

THE VOLUNTEERS.

To the Editor of the Globe.

SIR,—I deprecate the handling of militia matters in a political or partisan spirit. Our national defence, and the organization of our constitutional force for that purpose, should be common to all shades of political creeds, without distinction of party, and should be discussed without reference to party lines. It is difficult to carry out this important point in a newspaper argument or outside of the force; but I am proud to say that in the volunteer force, where "Fossil Tory" and "Clear Grit" elbow each other, I have never heard the question of politics raised, or the condition of party discussed, where the interests of the force were concerned. While I respect "Kanuck's" undoubted military attainments, I decidedly object to his manner of handling the subject. I object also to his defining the duties of chief officers in the selection of their staff. What we want is the *best men*, let them come from whence they will, and I feel sure that no Canadian volunteer will feel a jealous thrill at the mention of the names of McDougall or Wolseley. I have never had the honour of serving Her Majesty as a "subaltern" save in the volunteers, but I will not confess to any jealousy of those much-scorned "subalterns" when they are good men and suited from their education and antecedents to assist in promoting the efficiency and well being of the force, and I think it narrow-minded in "Kanuck" to confess to such feelings.

To come, however, to the consideration of the more important question. I hold that the "volunteer force" as at present constituted is not an adequate provision for the defence of the country. Putting aside the sentimental standpoint which the word "volunteer" affords, the common sense view of the matter is as follows:

Imprimis—It must be granted that every man, between certain ages, is liable to contribute towards the national defence, either by bearing arms himself, or, under certain conditions, by furnishing a substitute.

The present volunteer organization does not fulfill these conditions, for three vital reasons, viz:

First,—Because the burden is distributed unequally—resting on the few who have sufficient loyalty to offer themselves for this service, and who at the same time contribute an equal share towards the national revenue as do those who avoid or refuse to carry arms.

Second,—Because an adequate force for the protection of the country cannot be raised as volunteers. The volunteer spirit is confined to few in comparison with the arms-bearing population of the country. These few have, in many cases, served three or four times as long as required by law, and have thus deprived the country, in case of need, of the services of two or three trained men.

Third,—Because, where the voluntary principle exists, the burden of raising and keeping together a corps fall upon its officers, who are obliged to use conciliatory and popular measures, to the detriment of discipline and derogation of their position as officers in order to maintain their corps in an efficient state.

Many other reasons may be quoted. The privilege of leaving a corps at six months' notice for any trivial or fancied grievance. The question of uniforms, that is, the impos-

sibility of obtaining recruits to wear old or half-worn uniforms. The question of pay, which is inadequate for a *voluntary* service. The selection of officers, which must be guided at present rather by the influence than the efficiency of the man. The question of expense, which is at present a heavy burden upon the officers alone, and which should be sustained by the country which benefits by their services; and many other equally well grounded reasons, which space will not allow me to mention.

These evils have been long recognized by the officers of the volunteer force, and suggestions were made to the Minister of Militia on the passage of the Militia Act, from a meeting of commanding officers of corps, by which the constitutional force of the country would have been placed upon a proper basis. But for reasons which are inscrutable, he ignored the results of their deliberations; and only now consents to a step which, had it been taken at the time it was proposed, would have given the country a *real* army of 40,000 men instead of their shadows upon paper. Without for a moment decrying the force assembling at Niagara, Goderich, Kingston and Laprairie, I have no hesitation in saying that it was a sham, brought together by the exertions of the officers of the force, and which as soon as the camp was over would fall to pieces, and "like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a wreck behind." To outsiders this may seem a wild assertion, but in confirmation of its truth I appeal to my brother officers.

Briefly—as a cure for these ceaseless fictions contained in the annual reports of the militia, and which cause our system to be lauded by the English papers as worthy of imitation, but which, like their own, is rotten to the core, we want an *active* militia, to be raised by voluntary enlistment,—by voluntary enlistment and ballot—or by draft if necessary. Compulsory service of enrolled men for three years; at the expiry of that term to form the first-class reserve, retaining clothing and arms for that purpose; being discharged at the end of six years from further service, until the whole of the active force and first-class reserve are exhausted.

