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THE CANADIAN

Military Gazette

Successor to the Canadian Militia Gazette.

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MONTREAL, MAY 15, 1895.

Notes and Comments

This has been an important fortnight for the Canadian Militia, and an unsatisfactory one on the whole, to boot. It is true that the government has pledged itself to furnish pay for the militia for this year, but the pledge was not given until political pressure had been introduced to compel the government to do justice to the force. It is all very well for the members of the government to put a pleasant face on now and submit gracefully to the political pressure which has been enlisted in behalf of the militia, but the fact remains that it was the deliberate intention to deprive the force of every cent of pay until the issue was made one of compulsion. It is all very well for minis-

ters to stand up and make pretty speeches about their undying admiration for the militia; but the fact remains, and it will go down to history that the present administration had deliberately decided to starve the militia out of existence. The knowledge that this was the case will work incalculable harm, for militiamen will regard the force as a temporary concern liable to be starved out of existence at any moment at the caprice of the government.

At the best the city battalions will hesitate to enter upon the expenses of the annual drill each year until the drill pay is voted, and a considerable portion of every year will be lost. The practically permanent organization of these corps will give way to a precarious intermittent existence, and the position, altogether, will be most unsatisfactory. Under the circumstances we think we have ample justification for declaring that the past fortnight has been a most unsatisfactory one for the militia. Altogether we really believe that this has been the worst blow struck at the militia since Confederation.

It is a dark cloud that has no lining however, and good may come out of harm in this case if members of the militia learn one good lesson from this regrettable incident. It is this. Political influence counts for more with Canadian governments than public service and even national interests. So long as the ministers had to face nothing more than the fair claims of the militia to decent treatment they were prepared to sacrifice the

force at one fell swoop. When brought face to face with the possibility of political opposition they surrendered unconditionally. There was something pitiful in the sight of gallant officers pathetically pleading with the government for justice for the militia, and basing their plans, not on the undeniable importance of the efficient maintenance of the force, but on the risk the government incurred of antagonizing some of its political supporters if it persisted in its course.

If militiamen really wish to see the force maintained on a proper footing they must see to it that their votes and influence are used to some purpose. We wish the militia could be divorced altogether from politics, but it cannot, as this pay incident again abundantly proves. We would of course not wish to see any political organization within the militia, but every militiaman should determine to vote only for such candidates as appreciate the importance to the Dominion of a thoroughly organized and equipped militia, and are pledged to deal honestly by the officers and men who are trying so hard under such persistent discouragement to build up such a force.

The maintenance of the militia is not a party question, and we hope it never will be. True, the force owes the recent cruel blow to a Conservative administration; but Liberal administrations have been just as thoughtless in the past. The present government has been inclined to give more attention to the interests of the manufacturers and railway schemes than to the