

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor of THE VOLUNTEER REVIEW.

SIR,—Your gallant correspondent "G. W." in your issue of the 30th November, reviews my letter of the 9th, and seems to think that it calls in question the power of the Commander-in-Chief to make regulations as conferred by the 96th clause of the Militia bill—he also explains the 8th in a sense totally at variance with the spirit of the act and which would make it practically a dead letter, he says its provisions are of possibility not of right—now the eighth clause is "No member of a Volunteer Militia Corps enrolled or re-enrolled under this act shall be permitted to retire therefrom in time of peace without giving to his commanding officer six months' notice of his intention."

It is evident enough that the conditions are positive, not of possibility, and are a matter of right and option, just as much as it is a matter of inclination or will in the individual to belong to the Volunteer force at all. Moreover there are no clauses, before or after, prescribing conditions nor limiting the individual's will in any case. As to the fact of the Volunteers being only a six months' force, it is just that and no more, notwithstanding all the Regulations, General Orders, or Rules of Discipline which the Adjutant General's Department may devise.

The 96th clause says:—"The Governor General in Council may make regulations relating to any thing necessary to be done for the carrying into effect of this Act, and may, by such regulations impose fines not exceeding twenty dollars each, and imprisonment in case of default of payment of any such fine."

It is evident that this clause confers no powers which render the 8th clause nugatory, and it is an established principle in jurisprudence that one clause of the same Act of Parliament should not repeal the other, but if, through inadvertence such a thing should occur, the first clause would be the governing one, therefore your correspondent is mistaken in supposing that I animadverted on the powers conferred on the Commander-in-Chief. It follows then that the heading of the new rolls is at variance with the provisions of the Militia Act and are consequently illegal.

I quite agree with "G. W." that a large discretionary power to make regulations for the purpose of carrying the provisions of the Act into effect is its best feature, but I am unable to see that its construction is loose and requires improvement, nor do I think amendments would be judicious just now as they might possibly make the measure unpopular, because the tendency would be towards greater stringency.

There has been and is a tendency amongst the Volunteer force to consider themselves as the only Military power in the Province—such a feeling is quite natural—always follows particular corps and is almost a necessity of the situation—but the individual who is obliged to look at the effect of any measure in relation to its bearings on the Public interest will not be inclined to fall in with the views of any class respecting the utility or otherwise of such measure. Under this aspect my letter was written; its object to prevent, if possible, what is a false step in every way, viz: that of attempting to over-ride the provisions of an Act of Parliament by an irresponsible authority; moreover my letter was written without any intention of giving the Volunteer force particular prominence, and if "G. W." will read my letter attentively he will find that even on the question of discipline there is not much difference of opinion between us.

The Militia law provides for the enrollment and organization of every man in Canada between the ages of 18 and 60 years. The application of the very stringent discipline of even the Volunteer force on service, could not be applied to the Canadian Militia as a whole, therefore the axiom, laid down in my letter of the 9th, that "The Canadian soldier will submit to just so much military discipline and no more as will enable him to act with his neighbors in defence of their common rights and individual property"—is correct both in statement

and application—there is no clause in my letter by which discipline in the face of an enemy is restricted.

To my mind what has popularised the Volunteer movement is the fact that the individual was at liberty to choose his officer, and that it reflected the highest honor on the latter to have respectable men voluntarily place themselves under his command; and it is not too much to ask that in case these men should become dissatisfied that they should be at liberty to retire, especially as the penalty would be liability to serve under compulsion—it is not necessary to enter into any discussion of the extreme cases. Your correspondent imagines because his proposition presupposes that every man in the Volunteer force must be of one mind; the new Militia Act provides for all objections to superior officers by taking them from the same locality as the men except in extreme cases.

With respect to the powers of Adjutant General the conditions of the case demand that they should be defined, for this reason, that a totally different force from the small compact and well organized British army has to be dealt with. "G. W." must remember, in Canada a commission in the Militia is a mark of social distinction, that any injustice in the delay of promotion, through caprice, intrigue, or accident, is felt by the individual in a double sense, and therefore, if for no other reason, no latitude should be left to a merely executive officer. If he will take the trouble to read my letter again it will be seen that no fault has been found or sought against individuals—no envy for paid appointments, but the general principles which should make the Militia available for the Public interests has been kept steadily in view. I beg leave to assure him personally that individually I have no complaint to make on the score of promotion or from any other cause, but having a mind deeply impressed with the sacredness of the tie which binds the Dominion to Great Britain, I wish to use every means in my power to make that bond a lasting one, and to this end advocate a thorough system of defence of which the Militia is necessarily the basis.

