

the cost were in fact based on the amount requisite for maintaining an ordinary English or American foot soldier for an equal time, assuming only,—what we have every reason to expect we may rely on obtaining, in any such attempt—the active and cheerful co-operation of the mother country. As to the much more important question whether the amount of training proposed, viz., six months, would suffice to make them always thereafter capable of serving in the field at a few weeks' notice—I must speak with some caution—since while perfectly certain that it would go much further towards effecting that end than a much longer period of desultory instruction, with frequent breaks and long intervals between, nothing but actual experience could determine this point absolutely. This, however, may be said, which is indeed well known to every trainer and gymnast, that when once a certain proficiency in any athletic exercise has been attained, the person attaining it, though without constant practice he very soon falls off from any high degree of proficiency, is always able, so long as health and vigor remain intact, to regain his former skill in a very short period; and further, that most men can be brought to the highest point of perfection they are ever likely to reach in six months or less. If this prove true, as there seems every reason to suppose it may, with regard to military habits and exercises as well as athletic pursuits, it would go far to prove my case—at any rate a brief experience would show whether it is correct or not. As to the other objections, which, so far as I know, are these three, the injury to industrial pursuits and demoralization to the young men themselves caused by withdrawing them from their occupations and shutting them up in camps, and also the necessity of obtaining them by conscription or ballot, I have to reply that the slightest consideration might have shown those hon. gentlemen that the withdrawal of so very small a number as one hundred lads per county for a single summer can hardly by any possibility retard the commercial or agricultural interests of a country like ours, while as to the demoralization consequent on collecting a few thousand young men in camp in proper situations, passing over the very bad compliment which these gentlemen pay to our Canadian youth, in supposing mutual contact is likely to corrupt them to so alarming an extent, it is as well to remember that theirs will be no life of idleness or garrison routine, but one which, if properly managed, will provide abundance of healthy exercise for body and mind. And I may add, I have yet to learn, Mr. Speaker, what there is in strict and systematic physical training to predispose men to that profligacy and debauchery which some affect to dread, and which is in truth rather the invariable concomitant of an effeminate and luxurious mode of living. As for the necessity of obtaining the requisite number by ballot, though it ought to be enough to point out that this is the mode prescribed by our existing law, I shall just observe that no man has a right to assume that our militia would refuse to volunteer for the purpose till the experiment had been tried and failed, but that even if they did decline to come forward in that manner, it would be as absurd to leave the country undefended on that score as to leave our taxes uncollected because the contributors would not pay unless compelled. There are some powers, Mr. Speaker, which no nation and no government can possibly resign without giving up the power of maintaining its very existence; and if there be one of those which is plainer than another, it is that of requiring that a reasonable number of its inhabitants should submit to be trained to defend themselves and their country