

CHAPTER II.

THE FOUNDING OF A NATIONAL FORCE.

At the forging of the sword
The startled air swift whirled
The red flames round the world,
From the anvil where was smitten
The steel the forges wrought into the sword.
—ISABELLA VALANCEY CRAWFORD.



FTER the arrival of the new Governor there was no unnecessary delay in providing for the military defences of the Province so far as the resources available would allow. A provincial corps for special colonial service was raised, recruited chiefly among veteran soldiers, and called after Simcoe's old corps of the Revolutionary War, the Queen's Rangers. The first session of the Parliament of Upper Canada met September 17th, 1792, and passed Acts to put in force the English law to establish trial by jury, to establish a standard for weights and measures, etc., etc. There were so many questions of vital domestic concern to attend to that the Governor and the Parliament could not attend to the question of defence; but soon after the House prorogued, Simcoe actively busied himself with the matter, and when the House met for its second session, March 31st, 1793, he earnestly recommended in his opening speech the immediate passage of an Act for "the better regulation of the militia." The first business of the session was the passage of such an Act, the ideas of the Governor and the Provincial Legislature being exactly alike on that question. The bill as passed had doubtless been drafted by the Governor himself.

Simcoe's idea was to organize the Upper Canada militia on the model of the British militia force of that day, a service the development of which to that date it is most interesting and needful for us in Canada to trace.

Under the Anglo-Saxon kings, when the question of defence against the Scots, the Welsh, and particularly the Danes and other over-sea raiders, was a very live one in England, all men were required to bear arms as a sort of body-rent for the land they held, but there was no special organization until King Alfred's reign. That wise sovereign, about the year 880, organized the militia or fyrd, making land the basis of numbers, but the family system that of discipline. So many families were a tything, ten tythings a hundred, and hundreds were united into county powers, each under its *heretoga*, leader, dux or duke. Each section of the community had not only to furnish its quota in time of war, but also to provide arms, keep them in repair, and train its men for so many years every year.*

* Capt. W. E. Ward's "Short History of the Militia" (English).