

Supplement to the C. M. Review.

1ST APRIL, 1881.

AN interesting and lengthy correspondence has, during the past month, appeared from time to time in the columns of the *Toronto Globe*, upon the subject of "Our Canadian Militia,"—a discussion between the editor of that journal and correspondents, signing themselves a "Lieut.-Colonel," "Observer," and "Non-Com," resulting, we fancy, in each being convinced against his will, but remaining of the same opinion still. "Lieutenant-Colonel" thinks that what the Militia requires is, having a highly trained class of officers scattered throughout the various battalions and batteries composing the force that protects our extended frontier, diffusing something like efficiency and discipline in the service, and the rank and file, believing in the ability of their commanders, would, in the hour of need, be led confident in their own power of victory—a power which more than once has won a battle.

"Observer's" letter being short and to the point, from the cadet point of view, we insert it:

SIR,—In a letter to THE GLOBE of the 21st Inst., signed "Lt.-Col.," I am surprised to learn that although the theoretical knowledge of the cadets who have graduated at the Royal Military College is no doubt superior, their practical experience is inferior to the militia officers of Canada.

I should like to know if "Lt.-Col." considers the practical experience obtained by the average militia officer to be equal to that of the cadets, who live in barracks during nine months of the year, for four years, under the strictest military discipline, and who parade several times a day for either practical engineering, artillery, infantry, or cavalry, and in addition, very frequently route marching; who also all consecutively the different positions of private, non-commissioned officer, and officer, thus obtaining a thorough practical experience of a soldier's as well as officer's duties. Will "Lt.-Col." please explain how the average militia officer is superior in "practical experience" to the graduate of the Royal Military College?

I will not further trespass on your valuable space.

I remain with many thanks,

OBSERVER.

Toronto, March 21th, 1881.

"Non-Com" seems chiefly concerned in the abuse of men who have served the country, and are—some of them—ready to do so again.

The "proof of pudding is in the eating." No one who has read the last Militia Report, but must feelingly regret the unwelcome remarks made by the Assistant Inspector of Artillery for the Maritime Provinces in reference to the state of the New Brunswick Artillery. He is compelled to say that this Brigade which at one time held a leading position among the corps of the country, has greatly deteriorated. He advises the retirement of the Colonel commanding, and mentions that he was obliged to reprimand the Adjutant on parade for the want of discipline in the ranks, and he thinks that this latter officer, who was qualified at one of the Gunnery Schools, lives too far away from the head-quarters of his brigade to be of effective service. Here is the whole mistake. The Government cannot ask this officer to forego his country business and remove to town without any occupation, but if they had given him, upon his return to St. John from the School, a yearly allowance as Adjutant-Instructor of the Brigade, then the present state of things might have been different. No! We suppose the instructional money is distributed to the Colonel and Captains of corps, as instructors who have not taken advantage of the opportunities afforded artillery officers to acquire that thorough knowledge of the profession and duties of a soldier which would enable them to keep their brigades or batteries to the standard of efficiency, demanded by the wonderful scientific improvement in "modern Artillery," and hence the above result.

"Lt.-Col." points to the fact that at Ridgeway the volunteers were thrown into confusion through the utter incapacity of the

officers, and shews that militiamen and volunteers, when led by experienced officers in whom they have confidence, are superior to raw regulars under the same conditions.

The editor of the *Globe* agrees with all this, but thinks the Royal Military College will, in the future, furnish all that is required in the way of highly trained officers. With this we agree, but are we to wait for years until a sufficient number of cadets have passed out of the College and grown to that age of ripe manhood which commands the respect and confidence of the men whom they control. We must wait also until the cadets have made money in civil life sufficient to enable them to devote time to a non-paying militia, and in the meanwhile are we to allow our Canadian army to drift into inefficiency. We have before pointed in these pages how desirable it is to offer to those officers of the Militia who have taken certificates at the Royal Schools of Gunnery and to the passed graduates of the Royal Military College, some yearly remuneration that would make it worth their while to devote a part of their time and energies to keeping up the discipline and efficiency of their respective batteries, troops or companies.

— Why is England so slow in following the mechanical improvements in weapons of war adopted into the services of continental nations. Her recent disasters abroad shew that the savage is sometimes a match for us with our breech-loading small arms, and muzzle-loading field guns; had Britain the breech-loading shielded field guns and the repeating rifle, as in the German army, we would not hear of all the gunners being killed by rifle fire around their guns, or of the hill of Majuba, being cleared by the Boers.

The German rifle is made into a repeating arm only in cases of emergency, when by fixing on to the breech a reservoir containing a number of cartridges, a stream of bullets can be poured with the greatest rapidity without taking the right hand from the rifle, so as to effectively check a sudden rush of an enemy, be they cavalry or infantry. These weapons combined with a less conspicuous dress, that scarlet which, though associated with so many glories, has had no slight share in our reverses from the days of old Braddock ambuscade by French Canadians, to the last fight on the Spitz Kop, where the gleaming white helmet raised above a tuft of grass or boulder, (as it must be to take aim,) brought instant death to the owner. The probable result was that men blazed away without aiming—hence the marvellously small loss of the Boers. It would seem the Staff Competition wallahs, if they have learnt much, have forgotten something they had better have remembered, if they ever knew it. In the Indian Mutiny Campaign, we adopted the Kakee color of the skeiks of the old Kalsa army—neutral grey tint—easily obtained by soaking the material in a solution of ashes. Our poor fellows' helmets stained an ashen grey would have saved many a life, if we must persist in the scarlet which not only is dangerous under fire, but interferes with instruction in peace, because soldiers can't be got to add to their tailor's bill by lying down in the mud to skirmish in a scarlet coat. The instruction with the rifle is equally unpractical. Both our musketry instruction and volunteer associations practice under conditions exactly opposite to those of war. The Wimbledon and Dominion Rifle Associations give their prizes for skill at measured ranges, with the effect of each shot signalled. In war the ranges vary incessantly, and you can't persuade a Boer to hoist a red or white disk where he is hit. Soldiers are not judges of distance, and their fire is ineffective. The Wimbledon or Canadian volunteer need not boast himself to be much if anything better, or imagine himself to be a match for a marksman accustomed to stalk his game.