

FELL OUT OF THE RANKS.

WHY A HALIFAX REGIMENT HAS HAD AN INQUIRY.

Men who Marched to a Funeral and Did Not March all the Way Back—How They Have Been Punished—The Case of Colonel Egan Again to the Front.

HALIFAX, March 19.—One after another the three battalions into which the Halifax militia force is divided have had their little, or their great troubles. There has been internecine strife among the officers of the 63rd Rifles for a couple of years. The 66th Princess Louise Fusiliers have had a series of "little unpleasantnesses" culminating in the Bedford range troubles of last summer. Now the 1st Regiment of Canadian artillery, or as they used to be called, the H. G. A., are in for a full share of trouble. It is a question of discipline, and the results, which are likely to flow from it may be far-reaching.

The H. G. A. has always been a model regiment. Officers and men come from the best "middle classes" in the community. They are largely mechanics, of a most intelligent description. The regiment has long held a place of high standing compared with other artillery regiments in Canada. Officers and men have worked well together and without sacrifice of discipline, for that has been well maintained.

A recent occurrence, which happened during the funeral of one of the best members of No. 3 Company, has caused a break in the happy relations hitherto existing, and has made a breach which may be a long time in healing. Like every subject there are "two sides to the question." Progress in its invariable desire to be, and practice of being, fair, will do its best to present both sides.

The incident which gives rise to regimental excitement in brief is, that one day last week, after returning from the funeral of their late comrade Gunner Morgan, some of the members of the funeral party fell out of the ranks on the way back to town, when near their homes, instead of marching two miles further, to the drill shed where arms were to be handed in and the party dismissed. For this three non-commissioned officers were reduced to the ranks and two gunners were fined \$3 and \$1, respectively.

Here is the way the officers look at the question: Discipline must be maintained. These men had put on the uniform to attend a military funeral. True enough, it was a voluntary affair, but when once they stepped into the ranks, with the Queen's clothing upon their backs, it's voluntary character ceased and the men passed under military law, so that they could do nothing without orders, and especially they dare not disobey orders. If one or two, or a half dozen men were permitted to do what was refused to others, the force of discipline would soon be a thing of the past. An additional aggravation of the conduct of men who prematurely fell out from the ranks on this occasion, in the eyes of the officers, was that they held rifles and side-arms which had to be taken to the armory in order that they might be properly cared for, cleaned and dried, after the rainy weather to which they had been exposed. Some men might be trusted to properly attend to their arms at their homes, but others cannot be, so that the rule has been rigidly enforced that arms must invariably be deposited at the armory. In the case of Gunner Fader, who was fined \$3, the officers charge that he left the ranks in the face of a positive refusal to allow him to leave before reaching the drill shed. No matter how distinguished a man's services, the officers say, he must obey the rules just as if he were the newest recruit; in fact he should be more careful, because he knows better what his duty is. This is reasonable.

Such is the reasoning of the officers of the H. G. A. and such the cause of their punishing five men for leaving the ranks previous to the conclusion of the funeral parade for Gunner Morgan. The men who suffered for their conduct were: Sergeant Johnston, Sergeant Gordon, Bombardier Currie, Gunner Fader and Gunner Dibbin.

On Thursday night these men were summoned to appear before a regimental court of inquiry presided over by Colonel Curran, seated beside him being Major Maxwell, Captain Flowers and other officers. Sergeants Johnston and Gordon were marched in first, and their reduction to the ranks was ordered. Then Bombardier Currie was escorted in to hear his sentence: "Reduced to the ranks." Last of all Gunners Fader and Dibbin were marched into the awful court. The story of what took place may be regarded as the men's side of the case. Gunner Fader's face was as red as a beet, not on account of confusion, but because of anger. He was in a towering rage that he should be submitted to what he considered so gross an indignity to a man who had for twenty-three years been a militiaman. For ten years he had been color-sergeant of the 66th P. L. F., and for eighteen years had been a Fusilier. Over and over again during the past five years had he been urged to take a sergeancy in the H. G. A., and had been desirous ere now he could have had a commission. Shoulder to shoulder for many years had he fired with those same officers in rifle competitions, helping to bring laurels to the battalion.

