

NATIONAL GUARD CONVENTION.

A session of the Oregon National Guard Association is being held in the armory of the First Regiment in this city, for the purpose of considering the question of necessary legislation at the coming session of the legislature, and other questions affecting the increased efficiency and higher standing of the



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national guard of the state as a serviceable and reliable military arm of the government. Such an object is certainly a worthy one, and deserves the hearty sympathy and co-operation of the people. The time has gone by when the militia can be charged with "playing soldier." Service in the national guard means plenty of hard work, the expenditure of some money, the giving of considerable time, and the reaching of a fairly effective standard of military excellence on the part of even the privates, while on the part of the officers it means all this increased from two-fold to ten-fold, in accordance with the position occupied. Under the most discouraging conditions, as compared with the guard of other states, the service in Oregon has been brought to a state of efficiency much higher than in some states, and fully as high as it will ever be possible to raise it unless many of the insurmountable obstacles now in the way are removed. This high state has been reached through the unselfish labors of men who have given freely of both time and money to accomplish it, and it can not always be expected to remain there under the same conditions, for unsupported energy must flag and a thankless task must sometime become irksome.

Nearly every state in the union makes provision for the proper equipment of its national guard and for placing it in camp of instruction at least one week annually. California and even the new states of Washington and Montana do this, but Oregon has as yet failed to attempt it. A sudden call for service would find the Oregon national guard unequipped, and therefore, practically unserviceable anywhere save in the towns where the various companies belong, and not even there for night duty. There is not an overcoat in the service that is not the private property of the wearer, not a blanket, not a tin cup or any other utensil, not a tent, and it may be said nothing whatever that would enable the regiments to go into camp or respond to a call for duty that would take them into the field. To be sure, under the stress of sudden emergency, when the public welfare was at stake, patriotic citizens might, and probably would, come to the rescue and contribute the

necessary equipment and supplies to render the urgently-needed services of the guard available; but should the state rely upon such a supposition, and invite the inevitable delay and loss of the advantages of prompt action at a crisis suddenly precipitated?

The result of the convention will, undoubtedly, be the framing of a bill to be presented to the legislature appropriating a sum sufficient to provide camp equipage, pay the expenses of two annual encampments, equip the men with overcoats, and pay the expenses of the first six months of the military organization left unprovided for when the national guard was organized in 1887. The military law passed that year went into effect on the first of July, while the appropriation for the support of the guard under its provisions did not become available until January, 1888. This permitted the expenses of maintenance to accumulate for six months, and the military board is, consequently, just six months short in its funds. This shortage should be provided for. To it can be charged, to a considerable extent, the failure of the board to provide overcoats and other necessaries, and to institute many needed measures for the improvement of the guard.

One at all familiar with the life and requisites of a soldier does not need to be told of the necessity for giving him practical instruction in the camp and field. Theory never can usurp the place of practice. A soldier not trained in the life of the camp, the duties of the sentinel and the practical experience of drill in the field, has all this to learn when called upon for active service, and is, therefore, not as efficient, serviceable and reliable as one who is, nor can he be considered as competent to answer satisfactorily a sudden call to duty. Camp instruction and discipline, combined with rifle practice, are far more important than a high state of perfection in company drill, which the uninformed individual is prone to consider the sign of a serviceable and trained soldier. The efficient soldier is the one who knows what to do and how to do it when active service is demanded, not the one who can stand up in the armory and drill the best in the manual of arms, though, under proper conditions the two will generally be found united in one person. In like manner the company that can go into camp and take the field in a self-reliant and effective way, is far superior to the one that can only boast of the ability to execute the school of the company in a faultless manner before a host of admiring friends. Again it may be said that under proper conditions, these two companies will often be found combined in one; for the same spirit that actuates the individual and the com-



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