

attaches to the deserter voluntarily surrendering himself, and the dread of encountering which is one great objection to his return among his comrades from whom he may expect taunts little dissimilar from those which he had found to attach to him in the land for which he had incurred all the odium. Moreover, the cost of these deserters to the Government, independently of the humiliation they bring upon the service, is so enormous that an attempt *honestly* to reclaim the erring soldier becomes almost a feature in political economy. No man can well be enlisted, clothed, fed, and moved from clime to clime, at less than an average cost of £20 to the country. Therefore, if we add five hundred deserters to the number stated by Sir John Colborne as having gone off between 1815 and 1838, there is a dead loss of upwards of £110,000.

The following anecdote, for which I am indebted to the Town Major of Kingston—Captain Bouchier—is certainly most cool and unique. During the former service of the 71st in this country, a man had been seduced by an American farmer of some wealth to desert, and take up his residence with him for five years in the capacity of a laborer, the stipulation being that he was to receive certain wages, food, clothing, &c. He served his engagement, but during the whole time, although well fed and otherwise provided for, he could get no money. At length he became urgent for a settlement, and, notwithstanding many evasions, succeeded in bringing his employer to a consideration of his claim.

"I'll tell you what it is now," said the farmer, in his nasal twang, "money is out of the case: I've got none; but I guess I'll give you so many acres of land, and what is more I'll help you to build a house upon it, and then you may fix it the best way you can."

The proposal was accepted, a log hut was built, a clearing was effected, and the deserter remained in occupancy during the space of four years. But there was neither deed nor title of the slightest description given to him. At the expiration of the term just named, the farmer died, and the son, his heir, who must, of course, have been fully aware of the whole transaction, called shortly afterwards on the tenant of the log hut and demanded rent.

"Rent! for what?"

"Why for this ere land you have located for the last four years. I guess the rent isn't paid."

"Of course not: I owe no rent: this land was given to me and this house put upon it by your father, for whom I worked five years."

"Don't know nothing of that," retorted the son. "If you ha'n't got the deed, I guess you must clear out, and I claim four years' rent of you." And turned out he was, forthwith.

This was his well-merited reward for deserting, and placing himself in a position of which men scrupled not to take every unworthy advantage. He had perjured himself to his God and to his country. He had toiled five years with the sweat of his brow for him who had seduced him from the path of honor, and in addition had assisted in building a house, and had cleared and cultivated a considerable portion of land. For all this he had been allowed barely the means of subsistence, and was withal called upon to pay four years rent for that which was in fact his own. This surely should be a lesson to all soldiers cursed with the spirit of desertion.

But the most amusing part of the story remains yet to be told. Annoyed and disgusted with the treatment he had received, the dupe hearing of the return of his regiment to Canada, conceived the design of honoring it with his presence. He accordingly recrossed the lines, gave himself up as a deserter, and demanded to be taken to his regiment. The application was forwarded to Colonel Grey, then commanding the 71st, but that officer very properly refused to have anything to do with him, desiring, on the contrary, that his immediate discharge be made out. The refusal to receive him was regarded by the deserter as very extraordinary, and his ideas had become so expanded during his long residence in the States that he absolutely considered himself to be a very ill-used individual.

One of the most singular cases of desertion, however, occurred in the 15th Regiment, while quartered on the Lower Canada frontier, and this so completely upsets all one's preconceived notions as to the influencing causes of desertion that it merits a record. A servant of one of the officers had been sent on one occasion to Montreal with some valuable property belonging to one of the ladies of the family, and having executed his trust with the utmost fidelity, returned to the Isle-aux-Noix, where his master was quartered. During his absence, or shortly subsequent to his return, his fellow-servant, the groom, had deserted taking with him his master's horse. A sergeant of the regiment was immediately despatched in pursuit, and with him went the servant, already mentioned, for the purpose of identifying the animal. They crossed over into the States, found the horse, which had been left in pledge by the deserter at a tavern, and, after paying the charges of the landlord, recrossed the lines and returned with the recovered animal to the British post. Two days afterwards, the same servant—who had only a few days previously been entrusted with a parcel of some value, and with which he might easily

have absconded, who had moreover since that been in the States, where no power but his own will could have withdrawn him—deserted also, and has never since been heard of on this side of the line.

