

## CORRESPONDENCE.

The Editor does not hold himself responsible for  
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MITRAILLE.

(LETTER No. 2.)

It is perhaps gratifying to find Imperial officers of rank manifesting such an interest in the Canadian National Forces, as has been shown by Lieutenant Colonel Fletcher. But the speculations of regular officers avail the Dominion Forces but little. The "professional bias," to quote "Centurion," is too strong. No regular officer can grasp the conditions necessary to the forces of an armed nation, which means to do without regular forces beyond such as are necessary to its efficient instruction of a proportion of the population as officers, and such as may be, from time to time, called out temporarily for particular service, as the Provisional Battalion in the Manitoba. Suggestions and plans for the improvement of the Canadian Militia must be the product of Canadian minds, not necessarily of men born in Canada, but of men to whom, from long residence and intimate knowledge of affairs, Canada has become essentially "first." Regular officers cannot get out of the groove of a system, which we should not follow too slavishly. The British Army is a good model, but not a perfect one, and even its discipline and punishments are not altogether adapted to the totally different social condition of Canada. The Mutiny Act and articles of war, ought to be superseded in our service, by "simplified code of military law" sanctioned by an Act of the Dominion Parliament—a work which no one would be better fitted to draft than Lieut. Colonel Jas. Macleod, C.M.G. I do not see that the service is even much benefited by the Adjutant General being necessarily an Imperial Field Officer. At all events I hope to see that clause of the Militia Act repealed, which so limits that appointment. I know three men at this moment who are fit for the post. One of them is an Imperial Officer, but he has held a militia command in Canada for many years, and is otherwise intimately connected with the country. The Canadian Army cannot be tinkered out of the inspirations of regular military conventionalism. To infuse into it a life redeemed from slavish observance of unsuitable forms, requires Canadian genius, or at least Canadian talent. It should not be forgotten that America in her hour of need, found the leader she required not only in the person of her own countryman, but found him in the ranks of her own militia, and it need not be doubted that Canada can produce her full share of capability.

Colonel Fletcher displays a creditable appreciation of the principal causes which make the material of Canadian soldiery as

good as any in the world, but it would require a much more intimate knowledge of the country to propound a scheme which would be any improvement even on that existing. It is only justice to him, however, to bear in mind that his brochure is 'novedly only tentative and suggestive.

I think Colonel Fletcher ascribes undue importance to the idea that military titles are becoming, as in the States, too common by reason of the retirements of officers from their regiments. The Army List for November shows a retired list of three Colonels (one unhappily deceased) fifty-nine lieutenant colonels and seventy-six majors. The retirements of some of those officers are of old standing. Of several others who still render good service on occasion to the Force (such as Colonel Brunell, Colonel Dartnell and others) it may be said that they ought to stand on an "unattached," rather than a "retired" list, a term which, as has been pointed out, ere now, as an injustice to officers whom circumstances may compel to sever their connection with their original troops, but who may be very desirous to enter another when occasion may serve. At all events a large proportion of so-called "retired" officers would find immediate employment where their services would also be valuable, in the event of war.

That the retired list floods the country with titular officers of high rank who have never held commands corresponding to their rank is scarcely either, a fair allegation. As a general rule, Canadian officers placed in command in situations of emergency, have been found equal to their positions.

However, it is not my purpose to find fault with Col. Fletcher's well meant suggestions. He is rather to be thanked for his interest in Canadian affairs. Neither do I intend any detailed criticism. That task has fallen into better hands. In fact it was the pleasure I experienced in seeing the signature of "Centurion" attached to a letter on the subject, replete with the practical good sense and knowledge which distinguished that officer's communications, that led me to say anything on the subject.

I have not seen Col. Davis' pamphlet, to which "Centurion" alludes. Could you favor me with information as to where to procure it?

I cannot but agree with your correspondent "R." Let us know the real state of the Force.

In reference to your remarks (very just and true) on discipline, arising out of a question raised by the U.S. Army and Navy Journal, as to that of certain corps of the National Guard. I regret to observe that the vicious principle of election seems to have been given into, in the formation of one of the new corps in Victoria, B.C. It happens that the officers selected are an excellent choice; but if the new Deputy Adj. General there does not put his foot down on the principle, he will not be doing his duty.

It is true that the National Guard of the States stand on a footing of organization far less favorable to discipline than does our Militia army. They receive for the most part little Government assistance beyond the authority to organize, and numbers of Regiments are still armed with muzzle loading rifles. Some Regiments are made up of companies, each wearing its own distinct, and mostly, extremely fanciful uniform, the whole presenting a grotesque, and, to the eye of a soldier, disgusting appearance. But there are cases in which a soldierly and energetic commanding officer will be found, by his own exertions, and those of his officers, at no small pecuniary sacrifice too, on their parts, to have procured breech loading arms for the entire Regiment, and to have clothed them in the very neat uniform of the States. I say advisedly, very neat, for although the American soldier in the undress patrol jacket goes about frequently in a state for which we should send a man to the guard room, yet in full dress, a Regiment on parade clothed in the plain blue tunic, with white belts and white gloves, light gray trowsers with a black stripe, and neat chaco; arms and accoutrements, and the fit of the clothes, bearing testimony to the natural turn for neatness and smartness—such a Regiment is far from being an unsatisfactory spectacle. Such example tell rapidly in the States. We have already seen what have been the results of awakened attention to rifle shooting, in the establishment of Creedmoor, and we may rely upon it that discipline and uniformity in the National Guard will speedily follow the attraction of public attention to existing laxity. Those who have not had the opportunity of close observation, prompted by strong interest in foreign military matters as bearing on our own, will not readily realize the rapidity with which the acute American mind masters drill and technicalities, and it behooves us when once the right spirit (speaking from their point of view) is aroused in the United States, to look to our laurels as well in military spirit, as in rifle shooting.

With regard to the short comings of the military system of Canada, might it not be feasible, under a new Government, supposing it not to be utterly indifferent to the subject to revive, or rather improve upon, an action taken some years ago by a number of influential officers who convened a meeting at Hamilton to consider, and lay before the Department, the state of the Force. Perhaps the present Government, if it really desires to do good, might sanction a commission of officers with power to take evidence. The report of such a Commission could not fail to put the Government in possession of valuable information.

Permit me through your columns to draw attention to one amongst the many slovenly habits, which combine to debase the purity and precision of both speech and writing throughout North America. It is the use of