

No. 8.

*R. Byham, Esq., to J. Stephen, Esq.*

Sir,

*Office of Ordnance, May 4, 1840.*

I HAVE the honour, by desire of the Master-General and Board of Ordnance, to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, dated 24th ultimo, transmitting a Confidential Despatch from the Right Honourable C. Poulett Thomson (dated 26th March), inclosing a memorandum from Lieutenant-General Sir R. D. Jackson, commanding the forces in Canada, relative to the defence of Montreal and its immediate frontier, in order that the question may be taken into the earliest consideration of the Master-General and Board.

And I am to acquaint you, in reply, for the information of his Lordship, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, that the Master-General and Board, having been in communication with the Inspector-General of Fortifications on the subject, the following is the result of their deliberations.

It is observed that the great extent of our Canadian frontier, and the unfavourable direction of our principal lines of operation, whilst those of an enemy's corps, moving upon Canada from the States, would be generally advantageous, are military defects which have been invariably pointed out in every report upon the defence of our North American provinces, and as nothing has been done towards the fortifications proposed by the Commission of 1825, except at Quebec and Kingston, both of which are as yet incomplete, it were to be expected that the Commander of the Forces would again, under existing circumstances, call the attention of Her Majesty's Government to the subject.

The memorandum of Lieutenant-General Sir R. D. Jackson, before alluded to, is one of great interest and value, and the Master-General and Board agree fully upon the great importance which that officer attaches to the Montreal portion of the frontier; but they cannot give any opinion upon the character or construction of the works contemplated in the memorandum without the usual details of a digested project; and as a comparative expenditure has been attempted, which it is feared may either give a very erroneous idea of the ultimate expense or that the works enumerated are of inadequate construction, they cannot recommend the statement which accompanies Sir R. Jackson's memorandum to be laid before Parliament as the groundwork for a vote towards their execution.

Detailed plans and estimates have been called for, on the recommendation of Lord Seaton, for permanent works at St. John's, Niagara, and Amherstburg; and measures are taking to obtain the ground necessary for proceeding with those which have been determined upon for Kingston.

Could the Master-General and Board have contemplated the possibility of still further extending our permanent defences in this, or even the ensuing year, the details of the project for the Chateaugay Harbour, one of the points referred to by Sir R. Jackson, would have been likewise called for, but in their opinion what the Commanding Royal Engineer has already in hand, requiring as it does much judgment and professional skill in adapting the construction for the several works to the objects they are to fulfil, as well as very great attention in foreseeing and estimating their details, will be quite as much as can advantageously be undertaken at present in the shape of permanent works. Certain suggestions, with sketches, which, by a report dated 23rd March last, from the Commanding Royal Engineer, appear to have been offered by him to the Commander of the Forces, may assist the latter if called upon to determine the occupation of those posts on an emergency, but before permanent fortifications are undertaken. The Master-General and Board will require a very different degree of information; a project exhibiting in all the details of the several works the adaptation of engineering science to a well-considered system of defence.

The Master-General and Board therefore think nothing more can be done in the present case than has already been called for. The city of Montreal is no doubt of very great importance, but they are of opinion it will be better