It might be inferred, from the uniform steadiness of the Artillery, and the superior mental attainments which soldiers of this arm usually possess, that desertions from this body are comparatively unknown. I confess it was with the deepest surprise that I learnt, from an authority which could leave no doubt on the subject, that the crime of desertion exists with them to an extent (taking into consideration their fewness of number) not exceeded by the average of regiments of Infantry. Nor was I less amazed, when, from the same source, I was informed that the 93rd Highlanders have not been an exception to the general delinquency. The strong feeling of nationality which pervades this extremely fine corps, the personal and remarkable pride of appearance of the men, who bear themselves as if conscious of the classic garb they wear, added to the fact of their general good and steady conduct, one would have imagined to have been such guarantees of their fidelity that no temptation could shake it; but the infatuation has been too powerful even for them, and if they have yielded to it, who shall say on what desertion of troops to rely?

A most singular—nay inexplicable fact in the chronicle of desertion, and one which almost overthrows all reasoning from causes is, according to the same authority, evinced in the case of the Incorporated Battalions, raised during the rebellion, and only recently discontinued. One would have imagined that, if any corps could be exempt from all inducements to desertion, they would have been those, the very limited term of whose enlistment ought to have caused the service to be one rather of pastime than of toil. The men composing them were, moreover, not only not newly arrived in the country, and therefore likely to be hurried away with a false estimate of the advantages awaiting them on the other side of the line, but were principally old soldiers, or young men, either born or long resident in the country, who were no strangers to the American shore, and for whom the mere novelty of change could offer no attraction sufficiently powerful to counterbalance the infamy of violation of the oath which they had taken. And yet, strange to say, although the men serving in these corps had every reasonable expectation of receiving a fresh bounty at the expiration of the two years for which they were engaged, or, if they should prefer it, of leaving the service altogether, desertions were with them even more frequent, and on a more extended scale, in comparison with their strength, than with the regiments of the line. In proof of this, the returns of desertion from the Kingston garrison, from January 1838 to September 1844, exhibit, as I have before stated, a total of 215 men; and of this number, from January 1839 to August 1841, (five years back) there were, of the Incorporated Battalions, no fewer than 121. This immense disproportion is the more manifest when it is taken into consideration, that in Kingston, there are usually stationed one entire regiment, and the wing of another, independently of a strong force of Artillery.

The only way in which Captain Bouchier could account for this most glaring absence of principle, and indeed even of common sense, was by attributing the evil to the improper selection of men. The allowance usual on these occasions was not paid to the recruiting officer, before his quota of men had been completed, and as in most instances they (the officers) were not in a position to make heavy outlays, or of long standing, it necessarily became an object with them to fill up their numbers as rapidly as possible, and consequently without the exercise of that nice discrimination which might have been kept in view by them had this difficulty not interposed. True, there is no good excuse for this, but it nevertheless in some degree explains a fact which were otherwise utterly incomprehensible. Incorporated Battalions properly selected, and officered by men who understand the art of infusing a becoming pride into the soldier, while zealously alive to his wants, would be most efficient troops for the frontier—Kingston only excepted, which, as the Head Quarters of the Army in Upper Canada, should of course be garrisoned by the regular forces. Their removal from so important a position, would imply a dishonoring want of confidence which, would not much tend to the diminution of the will, if it did of the power, to desert; and, therefore, the evil here is almost irremediable, or at least not susceptible of any other modification than that which has been carefully suggested for the comfort and well being of the soldier, by Sir Richard Armstrong.

In the selection for the Canadian Rifles, now stationed along the Western frontier, of men of not less than fifteen years service, the Government have acted judiciously. If any men will remain true to their colors, they must be found among the number of those who have the reputation of past years to support, and who, from their long association with military life, are almost disqualified for any other employment. This is almost the only guarantee, but it is a powerful one, of their fidelity. Men who have numbered fifteen years of service in the army, and passed through a long and trying ordeal, with unblemished conduct, are not likely to forego the proud recollection, unless it be in a moment of inebriety to which the soldier is so unhappily led in this country, not more from inclination than example.

[TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT.]