



The Volunteer Review

AND MILITARY AND NAVAL GAZETTE.

A Journal Devoted to the Interests of the Military and Naval Forces of the Dominion of Canada.

VOL. VI

OTTAWA, (CANADA,) MONDAY, JANUARY 5, 1872.

No. 2.

We are indebted to our gallant and talented correspondent 'G.W.G.' for the following able article on the history of the Canadian Army:—

The close of the year 1871 forms an epoch in the history of the Army of Canada, at which it will not be amiss if we pause for an instant to contemplate what were its rudiments previous to the latter part of 1866; what it has become during the period which has elapsed since the end of that somewhat memorable year; and what are the reasonable hopes for its future, deducible from the progress made during the interval.

Previous to the month of September, 1866, less than twenty battalions bore a regimental organization. Before the end of that year above thirty more, identified with their counties, and bearing numbers and badges which we may well hope will become historical, were added to the list.

Although, therefore, Sir George Cartier's Militia Act did not come into operation for two years afterwards, the year 1866 may be taken as the epoch of inauguration of the National Army as it exists to day. The very perceptible steps which have been made since 1866 towards both system and efficiency have, however, mostly been effected in the last three years of that period.

Whatever may be the varieties of individual opinion as to the merits or demerits of the Act, or as to the conduct of the organization for which, at all events, it has enough elasticity to give scope, we cannot but think that a comparison of the past with the present will tend to mitigate those fears and forebodings as to our immediate military future, which are again beginning to have weight with some zealous officers of the Force.

We know that time is necessary to perfect an elaborate structure, and our experience of what has already been done leaves us in no doubt as to the certainty of future progress.

If we compare the scene of confusion and delay which pervaded the Toronto Drill Shed when the host of independent companies which then formed the bulk of the Volunteer Force, poured in, in June 1866, for the

defence of their country against the Fenians, with the orderly assemblage of far larger masses in the camps of 1871—the men proud of their regiments, their colors, their mottoes, and their badges—pleased to meet their comrades from distant parts of their counties—knowing, and known by, their officers—both men and officers with more advanced ideas of discipline, and greater knowledge of duty—with ample camp equipments, and with Quartermasters up to their work: if we compare the thoroughness of their drill (however inefficient in amount) now performed in camp, with the desultory and often inefficient instruction formerly given at Company Head-Quarters, we cannot but discern the substitution of an "Army" for a chaos of isolated Companies.

Within the period we have mentioned two Expeditions have been fitted out for probable hostilities in a distant Province, and it is but justice to say that the equipment of both reflects credit on the Head-Quarters' Staff: while it is satisfactory to know that the second—organized in a week, entirely by Canadian officers, has achieved with brilliant success, a task which seems to have been attended with hardships exceeding those of the first.

Within the present year the scientific instruction of that important branch of the service—the artillery, has been provided for on a satisfactory basis, and we trust to see a Staff College inaugurated before the year is out.

That much has yet to be done—that some fundamental reforms are imperatively demanded, is not sought to be denied; but we will not here occupy time or space by expatiating on them or even indicating them, because the letters of "Centurion" are before the readers of the *VOLUNTEER REVIEW*, and the talented officer who so signs himself has accomplished so complete a summary of, and so exhaustive a commentary upon, the amendments required, as to render unnecessary any other recommendation of them.

But even should reforms and improvements of organization not be accomplished quite so soon as we would gladly see them, let us remember that many of us have already, more than once since 1866, taken

gloomy views of the prospects of the Force, and that time has, on each occasion, proved our fears to be more or less unfounded.

For instance, in 1867, "volunteering," to use a current, but objectionable term, fell absolutely flat. The Fenian excitement, and that of the demonstration of the Thorold camp, had passed away, and not only were the croakers open-mouthed in pronouncing the Active Force to be in a state of atrophy, but many who were resolute to remain in it, and support it, as long as it would hold together, began to fear that it was doomed.

In 1868 many Battalions met at their Head-Quarters, and, although, there was a good deal of growling, and it was very generally supposed that the coming into operation of the new Militia Act, would deplete the ranks of nearly all the old hands, somehow or other large numbers signed the new muster-rolls, and the establishment of the camp system in 1869 seemed, after allowing for all drawbacks, to have infused new life into the Force.

We are now warned that the completion of the first triennial period of service under the Act will be signal for the retirement of the majority of members who have served that time, and that, unless the Act is amended the muster of next year will show a lamentable falling off.

Judging from the past it would seem not improbable that such expectations might, under any circumstances, be falsified, but, in view of the unjust pressure of the present purely voluntary system, it is to be earnestly hoped that the people of Canada will have plainly set before them the primary and imperative obligation of military service.

This will be the more necessary from the probability that the Manitoba fiasco will be the last act of the Fenian folly and wickedness; and, should it prove to be so, the rabid economists will be prompt to urge the absence of present necessity for expenditure for military purposes. In fact we really owe a debt of gratitude to our ruffianly friends; for their playful little incursions have done much to disturb the stolid serenity, and scare the obstructiveness of the dollar worshipers. It can scarcely be too often urged that the nation which, in peace prepares for war, is precisely the nation which is likely to re-