Now to find himself marched in as a prisoner, enraged him terribly. But he then said never a word.

"Gunner Fader, you are accused of insubordination and abandonment of your arms; have you anything to say in your defence?" said Colonel Curran.

Fader's defence was something like this: He is a builder, and has a couple of houses,



Col. A. E. CURRAN, H. G. A.

almost ready for occupation. The day before the funeral of poor Gunner Morgan a lady came to Fader and made an appointment to examine one of the houses with a view to purchasing. Fader for the moment forgot the funeral. When the mistake he had made dawned upon him he ran the risk of losing the sale of his house, by disappointing the lady rather than to neglect going to the funeral, a parade which was entirely voluntary. He therefore put on his uniform and went south to the drill shed two miles, and returned with the firing party, of which he was one, and the other members of the corps, to Morgan's house. The funeral started to Fairview cemetery, two miles away. The sad interment took place and all that was mortal of their late comrade was with military honors committed to the grave. At the cemetery Fader said to Captain Flowers, who was in charge of the detachment:

"May I not fall out at North street, on the march home, as I live near by?"

"I don't see how you can, Fader," was Flowers' reply.

So the weary tramp home began, and when North street was reached the men had marched eight miles in all. That would not be much of an ordeal on an ordinary day and under ordinary circumstances, but a rain storm had raged all the time, and Fader's footgear was out of order. It was two miles more to the drill shed and then two miles back again home, a total of twelve miles. Under the circumstances, Fader thought this was four miles too much for human endurance when there was no need for it, and seeing that the funeral had been an optional parade with the men, a trusty man accordingly offered to take charge of Fader's rifle, carrying it to the Armory, for it was only the members of the firing party who carried those arms, and Fader dropped out of the ranks at North street and went home. At different stages of the march Sergeants Johnston and Gordon, Bombardier Currie and Gunner Dibbin did likewise, as they passed the points nearest to their homes.

This statement carried no weight with Colonel Curran, Major Maxwell, Captain Flowers and the other officers, and the colonel, in solemn tones and grave, solemnly uttered the words: "You are fined \$3," and Gunner Dibbin must pay \$1, as he too left the ranks though without the added heinousness of having done so in the face of that "I don't see how you can." Then the two gunners were ushered into the darkness. Fader was as mad as ever, or worse if that were possible. Poor Dibbin was so worked up about it that when he reached the door he fainted.

A crowd was waiting outside, and Fader received many assurances of sympathy not to speak of promises to back him up in any measure he might think it necessary to take. Fader is a man not without influence, and those assurances meant something. He belongs to company No. 3 of which Maxwell is major and Flowers captain. No. 3 has attained great distinction for its efficiency, a distinction which is due to Fader and such men as he. Only a few weeks ago the non-coms and men of No. 3 leased a fine suite of rooms and formed an organization whose sole object was the improvement of the men and the advancement of the interests of No. 3 company. Fader, among the others, put his hand deep into his pocket to pay the expenses of this movement, and he was made president of the organization. Now he has been disgraced by the officers, the class who would reap most of the glory from the good work No. 3 association proposed to do.

The outcome of the trouble promises to be serious. The matter will not be allowed to rest where it now is. A meeting of the association is to be held this (Thursday) evening, which will be in the nature of an indignation meeting. Fader and his doughty sympathizers will be heard from, and the officers may be heard from too, for they are members of No. 3 association as well, but only on an equal footing with the youngest gunner. Politics should not be brought into such matters, but Gunner Fader says that henceforth he counts himself a liberal because Colonel Curran, Major Maxwell and Captain Flowers are supposed to be conservatives.

The 63rd rifles case is now before General Gascoigne, at Ottawa, and a decision may be expected at an early day. The difficulty has come to be one simply between Captain Dixon and Colonel Egan, and it will be a happy day for the battalion when war is over and peace between those two is declared. Sympathy, which at one time was mainly with Dixon, seems now to be rapidly swinging round to the Colonel, if indeed, it has not already swung there. It was thought that there was some great principle at stake between a section of 63rd officers, represented by Dixon, and Colonel Egan, but it appears

that it is just the case, that that stage has passed away, and that the officers have flocked to Colonel Egan's side.

