

Militia Report.

I am glad to report that you have very considerably made a special appropriation of the funds at your disposal for the purchase of materials, engineering implements and equipment in some measure, as field companies of the several corps of engineers. This will be very acceptable to the officers who have gone to considerable expense and devoted time and talent in the instruction of the men and providing stores for their service. In August last the Toronto Engineer Company encamped at Niagara for annual training, and was inspected by Major Walker, Royal Engineers, Professor of Fortification in the Royal Military College. His report contains matter of so much importance to the future progress of the Dominion Engineers that I recommend its being studied in the appendix. The first recommendation is for sergeant instructors from the Royal Engineers, qualified to give the necessary practical teaching on technical subjects. Also for suitable field equipment, suggesting, moreover, an organization for the whole of the Engineer force of the Dominion, which, while preserving the existing companies, will ensure their efficiency and provide a nucleus for the necessary pontoon and telegraph trains which would be capable of gradual extension. The report further sketches out in much detail a practicable scheme which, if carried out, would lead to the formation in the future, of a force of thoroughly efficient engineers, but in the meantime the existing companies should devote themselves particularly to the simple field works required for placing in a state of defence a position, a village, or isolated locality, works of the greatest importance in the present condition of war. Instruction in signalling is also of consequence, and should be included in their course, and generally studied as far as possible throughout the service. It is considered better to know thoroughly the application of the simple works required on the field of battle so as to be able to instruct the infantry, than to have a mere smattering of the more technical advanced duties of engineers, to a thorough knowledge of which they cannot attain without an organized system of instruction.

This is as it should be, provided the time for training was extended. The Lieut.-General commanding refers to the time as being insufficient to produce efficiency in the infantry battalions—this is doubly the case with engineers and artillery. Encouragement should be given these branches of the service to carry out voluntary drills; unfortunately the efforts of commanding officers in this respect are not seconded by those who should take as much interest in it as they do themselves. We have heard of a captain being informed that he had no authority to assemble the men for voluntary drill, and that if the clothing of this men did not last the full term laid down by regulation, he would have to pay for it.

The necessity of troops being well grounded in discipline is strongly dwelt upon in the report.

Military drill is instituted to teach men how to stand, how to walk, how to comport themselves with accurate movement of body and limb how to sit on horseback with the best advantage to the animal and the rider; so is discipline inculcated in order that at first small, and by degrees larger bodies of men should conform to recognized laws enacted and issued for their guidance. It grounds and instructs the mind in that obedience to authority which distinguishes a body of soldiers armed and drilled for mutual defence of their country, from an unorganized crowd. The Articles of War, Mutiny Act, Queen's and Militia Regulations, and later the new Army Discipline Bill, are each and all compiled and circulated with that just object.

Discipline is the mainspring of every organization—without it an armed force, however well drilled, is liable to become a mob. Drill enables troops to carry out the various evolutions with unanimity and precision, but no amount of drill can compensate for want of discipline. There are many instances on record when the discipline of the British army has saved it from apparent annihilation. This discipline cannot be attained by drilling a few evenings per annum in a drill shed. Neither is discipline under fire brought about by fear of the law. The abilities of the leaders must be above suspicion. The faith of an army in its officers is the same as the faith of a nation in its rulers. "Faith supports an individual" in his troubles; without faith in its rulers a nation faces "danger with a consciousness of weakness which has already sounded the key note of surrender." The key note of discipline is in the following paragraph:—

If, as I ventured before, political considerations could be extinguished entirely from the volunteer force, the body itself more solidified by the reduction of certain of the less efficient companies and garrison batteries of artillerymen without guns, previously alluded to, the number of days' drill increased, the assembly of camps of exercise, some rectification of the pay, just claims for contingencies quickly liquidated, and primary schools provided for officers and non-commissioned officers, the active force would be sufficiently effective to all practical intents and purposes. Even corps in rural districts would be comparatively no exception, and would be always as available for duty as the others whose conditions are now favorable.

This carried out, and our militia force would be a reality. Political or national qualifications do not fit a man for the mil-

itary profession. It has been truly said that "the vice which recognizes political over professional claims is the rust which grows on a form of government during the piping time of peace. In the friction of a nation's agony the rust disappears."

