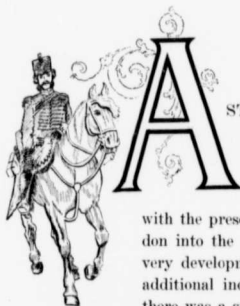


CHAPTER IV.

THE YORK DRAGOONS.

Oh, lead are the men of my heart's desire—
Their father's were lead in the days gone by :
And their blood is hlythe with the subtle fire
The purple breeds, and their hearts are high,—
True and gallant and dear to me,
With a strong hand each and a pedigree.
—THEODORE ROBERTS.



STATE of things familiar to all readers of history, particularly of that of the English peoples, succeeded the close of the great war. As soon as peace was declared the question of national defence was ignored, and governors and governed utterly disregarded the future welfare of the militia, the institution which had had so much to do with the preservation of the country, and threw themselves with characteristic abandon into the development of the national resources of the country, as though the very development of those resources and the accumulation of wealth would not be an additional incentive to attack from the envious and evil disposed. True enough there was a special excuse at this time for the concentration of energy upon commercial and agricultural enterprise. The marvellous extent of the natural resources of the country had been demonstrated, emigrants were pouring in, and the introduction of steam navigation gave promise of the commercial revolution which had actually taken place. The war had kept the development of the country back, now it progressed by bounds. Provincial legislators found it had to keep pace with the demands made upon them for enactments regulating various phases of commercial and social life. There was time for only a passing thought to the militia. The Incorporated Militia, the Glengarry Light Infantry, the extemporized troops of Provincial Dragoons were disbanded, and as far as the ordinary militia were concerned, things reverted to the condition they were in before the war. The names of the militia officers continued to make a brave showing in the long lists prepared regularly as per the Act of 1808, and the annual "training day" continued to be kept on June 4th, with all of its fun and frolic, but with no training.

In "Toronto of Old," published by Rev. Dr. Scadding in 1873, we have at page 36 this picture presented to us of the annual military "trainings" in Toronto:—"On the green sward of the bank between Princes' Street and George Street, the annual military 'trainings' on the fourth of June—the old King's birthday—were wont to take place. At a later period the day of meeting was the 23rd of April, St. George's Day, the fête of George IV. Military displays