

## CORRESPONDENCE.

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for individual expressions of opinion in communications addressed to the VOLUNTEER REVIEW.]

To the Editor of the VOLUNTEER REVIEW.

SIR:—In an editorial of your issue of the 15th inst., occurs the following passage, "It is a subject of just pride to the Canadian statesman and people, that they have succeeded in solving the problem of an armed nationality." Now, Mr. Editor, I trust that I am not one of those people who are in the habit of finding fault, merely for the sake of finding fault, but if we Canadians have really succeeded in solving the problem of an armed nationality, it is certainly news to me, and I think will be news to the greater part of your readers, who as I believe are chiefly members of the Active Force. That such of our people as have carefully, prudently and constantly ever made it a rule to have neither act nor part in the volunteer or any other movement looking to the defence of the country, should in consequence of so seldom troubling themselves about such things, really not understand what is meant by an armed nationality, and so not understanding, should be quite willing and indeed anxious to believe that nothing more is necessary to be done is quite possible. But such people alone will not feel inclined to smile, when you seriously discourse of our having successfully solved the problem of an armed nationality.

An armed nationality as I understand it; is one in which every man of suitable age to bear arms, is capable of taking on himself at a moment's notice the duty of a soldier, and of acquitting himself satisfactorily in the discharge of such duty. Are the Canadian people in that position? No, by my faith, they are not. And I will venture to say that if the present volunteer system is continued, they will not succeed in making even a respectable approach to it, which in our present circumstances is perhaps all that is desirable or necessary. If a *terce en masse* of our population was required next week or month to repel some sudden attack of our giant neighbor, beyond forty thousand more or less, of very partially drilled volunteers, out of a population of four millions, would we have a single regiment to show, in whose ability to be of service, the most sanguine could confide? May heaven long keep us from such a solution of the problem of an armed nationality, as this would be! And this unhappy result, would be directly traceable to our vicious but by some people much be praised volunteer system. Had the service been made compulsory, had a certain number of men been drafted during the last ten years, each contingent, as its two or three years term of service expired, being formed up in a compact and available reserve, each Reserve Battalion being kept as intact and well defined as when forming part of the Active Force, with

arms and accoutrements ready at Head Quarters to be delivered at a few hours notice; we might indeed without a misapplication of language, boast that we had done something towards solving the problem of an armed nationality. Nothing of this kind can or will happen, no such result can be arrived at under the volunteer system—a system which is in great part kept alive (after its defects have been discovered, and repeatedly and ably exposed in your own columns) by the incessant, the fulsome laudations of it, coming from persons who ought to know better, but whose patriotism appears to be somewhat in excess of their judgment. Believe me, Mr. Editor, men will not be found to volunteer, with the prospect of being formed up in reserves when their time has expired, nor do I see that any blame can attach to them for declining to do so.

But failing to form such reserves, and allowing our partially drilled men to be absorbed in the great and chaotic mass of the people, we in great part waste the money spent on their military instruction, and inasmuch as we are concerned, the solution of the problem of an armed nationality remains as far off as ever. If our present volunteer system turned out every three years forty thousand men, who having really and truly completed the prescribed drill forthwith made way for an equal number of fresh men. then, though no care should be taken to form reserves, something at least might be said for it. Every volunteer officer however, knows that to suppose anything of the kind as actually taking place, would be the most egregious nonsense. In point of fact, some volunteers drill for one year (*i. e.* six teen days) only, others for two or three years, and a large proportion have been in the force for seven or eight years, if not indeed since its original inception. The longer a man has been in a company, and the more efficient he has become in consequence the less is his Captain willing to part with him, and naturally exerts himself to the utmost to prevent his making way for some green hand. But the volunteer who has been nine years in a Company, has taken the place of three men, who under a different system would have received a certain amount of military instruction and in so far have assisted us in solving the problem of an armed nationality. A volunteer officer myself, and one of long standing, I may without exposing myself to the charge of self conceit, pretend to know something of the working of the system, and it is now many years since I came to the conclusion that the sooner it was abolished, and a different system substituted for it, the better it would be for the true safety of the country. For years past the force has been upheld only by the unceasing but not unwearied efforts of the Company officers, who have sacrificed time, money, and I fear in some instances self-respect, rather than confess that the company could not be kept to

gether. May I ask, what right has the community to exact or expect such sacrifices from any set of men? There is an old saying about not driving a willing horse to death. The advocates of the present system so far from agreeing with the spirit of that aphorism, seem to think that as soon as one poor fellow breaks down and retires in disgust, it is of no consequence and all right as another fool will certainly be found to take his place, some one who having no objection to humble pie as an article of diet, will consent to coax and wheedle his neighbors to join the company, and ever after be their most humble servant, and very careful how he offends them in the discharge of his duty. In short, the officers are in a false position and discipline and efficiency suffer accordingly. The men cannot always be had when required, and consequently a full company in camp is the exception rather than the rule. The men's pay is not quite equal to that of daily labourers throughout the country, and they therefore never weary of grumbling about the sacrifices they make in becoming volunteers, which is of course pleasant for the officer who induced them to join, and highly conducive to discipline and a cheerful discharge of duty. In a word, volunteering is played out. The novelty which was its chief attraction has worn off. Men no longer present themselves as volunteers, (at least in this part of the Province) but must be coaxed and entreated. And there being no immediate danger of invasion the movement is discouraged by thoughtless people, who do not understand or will not seek to remember that a soldier cannot be created simultaneously with the emergency which requires his services. These people have come to look on volunteering, as mere playing at soldiers, and are much given to bestowing a pitying smile on those who are so foolish as to abandon their usual avocations for so barren an amusement. I am far from wishing to convey the idea that volunteering in Canada has not been productive of some good results, or that the money spent upon it has been squandered; on the contrary, I do not think that we have at all paid too dearly for our whistle; but it is time, it long has been time that the system were changed. What we want and must have is a system which making the officers more independent of the men, will enable them to put in practice a more healthy discipline. A system which will throw on a few patriotic, energetic and self-sacrificing young men, the great burden of keeping together a force in which the whole community is equally interested. A system which will gradually train to arms a considerable proportion of our people, and never losing sight of such trained men, will enable us to put our hands on them the moment we may require them. Such a system is the *draft*. When it is put in force and not before we will indeed have made a considerable step towards solving the problem of an armed nationality.

Yours &c.,

ROLLO.

Original, 17th April, 1872.