The formation of two regiments on the plan sketched in our last issue, under the heading "La defense du pays et la colonisation," supplemented by an Imperial reserve in Canada would do more than anything else to produce the required efficiency in our militia force.

In a few years the Royal Military College will send more than sufficient gentlemen specially fitted through training to officer such a force.

We would direct the attention of those interested—residing in our Maritime Provinces—to the valuable suggestions thrown out with reference to a naval reserve. We should have ships of our own whose special duty it would be to guard our coasts. The Imperial fleet might be called away for some important measure, perhaps lured away in order to admit the passage of a hostile cruiser up our rivers or bays; what would be the fate of St. John, N. B., and the towns on our west coast, or the cities along the coast of British Columbia in such circumstances? Canada should certainly have a reserve of her own to assist in the protection of her coasts. These points (east and west coasts) require special attention being almost entirely open as far as the Dominion is concerned, to the possibility of attack from the sea. The following paragraphs deserve earnest consideration.

Since my long journey across the Prairie Territory and the Mountains to British Columbia in 1875, I have frequently urged the necessity for more completely protecting the only naval anchorage and dockyard on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. In the report of last year it was stated that the defence of Esquimalt might be considered as much an Imperial as a Dominion question, but that it intimately concerned the honor of both and the efficacy of British naval power in that region. Our security on the Pacific requires it to be well guarded; our fleets must keep there if necessary in all weathers, and they cannot do so without the important element is in ample stock and prime quality. The British navy is scattered over the Pacific, and there are no works of defence at Vancouver till last year; for the protection of our coast; nothing but British prestige, and companies of militia at Victoria and up the Fraser River works thrown up hastily last year when a Russian squadron appeared on the coast, rendered it necessary to despatch a squadron there during the past summer. Col. Lovell, Royal Engineers from Halifax, and Lieut.-Col. Strange, Royal Artillery, Quebec, have thoroughly examined and reported on the facilities for defence of Vancouver and the seaboard of the mainland of British Columbia. This joint report I have not seen, but a separate report of Lieut.-Col. Strange, will be found in the appendix. A few remarks of a general military character may therefore be out of place on this subject, which can hardly be considered too carefully at this juncture. It would of course be necessary to hold the peninsula which is bounded on the one side by Esquimalt Basin, and on the other by the narrow inlet "The Gorge." There is a small neck of land at Portage separating these two sheets of water, and there the position is well entrenched. Signal Hill close to the Dockyard, dominates the harbour and the Royal Roads outside its entrance. This certainly be fortified. Rear Admiral de Horsey said to the writer: on examining the chart, the eye will be immediately struck by the capabilities of defence of this peninsula. The position itself with its commanding outpost, Signal Hill, is capable of being held by a few men, whilst at any time it be decided that it is most desirable to fortify the peninsula, it can be made practically impregnable by placing redoubts on and around the heights with a sufficient garrison. As regards Signal Hill, he did not overlook the rule that guns should not be placed to draw the enemy's fire on the position they protect. This rule hardly applies to the present case, because from Signal Hill could scarcely be so bad as to strike the Dockyard seven hundred yards at right angles to its line.

I had previously urged the arming of Signal Hill, a commanding point whence to engage an enemy's ships approaching the harbour, and to render Esquimalt Basin a shell trap for any vessels that might enter it.

Lieut.-Colonel Irwin considers the present sea defences of Victoria and Esquimalt, while efficient enough against small vessels, would hardly serve to prevent an iron-clad from either of them; the eight-inch nine ton gun on Brother's Island being the only armour-piercing gun to defend the latter. Naval stores are at present in an exposed position to naval attack. The site of the naval hospital and Hudson Bay store would be protected. Lieut.-Colonel Irwin does not consider the dock in an unsafe position, nor likely to be destroyed by enemy's fire. It would hardly be possible to muster more than a few men in British Columbia to defend Victoria and Esquimalt from a combined land and sea attack. The Victoria peninsula presents many facilities for landing troops, but the city itself might be difficult to defend, it would be hazardous for an enemy to cross the Gorge, which is deep with a strong current, and commanded by a ridge along its southern bank. Esquimalt would be tolerably secure, provided Signal Hill and Red Point had heavy guns, and the neck at Portage Inlet was entrenched. The guns should be manned by trained artillery and regular troops enough to keep the volunteers up to the mark and act as a reserve.