

## No. VIII.

A great friend whose thoughts jump with mine was recently discussing with me the training of our rural militia, and I think it will be no breach of confidence to give you his exact words. They were as follows :

"Not the least difficult question in connection with military training is that of rifle shooting, or the making the men skilful in the use of what may now be considered their only weapon. It must be apparent to anyone that cares to give a moment's thought to the subject, that it is almost useless to train men to move into position if they are not able when there to use with fair effect the arm placed in their hands. Indeed the power of manœuvring is secondary to the power to do execution with the weapon. "In many things, in fact, if not the only things, now required to be taught to troops, especially 'militia' troops, are *discipline and fire discipline*. If we add to these the power to march, then the moving of the men on the chess board will take care of itself. Even the best armies are not trained to the possibility of their weapons, and the main reason of this is that they are limited to their ammunition supply. Rifle shooting is expensive, as those well know who indulge much in it. The United States regular army is, perhaps, in that respect, better off than any other, for the supply to them is practically unlimited and the results are correspondingly good. In our own British regular army a change for the better has taken place within late years, still there is much room for improvement. Looking at home here in Canada we cannot find much to boast of. Amongst city corps a certain amount of practice is done, but it is too much limited to the few. The great mass of the enrolled do not fire, they are not required to do so, and they could not be trusted to handle their rifles in anger until they had some preliminary practice. Something is done in this direction by rural corps during the annual drill, but with rather unsatisfactory results. It can scarcely be expected that any good can come from the firing of 20 rounds in a hurried manner and without any preliminary instruction, once in two years. Indeed, the only satisfaction that is derived from it is the knowledge that a certain number of men have loaded and fired their rifles at a fixed object. It is folly to suppose that any lasting benefit can result from such a course. In the interest of the country then, it is desirable that some other and more continuing system should be adopted for securing efficiency with the weapon. Just what that system should be is a moot point. It has been urged that more time should be devoted to the practice during