Last autumn charges of insubordination were preferred against Captain Dixon by the regimental commanding officer. On the other hand, the colonel was charged with wrong-doing in regard to the re-employment of Holloway and Pickford, a charge which worked backward as well as forward. Captain Dixon has lost ground with the officers on account of his most recent charges against the colonel—charges which were investigated by D. A. G. Maunsell on a recent occasion in this city.

First, Dixon charged that the colonel had sold some old clothing given to the battalion by the government which had become useless by long wear and that he had therefore realized between \$50 and \$60, a sum which was paid into the regimental fund. The sale, perhaps, was irregular, but it was for the good of the regiment, and the government never receives benefit from such clothing. Had the clothing not been sold, as it was, it would have been lost to both government and battalion. So that this charge, while reflecting on the colonel, is also bad for the regiment, a situation the officers naturally don't like.

Charge No. 2 has regard to moneys paid for rations on two occasions. During the Sir John Thompson funeral rations were served to the men on duty. A charge of 25 cents per man was made for this to the Sir John Thompson burial fund, and the money was paid. It went into the regimental fund and so swelled the battalion revenue again. At the autumn mobilization last year a similar sum was paid per man for rations. But the men brought their own rations, and the money was placed in the regimental fund, from



Col. T. J. EGAN, 63rd Rifles.

which any man who wants his "quarter" can get it. Most of them prefer to see the regiment so much more in funds on account of the 25 cent transaction.

Thirdly, the government allows all field officers a certain amount to pay for the use of a horse during the season's drill. Colonel Egan put in an amount for the full number of days on which he might have used a horse, he paid for the animal when he had one, and deposited the balance, where all the other moneys had gone, in the regimental fund for the good of the battalion. The opinion is freely expressed that neither Colonel Humphrey of the 66th, nor Colonel Tucker of St. John, nor any other infantry colonel in Canada does otherwise than as did Colonel Egan. Yet this charge was pressed against Colonel Egan by Captain Dixon. While these latest charges may make an unpleasantness for the colonel such complaints are not popular with the regiment, and now officers and men have become almost solid for the C. O.

When asked regarding the "interior economy of the regiment," by Colonel Maunsell, not an officer could be found to condemn Colonel Egan's management. So it is alleged on good authority.

Salmon Sometimes Caught at Sea.

The salmon is one of the anadromous fishes, of which the shad and the sturgeon are other examples; anadromous fish being those that come from the sea and ascend fresh water streams to spawn, and return to the sea again after spawning. It is not known of the shad whether it remains in deep water in the ocean not very far away from the river whence it came, or whether it goes south; but it seems certain that some salmon, at least, spend their sea life not far away from their rivers, for salmon have been caught at sea in northern waters, off the New England coast, on hooks baited for cod, haddock, and halibut.

Somewhat Similar.

Wickwire—Sometimes I think it would be a good idea if a man could be treated like a horse—shot when he gets too old to work.

Yabsley—it is pretty near that way now. When a man gets too old to work he is fired.

Shattering a Popular Superstition.

About the most surprising thing in an X ray picture of a shad or herring skeleton is that the bones are several milliors less than was popularly supposed.

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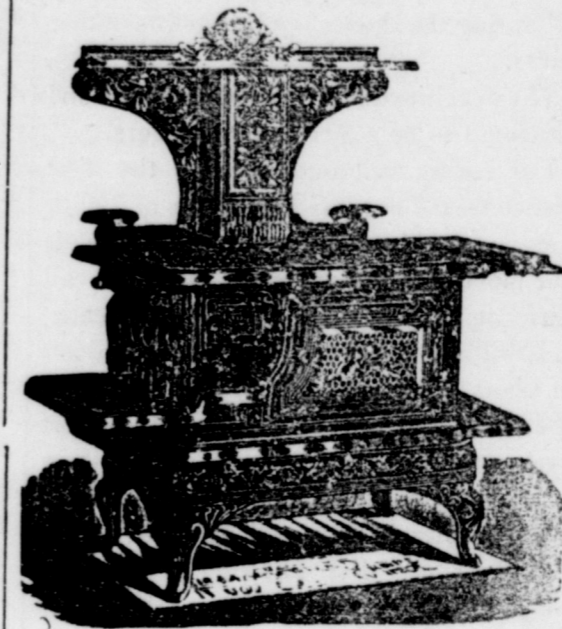


