

both by rail and steam, it is evident how much their Military Forces would be strengthened for defence purposes if they could join hands with one another, and, on an emergency, act in common. To do so rapidly and effectively they must, however, be under a common administration in peace time.

Were the Colonies federated, this question would be doubtless very soon solved, and the example of America, or it is to be hoped rather of Canada, would be followed, and the forces of the several Colonies so organized that they could be used as a whole for the defence of any one of them. This question of Federation is, however, one which may not perhaps be settled for some time to come.

With regard to the first line of defence, the Navy, they have, as we know, already taken combined action by joint contribution to the cost of an increase to that Navy of five fast cruisers and two torpedo boats, under certain conditions regarding Australian waters. This joint contribution of payment of £120,000 per annum for ten years seems to show how thoroughly these Colonies are prepared to take their fair share in the protection of the commerce and of the safety of that prosperous portion of the Empire which they have the privilege of governing for themselves. They have thus readily recognised that their commerce, their wealth, and the sanctity of their shores is safeguarded, in the first line, by the Imperial Navy.

To fulfil more completely, however, their just responsibilities it is evident that difficulties in the way of combined action of their military forces must be overcome by them as soon as possible. It should be borne in mind that an attack on any one Australian Colony would be much more than a menace to the remainder, that they must really stand or fall together as regards any Power which should attack them in force, which, though not certainly probable, is yet possible so long as they cannot oppose sufficient defence.

What would be the principal points to be decided on in conference or otherwise by the Colonies willing to enter into an agreement to make practicable any combined action of their forces? They would be mainly as follows:—The Field Force in its various branches required as a minimum for common defence; including its arming, equipment, reserves to be held, etc. The quota of the same each contributory Colony must maintain. The amalgamation or other modes of treatment of their Permanent Forces. The military law for the government of these forces in peace time, or when called out for war, or a prospect of war: this would include the precedence of the forces of the contributing Colonies, and of the officers of the same. [It was stated at the Colonial Conference in England that the simplest solution as to the knotty point of precedence would be the laying down in such identical Act that Her Majesty the Queen had power to grant commissions in the Colonial Forces. If a complete political Federation takes place, and the forces, as in Canada, become Federal, there would be no difficulty as to this point, as commissions would be given by the head of the Federal State.]

These points being determined, the approximate cost arrived at in the quota of such cost which each Colony would have to bear, and an identical Bill drafted for submission to the several legislatures, the difficulties would, I believe, be more than half over.

If the two great Colonies of New South Wales and Victoria can come to a substantial agreement regarding this question, there is little doubt but that the problem might soon be solved, and that Australia would find herself in a position, as regards her Military Forces, of which she might be justly proud. Let us hope that this solution will soon be brought about. A great deal of your time has been taken up as to this question, but it is so pressing and important a matter for the Australian Forces that no apology is necessary for my so doing.

New Zealand is so far removed from Australia that any conjoint military action of her forces with those of Australia could only be expected under very exceptional circumstances.

New Zealand has many more points vulnerable from the sea than Australia presents, and has, as already mentioned, spent large sums on her coast defences, for the manning of which a considerable force will be required. The organization of her militia (termed volunteers) is, under the recent Acts of 1880 and 1889, very similar to that of Canada, and the provisions under which they serve are on the same lines; all males between 17 and 55 years of age, including the natives, the Maori race who make excellent fighting material, being liable by ballot for military service.

New Zealand has no training institution for officers, no factory for the supply of ammunition or arms, nor apparently even a nucleus of a transport branch.

Having gone so much into detail, it may be well to recapitulate in a few words some of the apparent shortcomings, or the opposite, with reference to their Imperial responsibilities, of the groups of self-governing Colonies whose forces have been discussed; as to their provisions for defence generally (for although these do not come under the limited scope of this lecture, they must be alluded to), and as to their military forces in particular. The Dominion of Canada gives no contribution towards the defence of her commerce, nor has she done much towards the defence of her coast, either on the side of the Atlantic or Pacific, leaving these principally to the protection of our Navy. On the Pacific Coast, the magnificent harbors of British Columbia still wait the necessary works and guns for the proper security, from want of agreement between the Dominion and the Mother Country. Her military forces seem hardly adequate in numbers, nor to have a sufficient amount of annual drill and exercise. On the other hand, her military organization is good, and she provides excellent institutions for the training of officers and non-commissioned officers. She supplies much of her own ammunition for infantry, arms, and even field guns, but for heavier guns is dependent for her supply upon England.

As to South Africa, both in the Cape Colony and Natal, the Colonies have quite accepted their share of responsibility as to their coast defences. Direct Imperial interests make it necessary for the Mother Country still to retain forces in these Colonies.

As to Australia, her colonies have nobly met their responsibilities on the whole: they have in most cases, provided formidable defences for their seaboard; they share in the cost of that navy which protects their commerce.

New Zealand, while paying of late much attention to her seaboard defence and joining in her share of the Imperial Naval Defence, does not appear to sufficiently train her military forces. In all these colonies we find a great variety of field guns and but small reserves of ammunition.

These and many other important details will have to receive attention, before the military forces of the colonies can be said to be prepared for any continuance of work with a fair chance of success.

These forces are still young, however, and, judging by the extraordinary progress already made by them, we may be sure that it time these defects will be made good, and the more quickly, no doubt, the more they are criticized.

[Continued next month.]

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