundred and fifty.

The annual attack upon the Garrison Common rifle ranges at Toronto is in progress, and as usual the Exhibition Association takes a leading part. This time it is a contractor employed by that body who is the figurehead. He had a number of men engaged in building a wharf some three hundred yards outside the line of fire, and stopped the work on the absurd allegation that their lives were endangered by the rifle practice. The dodge was a smart one, but in the interest of volunteering it is to be hoped it will not be allowed to have the effect desired. If the ranges really are dangerous, and competent authorities be found to so pronounce them, it will then be in order to devise means for ensuring their use with safety to the public. This would be an easy undertaking, and cost but a fraction of the expense to which the volun-

teers would be put were they compelled to travel many miles by rail to do their firing. Montreal just now furnishes an apt illustration of the evil effect of closing the city range and substituting for it one seven miles distant.

As the facts become better known the good sense of the public leads to a decided protest against the attack upon General Middleton because of the loss of the furs in the possession of Charles Bremner at the time of his arrest at Battleford for participation in the rebellion. *Bystander*, an eminently independent reviewer, has published a strong editorial article in the General's defence; and simultaneously there appears in the *Manitoba Liberal* an article pointing out the absurdity of the attack on General Middleton, which the *Liberal* thinks proceeds from the desire to "pull down the old General because he was sent over to Canada from the British Army." The paper proceeds very sensibly to condemn the agitation against the award of the command to a British officer, pointing out that while we have the very best material in Canada for officers, we have not yet men of sufficient training by real experience. On the last day Parliament was in session, the subject being brought up in the House, Lieut.-Col. Kirkpatrick thus concisely stated the case, speaking in opposition to the contention that General Middleton should be asked to pay for all of the furs in place of for only the few carried away by his order:—

"There is a total misapprehension," he said, "on the part of hon. gentlemen as to the way these furs came into the possession of the Police. This man Bremner had come into Battleford with these furs, and the furs were being pillaged by people there; by whom I do not know; but, at all events, it is stated that an officer of the Police came to the General to say that these furs were being taken from him, and he asked for authority to have them handed over to the Police for safe-keeping. At that time the General had no idea whatever of giving any order for confiscating the furs, or asking that they be put up for himself. They were handed over to the Police for safe-keeping, just as Bremner himself was arrested and handed over to the Police for safe-keeping. Two months after that, when word was brought to General Middleton that Bremner had gone to Regina as a prisoner, as the report states, Mr. Reed then asked the General whether these furs should be confiscated, and what was to be done with them. After he had come back, on the 4th of July, from pursuing Big Bear, he gave that order to confiscate the furs, and then said that some might be given to his staff, and some left for himself, and receipts were to be taken for them; so that they were really in possession of the Mounted Police, that is, of the Government, and whoever received the furs is the party that should be called upon to pay for them."

We note that the case of musical instruments placed by our advertisers Fontaine Besson & Co., at the Royal Military Exhibition in London, England, has been very generally admired. To this exhibit we would call the attention of the members of the Bisley team and other Canadian militiamen who will visit England this summer. The Besson instruments are very largely used by the military bands in Canada, and give the greatest satisfaction.

Much interest is attracted to the experiments being carried on in France in training dogs to act as scouts, messengers and sentinels. To teach a dog to act as messenger two men take the animal some distance and one returns to the starting-point, the dog upon being set loose invariably finding his way back. As a sentinel the dog gives indications of the approach of a stranger at the distance of a hundred yards. Acting as scouts, as soon as the dogs perceive a soldier wearing a foreign uniform they retreat, running to the soldiers who accompany them, and thus announce the presence of an enemy.