I must differ with "G. W." respecting the magnificent hyperbole of 700,000 militiamen. Organization, as I take it, simply means that those men should be enrolled and officered according to the terms of the Act; the clothing, arming, drilling and concentrating them being quite another matter, and I say again no British Officer ever had experience with such a force. The old Sedentary Militia were never thoroughly organized and no comparison can hold between the cases. I have not asserted that intrigue did exist, but in the nature of things such a contingency is sure to beset every department, and in a greater degree the further it is removed from responsibility.

My idea of the value of the Militia Bill is that it compels every man to serve—that its organization is local and that it does not nor cannot interfere with the industries of the country, and that it provides an efficient system of defence with the smallest outlay. As yet the organization has not been commenced, because no provision is made for a "retired list" as far as the Volunteers are concerned, and if the Act wants amendment it is in that direction. If the period of service of the men is to be THREE years that of the Field Officers should not exceed FIVE YEARS. There is no Quarter Master General's Department, nor any of the other necessary adjuncts of a military force.

These matters doubtless will be all adjusted in time, but it is the duty of every man who wishes well to the country, and understands its true interests to have the Military force founded on true constitutional principles and every one of its departments under the direct controul of law. The neglect of this simple precaution was one of the principle means of depriving Great Britain of her Colonies and it behoves us not to repeat so terrible a mistake.

I am, Sir,
Your obdt. Serv't,
MILITIAMAN.

Ottawa, 7th Dec., 1868.

THE NEW MILITIA ACT AND A VARIETY OF QUESTIONS ABOUT IT.

To the Editor of THE VOLUNTEER REVIEW.

SIR.—Already there has appeared in the columns of your valuable paper, a number of articles bearing on the new Act, and as the various paragraphs have been thoroughly discussed and the subject so well ventilated and "Mutilated," it would be worse than useless to review the matter again—I would simply ask a few questions relative to the Force, of which I am member, and hope some of your numerous Correspondents will answer.

And firstly, I would remark, that in every Volunteer Company, re-enrolling under the "New Law" there are a number of recruits, many leaving having completed their term of service and others, as under the "Old Regime" from various causes. Now to the point. Have the Government provided for uniforming the "New element" in the Force, or do they fondly imagine that "Jack" will step into "Tom's" clothes, after they have been worn by the former, for two or three years. Oh! undoubtedly, is the official reply, the Government have made no provision, and the articles must be worn for five years, etc., ad infinitum.

In H. M. Service we find that no recruit is required to don the suit of a predecessor no matter what length of time they had been worn, and surely as much decency ought to be observed amongst the Volunteers of Canada. After some eight years experience as an officer of the Force, I find that the greatest drawback to the efficiency and successful maintenance of Volunteer Corps generally is the "Old Cloe business;" again in the summer the men have nothing but the cloe and heavy tunic and I defy any Volunteer, however careful, if he aims to be a crack shot, to keep that article, of apparel in "Wearable order." But try and remedy the evil by applying for the "Serge" and one is met by the same routine answer, the Government have "Made no allowance." Who is to blame? All the Military Laws on earth, all the sums of money spent on this, the only available Force in the country, will have been uselessly wasted, if the essential item of clothing is not more minutely attended to. The period at present allowed for a uniform to last is something ridiculously excessive. On an average a Volunteer Company, what between Parades, Inspections, and Drill occupies some 50 days per annum; allowing 10 per cent. or four days for foul weather and we have 46 days wear and tear; now as corps have commenced their annual drills in Barracks or under Canvass the 8 days so employed are equal to at least 20 parades as far as using up the clothing is concerned, and indeed it would be no exaggeration to say that the time allotted to the Volunteer to wear his uniform—is equal to double the period required of the Regular. No doubt the clothing does manage to hang together for five years, but before two and a half years have passed the men cease to pride themselves on their "Natty" attire. There are some corps, I regret to say they form the majority, who have no really good marksmen and who do not aim at perfecting themselves with the Rifle—undoubtedly their glossy tunics and irreproachable trowsers will excite the admiration of the inspecting officer—but let him not judge too harshly of the well worn, well soiled tunic—the powder stained cuffs, the shrunken nether garment. He who wears them is not an "Incumbrance" to his Battalion. Comrades put your shoulder to the wheel and give us a "Change"—garments for Summer wear. Heavy ones for Winter—A tidy dapper Citizen Soldier—and a grand gain to the Public. Yours, &c.

TONY VRECK.

To the Editor of THE VOLUNTEER REVIEW.

SIR:—A certain Rifle Company was challenged by an Association to shoot a match together, the former having small pouches on their waist belts rested the left elbow on these pouches, which were slid round from right to left side for the purpose. Is such practice against the Musketry Regulations?