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REPORT OF THE ADJUTANT-GENERAL

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MILITIA GUNBOATS.

The report of Mr. G. W. Wyatt, Gunboat Agent (which will be found in the Appendix) details the duties carried out, and services performed during the past year by the two Militia gunboats "The Prince Alfred" and the "Rescue." Three Batteries of Artillery performed their annual drill on board the "Prince Alfred," namely, the St. Catharines Battery (two officers and forty-eight men), the Collingwood Battery, two officers and twenty-five men, and the Sarnia Battery (three officers and thirty-eight men).

The "Prince Alfred" took part in the operations carried out at Goderich, whilst the Camp of Exercise was formed there. This vessel is now armed with two "Armstrong" and four brass "howitzer" guns, and has been much improved by recent alterations. As part of the system of defence from Fenian invasion on the western frontier of Ontario, the "Prince Alfred" would be found very valuable, and she is well adapted for a training ship.

The "Prince Alfred" is too large to admit of her passage through the Welland Canal, and is therefore only available for the defence of the frontier of Lakes Erie and Huron.

The Gunboat "Rescue" is not at present so well suited for the service; but when the alterations proposed by Mr. Wyatt are carried out, this vessel will also form a valuable addition to the defensive resources of the country against Fenian attack.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

Of the 34,414 men who performed the Annual Drill last year, I personally inspected more than 30,000, travelling on this and other duties during the summer and autumn months upwards of 10,000 miles, visiting also every Brigade Camp (with the exception of one,) and nine out of the eleven Military Districts there are in the Dominion.

Among the various corps assembled at the camps of exercise there were many fine looking men. In some of the rural Battalions whole companies equal in height and physical appearance to the men of the Guards in England. Many farmers possessing ample means are to be found in the ranks purely from a patriotic feeling, and no finer physical material for soldiers, can be found in any country than amongst the backwoodsmen of Canada.

Perhaps the largest men are to be found in the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia Corps, but in the Battalion of Ontario and Quebec there are also very many large men. As an instance of extraordinary height, I may mention that in the camp at Point Lewis, opposite Quebec, I found a man in the ranks of one of the rural Battalions by name "Richard Manger" (of French Canadian and Irish blood) nearly 8 feet in height, being also well proportioned and powerful looking man.

On reference to the reports of the Officers Commanding Districts, as well as to the tabular Annual Inspection Returns of Corps (all of which will be found in the Appendix), the numerical deficiency which exists in the ranks will be seen. The only Battalion I found actually complete in strength was the 23rd Battalion (a French speaking Canadian Corps) at the Lewis Camp. It will be seen also that officers commanding Districts entertain little hope that the full numerical strength of existing corps can be maintained by voluntary enrolment alone.

A very general desire appears to exist on the part of the majority of officers to complete every corps to its full strength, when volunteering is exhausted, by means of the Ballot, as provided for in the Law, and thus not only render the respective corps effective in numbers but also equalize the pressure of Military service in the different localities, and on the community at large. A feeling appears to prevail in the Force in favour of a Regular instead of a Volunteer Militia. Experience proves that the strongest national Military organization is that one which is founded upon the principle of obligatory service; the people of Canada wisely recognized this fact in the Dominion Militia Act; doubtless the same wisdom and feeling of patriotism with which they were actuated in framing the law will induce them to carry out its provisions, whenever they find that the necessity has arisen. There are upwards of 220,000 men in the First Class of the Militia in the four Provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick alone, young unmarried men between the ages of 18 and 30, the withdrawal of a portion of whom, for a few days in the year only, from their civil pursuits to train for the defence of the country, would hardly be felt as a tax either by themselves, or the community at large; whilst every encouragement should be continued to maintain corps of the Active Militia by voluntary enrolment, the numbers required to complete the strength of corps which cannot be maintained at the proper strength by voluntary enrolment, might be taken from this class in the different Regimental Divisions by means of the Ballot. Thus would not only existing corps be kept

numerically efficient, but the operations of the ballot in time of peace, confined to the 1st class of Militiamen, who would be trained in rotation to some extent to the use of arms at a time of life when military service entails least sacrifice. Moreover, by carrying out the provisions of the law in this respect when necessary employers of labour, and others, would probably be deterred from throwing insuperable difficulties in the way of voluntary enrolment, as is often from self-interest motives, the case, and the pressure of military service, which has always fallen and still falls upon the willing few (in many instances upon the heads of families and upon certain communities only) by being spread more equally over the whole country would as a personal tax be much more lightly felt.

The fact that out of a nominal strength of paper of 43,000 so large a number as 34,414 men actually mustered and performed the Annual Drill last year, in a time of profound peace with no excitement to stimulate them, speaks volumes for the military spirit of Canadians generally, and for their determination to train themselves for the defence of the country. Those who know the high price of wages in the Dominion, the great demand for labor of all kinds in a new country, and the sacrifice such men often make in attending to their military duties, can best appreciate their patriotism; but it is too much to expect that such voluntary sacrifices can be long continued, or that the same men will cheerfully agree to leave their shops and fields year after year, for a certain number of days, to drill, whilst their fellow citizen, who should equally contribute personal service, remain at home to make money, or to reap a harvest.

Although it is found difficult to maintain the existing Corps of the Active Militia up to their proper strength by voluntary enrolment alone continuously, judging from past experience and present facts, however, there appears no deficiency in the number of men ready to enrol in newly formed Corps.

Since the commencement of the present year the following new Corps have offered their services, been accepted and gazetted, viz:

- 4 Troops of Cavalry,
- 1 Company of Engineers,
- 2 Battalions of Infantry,
- and three Independent Companies. Offers to raise Companies or Corps of the Active Militia are constantly being received from every district.

There is therefore every probability that the present actual strength of the Active Militia in the Dominion may be maintained by voluntary enrolment, and the District