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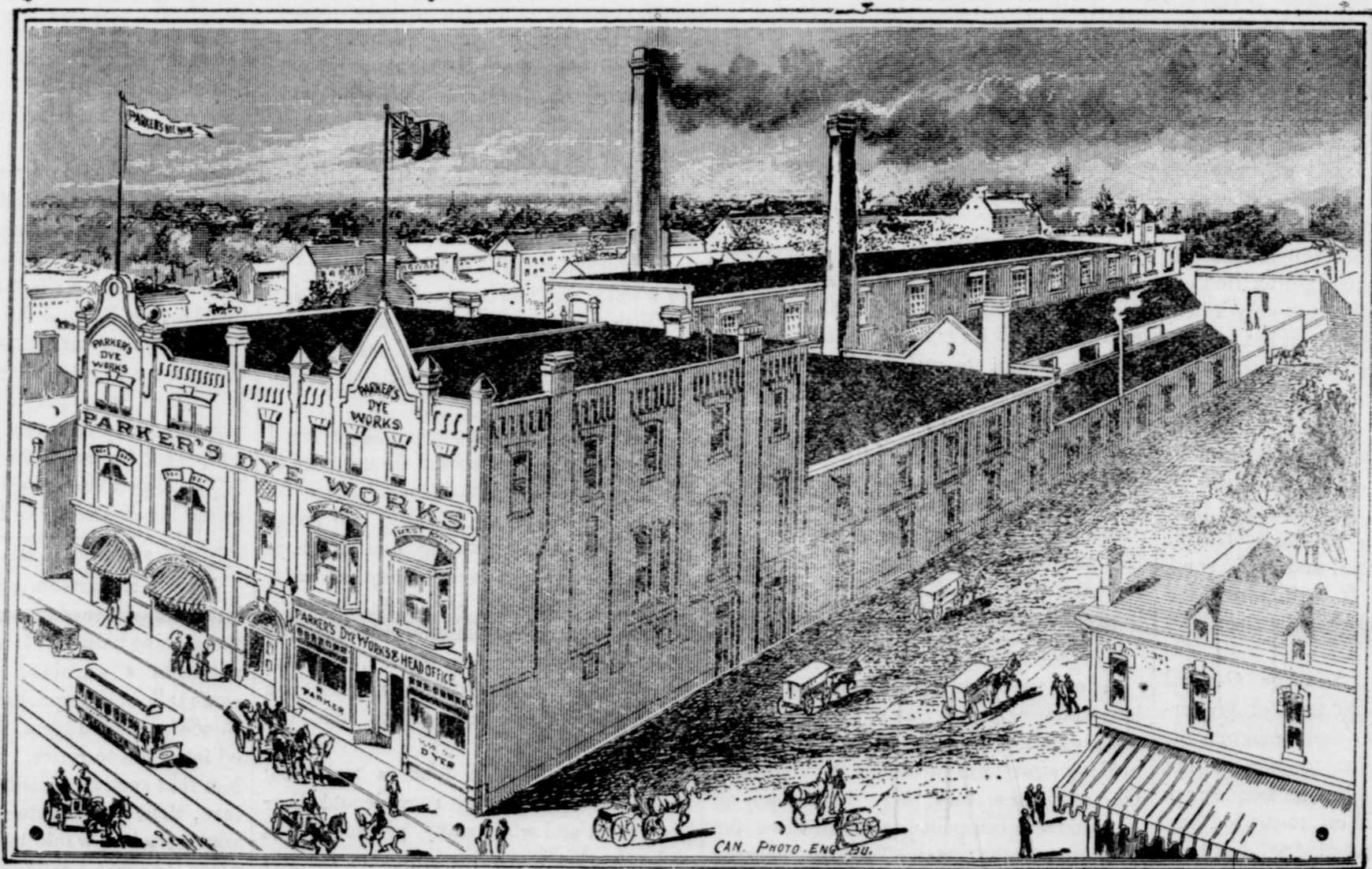
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