A direct tax to be levied upon all not actually bearing arms, for the support of the militia.

Twenty-one days' paid drill annually, seven days at company headquarters, at such times as are most convenient, and fourteen days in brigade-camp.

The appointment of none but qualified officers.

The establishment and training of an efficient staff, upon whose efforts and efficiency so much of the comfort and usefulness of the force depends. For this purpose a staff college should be inaugurated.

The organization and development of an efficient transport service, commissariat, medical and engineer staff, with the necessary equipment.

All this would undoubtedly cost money, but I have yet to learn that the Canadian people will refuse to sanction, to a properly devised, efficient, and trustworthy militia system suited to the constitution of the country, that aid which is necessary to carry it out in a creditable manner. On the contrary, the generous manner in which County Councils supplement the Government grants for these purposes, show that the loyalty and patriotism of the country is not at fault. It is when they see the mal administration, the nepotism, and inefficiency of the present system, that they cry out, and properly so, against the waste and mis-application of the public funds. Were the Minister of Militia to bring forward an adequate measure,

ignoring the remonstrances of the "moultens" who fear to be forced to take their share in the national defence, the spirit of the country would be with him, without reference to political tendencies or party platform.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

July 12, 1871.

CENTURION.

LITHIO-FRACTEUR.

During the late war the Germans destroyed the usefulness of many captured French cannon, which they could not carry away, by blowing off their muzzles. The explosive material used is called lithio-fracteur. A series of experiments lately conducted in England with this compound establishes its tremendous power and its comparative safety. The claim is put forward that it is absolutely harmless unless intentionally exploded, but experience will probably modify this claim. Lithio-fracteur is a patented compound, consisting of nitro-glycerine, gun cotton, the constituents of gunpowder, infusorial earth and other substances, and makes a white paste. A quantity of it was burned slowly both in the open air and enclosed, to show its safety from fire. A box containing five pounds was thrown from a height of five hundred feet and struck upon a rock. The cartridges were broken open and scattered, but did not explode. On the other hand, when exploded by a percussion fuse and cap, its power was tremendous. Placed on a block of stone in the open air a single cartridge, weighing less than two ounces, split off two large wedge-shaped pieces of stone. It was tried in quarries with very satisfactory results. Ten cartridges, weighing in the aggregate a little more than a pound, placed in a hole bored vertically four and a half feet deep, dislodged more than twenty tons of rock. The iron rails of the double headed pattern, four and a half feet long weighing seventy-five pounds to the yard, were laid one above the other on blocks of stone in the open air, and a cake of lithio-fracteur, weighing one pound five ounces, placed upon it was exploded. The rails were completely broken in two. The experiments were made to demonstrate the safety of the compound in transportation even when an accident occurs to a railway train. Two cartridges were fixed to the wooden buffers of a car, which was permitted to descend at full speed an incline of one in eight, nearly a third of a mile, striking with terrific force another car stationed at the foot of the incline. The concussion merely scattered the compound about the cars and rails, while it smashed the two cars to atoms. The same experiment was repeated with the use of iron buffers, and the result was a slight explosion which destroyed only a infinitesimal part of the lithio-fracteur and made a sound no louder than would be caused by striking a percussion cap with a hammer. Again, a quantity of the material was put upon the rails and the car passed over it at a frightful speed without injury. It seems to be settled by these experiments that the new explosive has at least some points of superiority over any other yet discovered.

MILITARY.—The Eardly Infantry Company arrived on the "Queen Victoria," having completed their term of annual drill at the Laprairie Camp. The Company numbered forty stalwart, strong, and hearty looking men, good samples of what our Canadian army is composed of. The majority of the company left for home on the 11th.