



Lt.-Col. Wm. Hamilton Merritt.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL MERRITT has set himself to do a piece of work and he will succeed. He aims to show what difference there is between our militia system and that of Switzerland, and to spread ideas which will prevent the growth of a "permanent" army in this country.

The picture presented with this article might make the reader believe that the Colonel is a blood-thirsty and adventurous individual. It is not so. The Colonel is a citizen of peace-loving disposition. He hates armies, armaments and military autocracies. His ideal soldier is a citizen who can shoot and who knows the elements of drill, but who is prepared to resist war of all kinds. The Colonel believes, moreover, that in order to prevent the growth of a professional army, it is the duty of every citizen to spend some time as a militiaman or volunteer.

He has recently contributed two articles to "The Canadian Magazine," published a pamphlet or two and delivered a number of lectures. In the first of these articles he says:

"In our people at large THERE IS A PHLEGMATIC ATTITUDE WITH REGARD TO OUR MILITIA WHICH IS APPALLING when we think that the very existence of our country may depend on the basis of our military organisation as largely as upon the spirit of our people; and that the former may be moulded to influence the latter."

After indicating his belief that every citizen is in favour of some sort of defence force for the country, he says:

"Taking the object of our militia to be for the defence of Canada and not a police force, what then should be the form of its military organisation? * * * This naturally takes us back to those giants of 1812, whose plan of military organisation * * * was that every male citizen, physically fit and not a criminal, should be liable for military service between the ages of eighteen and sixty. They also were of the opinion that an undisciplined, undisciplined mob, not knowing one end of a rifle from the other, was undesirable; they therefore provided by law that all should be compelled to acquire some experience in military organisation and the use of arms." * * *

The Colonel points out how this system fell into disuse and advocates its revival. He believes that every citizen should have a certain amount of military training as is the case in Japan and Switzerland. In Switzerland when the soldiers were mercenaries, the armies were the scum of the population; since the adoption of

Developing the Citizen Soldier

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compulsory universal service, the armies are as respectable as any other body in the community. Every citizen knows that he contributes some of his time and attention to defence of his home and country and because of this the system is beneficial to the country as a whole and to the individual man. The individual character is developed and the sum total of the moral and material energy of the country is largely increased.

The Colonel does not advocate military service which takes years out of men's lives; he favours only such service as requires a few days each year while men are still almost youths. He favours a volunteer service as against a permanent force.

"Strange to say in our case, in Canada, while situated similarly to the patriotic service countries on the continent of Europe, we have blindly followed the British dollar-system and have been raising a permanent force because it exists in the British service. Of course the more services of any kind with appointments in the hands of the government, the more positions for friends of whichever party happens to be in power; therefore, so long as the tax payer is satisfied, so long will the number of a permanent force continue to grow."

On the other hand, there is no standing or regular army in Switzerland, but in its place a small number of expert instructors assist to train the citizen army. A handful of skilled artisans is kept in each fortress to prevent surprises until the citizen soldiers could rally to the defence.

"For practical results of the two systems it may suffice to say that FOR LESS MONEY THAN WE ARE SPENDING IN CANADA ON OUR SMALL FORCE, SWITZERLAND HAS AN ARMY OF 280,000 STRONG, better trained, armed and equipped than our militia. A tax is levied on each man who does not serve."

The Colonel scores a good point on the British and Canadian systems when he quotes from the "Times" History of the South African War which says:

"It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the whole army spent the greater part of its existence in checking its own accounts."

Colonel Merritt closes his second article by saying:

"Finally, it appeals to common sense that the principle of a standing army is totally opposed to the idea of progress and industry in a new and growing country. * * * It would be better if the money were sunk in the ocean, for on the one hand, the false sense of security from the large expenditure it involves, would not be given to the people at large; and on the other hand there would not be the example of enforced idleness which is the result of barrack-life existence."

The gazettement of an eminent Scotch judiciary, Sir J. Macdonald, to the Honorary Colonelcy of the Army Motor Reserve is another link in the association between voluntary military service and the law, quite apart from the membership of the Inns of Court Volunteers (Devil's Own).

The Channel Tunnel is still a source of unrest. The Executive Committee of the Navy League have passed a resolution recording their most emphatic protest against its construction. The French appear to take little interest in the matter and regard it as of no consequence to that important consideration, the "entente cordiale."