

CHAPTER I.

THE BASIS OF THE MILITIA'S FOUNDATIONS.

Not drooping like poor fugitives, they came, in exodus to our
Canadian wilds;
But full of heart and hope, with heads erect,
And fearless eyes, victorious in defeat,
With thousand toils they forced their devious way
Through the great wilderness of silent woods,
That gloomed o'er lake and stream, till higher rose
The Northern Star above the broad domain
Of half a continent, still theirs to hold,
Defend and keep forever as their own,
Their own and England's, to the end of time.

—“The Hungry Year.”—W. T. KIRBY.



NOT merely the geographical situation of Upper Canada, but the special circumstances connected with the first serious settlement of the Province as well, made the question of national defence one of vital importance from the country's earliest infancy. Upper Canada had become the refuge of 10,000 of the United Empire Loyalists, people hated with a fierce and ever-increasing hatred for their loyalty to their King by their former republican neighbors—neighbors who, to give them whatever credit may be due on that account, came by their disloyalty naturally, by inheritance. A rampant democracy, next to being childishly bombastic, is nothing if not unreasonably revengeful. Revenge of a mean description led the American revolutionists to soil the opening chapters of their national story with as foul a blot as disfigures the pages of history, and it was only natural to suppose that in pursuit of their chosen policy of revenge, the citizens of the new republic would seize the first opportunity they could to inflict loss and trouble upon the country which furnished an asylum and a home to so many of the United Empire Loyalists. Subsequent history shows that they actually put themselves out to seize such an opportunity, and brought on their own country a terrible chastisement for their pains.

But in proportion as Upper Canada, in its infancy, was threatened with the revengeful ambitions of the American democrats, so did the devoted and cruelly-tried loyalty of Canada's new settlers rise to the emergency, and so did the importance of providing an adequate system of national defence magnify itself in their loyal hearts. The facts connected with the coming of the loyalists, and the tempers and lofty characters of these noble founders of Canada's premier province, have to be considered before it is possible to understand the motives which led to the establishment of the Upper Canada militia.