

AN ANSWER TO "T."

EDITOR MILITIA GAZETTE—

"T's" letter is hardly to be taken seriously in all its parts, especially as regards his idea of reducing the rank and file of the permanent corps; but like many such statements, it contains an idea which might be enlarged on; namely, this: Let the pay of the rank and file in the permanent corps be raised to sixty cents per diem, and the non-commissioned officers' accordingly. We could then maintain an excellence that would make us a corps each man of which would be expert in all that pertains to a soldier's profession, and each one capable of acting as instructor to a battalion. The great need of our force if suddenly called out will be such instructors and officers who know their work.

It is safe to say that the man who has only been to camp twelve days in two years will not be worth as a soldier any more than the man who has not. In many cases he will be of positive injury because he will have got into despising discipline. For my part, if required to raise a company suddenly for real service, I would pick my men without the slightest regard to their having been twelve days in camp at some previous period. In plain English, the twelve days is only of use to brush up knowledge already acquired.

As far as keeping up the nominal strength of the Militia is concerned, a stroke of the pen is all that is needed to give us an equally effective force of double or treble or quadruple the present strength.

This cry of more money for the Militia deserves no sympathy, at least until the funds at their disposal are expended on a system better calculated to secure efficiency. The statesmen who have guided this country in the past, and those who are at present at the helm are perfectly right in not voting to waste another cent on a force that has the system ours has. It is the system, not the men, which is at fault.

If going out to camp with a big crowd is the point to be aimed at; then am I altogether wrong.

But if having a small but perfect organization, which can be rapidly expanded, is the objective; then am I right.

As far as the difficulty of recruiting is concerned, it can never be worse than it is at present; if the young soldier could choose his tent and messing companions; make sure within reasonable limits who composed the remainder of his company; was served out with a pair of trousers which had not been in use by several different persons in previous years; then, perhaps, it would be different.

But under the circumstances recruiting can hardly be expected to be popular. That this is a fair sample of the "minor" inconveniences a militia soldier is put to can easily be verified. It has gone on so for years, and, no doubt, will continue to do so, unless those most interested wake up and recognize the need for a change.

Even "T," who admits the general inefficiency, seeks to divert attention by a side issue that had nothing to do with the question; because it is easy to increase or decrease the strength of the permanent corps without reference to the calling out of only ten men per company in the militia.

The permanent corps should be kept at that strength whatever it may be, which makes them of most use to the militia. And those officers of the militia who have been long enough at the schools to understand their working will agree, that it would never do to decrease their present strength.

But if there were neither permanent corps nor schools, it would make no difference, as to the wisdom of expending money in bringing men out for twelve days each two years.

My letter aims at the good of the militia, and is written with an earnest desire to point out real and practical remedies. I recognize fully that the thousand permanent corps soldiers in the Dominion are not the fighting backbone of the nation. That our sturdy farmers, tradesmen

and artisans are the strength and dependence of the nation. They are the men who will enrol themselves in the different battalions, who will in case of need entrust their lives to the care of the officers who at present command the force, and therefore it is of the utmost importance to them that these officers should have something besides their uniform to enforce the command they may be called upon to exercise.

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Lieut. and Capt. I. S. Corps.

The Barracks, London, 14th January, 1891.

THE REVISION OF OUR INFANTRY DRILL.

(The Broad Arrow.)

On the appearance of the last edition of the Infantry Drill-Book early in 1889, we expressed a feeling of disappointment that so much that was antiquated and unsuited to the requirements of actual war had been retained. The system it taught was clearly a compromise between that of the barrack-yard and the manoeuvre ground. In it were to be found most of the old rigid forms of battalion and brigade drill, whilst the essential part of the infantry soldier's training, the form in which he would be called on to meet the enemy, was treated as an excrescence and relegated to the end of the book. Instead of the drill-book having been curtailed, it was actually expanded by some sixty pages. And this expansion seemed the more remarkable, as the Germans had just issued a drill book of one quarter the size of ours. The only consolation in respect to the shortcomings of the drill-book of 1889 was the report that it was only to be looked on as an instalment in the direction of reform. We have reason to believe that a further advance in the simplification of our drill may shortly be expected, and that a strong committee has been appointed to consider its revision, in accordance with the best modern views of what an infantry soldier requires to be taught. As we have already said, the great fault of the drill-book of 1889 is that the most important part of a soldier's training is kept until the end of the book, instead of being worked into squad, company and battalion drill from the commencement. And here we might observe that if the revisers are unable to reduce the proportions of our drill-book to those of the German one, it would be better to publish it in parts. The French have little books called *École de Squad*, *École de Compagnie*, &c.; and, in the same way, we might have "squad drill," "company drill," and "battalion drill," published separately. We should like to see the setting-up drill and the bayonet exercise taken out of the drill-book and made a part of the gymnastic course, and if there must be such things as musical drill and the high step, banish them to the gymnasium. As Prince Kraft of Hohenlohe pointed out, infantry regiments are what the inspecting officers make them. If they find that the drill-book is founded upon the principles of the barrack-yard, they will require barrack-yard drill, and regimental commanding officers will endeavour to meet their views by practicing "marching post," and battalion "changes of front," to the exclusion of what is more important. If a general officer is not able to judge of the condition of a regiment by the way the men stand in the ranks, and by the intelligence they show on the manoeuvre ground, he is not fit for the work. We trust, therefore, that the Revision Committee will carefully consider the necessity for abolishing many of the battalion and brigade movements which now adorn the drill-book. They should ask themselves where can these movements come in on the field. The basis of infantry drill should undoubtedly be the independent movement of companies under their captains. The great object should be to have as few movements as possible, and to have these performed in the simplest way possible. For instance, if open order is required, on the command "open order" each captain