

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE NEW MILITIA BILL.

To the Editor of THE VOLUNTEER REVIEW.

I don't think, Sir, there is any use in prolonging the discussion over the New Militia Bill, Parliament has now adjourned, and until next year matters will, I suppose, remain as they are. "L. C." cannot convince the Editor of the REVIEW that there is anything wrong in the new Bill, and on the other hand, a dozen Reviews will not make "L. C." believe there is anything good in it. You have had but a theoretical trial of the Bill, I have had the practical experience of it, I will leave it to yourself to say which test is most likely to lead to a fair and honest conclusion.

Taking your comments on my last letter in their order, to the first one I will reply that I carefully read the report of the debates of last session, and I saw no such remark made by Sir George Cartier as you mention. Even if he did say so and without contradiction, your own next paragraph upon the action of the Militia officers in the Parliament of 1868 is a sufficient commentary, without one more word from me. If Sir George would pay no attention to a deputation of Militia officers, many of them his own supporters, pending the passage of the new Bill in 1868, what would be the use of any of them in opposition raising any objections to what he said about it in 1869. Had any of them done so the very men who went with them to endeavour to get the Bill modified, and who afterwards voted for it without modification, would have gone dead against them if it came to a vote.

You have been some time in Ottawa, Sir, I ask you as a man of honor, have you seen any question which might peril the stability of the administration, such as the Militia Bill, discussed and decided upon its merits? you know you have not, and what is the use of talking of Parliamentary independence. When party and party influence is carried to the extent that it is done in Canada, just so long can a Minister like George Cartier, who has place and patronage at his disposal, do as he pleases confident that he can always command sufficient support, to make the country believe, that a measure supported by such a majority as that which voted for his Militia Bill, must surely reflect the feelings and sentiments of all who supported the measure. I told you in my last letter how these votes were given, I challenge contradiction, I have all the names on record, and if Militia officers were such slavish partisans when their dearest and proudest interest was sacrificed, what can be expected from private members of Parliament. When those who ought to know something about the Militia Laws of the country are confessedly ignorant, and showed their ignorance by allowing such a statement as you say was made to go uncontradicted, I think it too a mere waste of time for a simple militiaman

to endeavour to arouse these men to a sense of their duties.

Now, Sir, to show whether I am, or have been, impressed by local grievances, I enclose you a few memoranda which you can look over at your leisure, and will in addition make the following bet which I will hold open for a month, fifty dollars, that there is not in all Ontario six thousand men (less than one-third the quota) re-enrolled for three years under the provisions of the New Bill. The same bet that there is not nine thousand, half the quota, enrolled to complete their three years, or that there has been three thousand recruits added to the force, that is one-sixth of the quota, under the New Law; and the same bet, that there is not twelve thousand effective Militia Volunteers in the whole force of Ontario. Now, Sir, you, or any of your friends entertaining similar opinions, can take your choice, I exclude of course the Grand Trunk Brigade.

You say it will puzzle me to show to whom the administrative organization of Prussia is due. There is no secret in it all. If you will turn up report of the English commission on the re-organization of the British army in the North British Review for December, 1867, you will find that the affairs of the Prussian army are directed.

1st. By the assistants of the King.

2nd. By the General War Department divided into five branches, viz:—

Division for food, army mobilization, substitution, &c., &c.

Division for the Artillery, arms for the army, powder, &c., &c.

Division for Engineers.

Division for Marines.

Division for personal affairs and the secret War Chancery.

Then you have the Department of Military Administration containing three divisions:—

1st. Division of the Exchequer and Staff.

2nd. Division for Uniform, Commissariat and Train.

3rd. Division for Hospital Service.

I do not mention these departments, Mr. Editor, in order to claim that we should have corresponding bureaus in Canada, but you asked me very triumphantly to show to whom the administrative organization of Prussia is due, and I hope I have satisfied you that there is no one man power there and that even Count Bismark would not have the effrontery to endeavour to rule the Prussian army.

The wildest assertion you make Sir, (you will pardon the expression but really I know no other word so applicable) is when you say that "Canada does not need to be an armed people as her frontiers are not easily accessible." Did you ever read Col. Lysons' report? Did you ever hear the report of the commission that was sent to examine the frontier in 1862-3? Did you ever hear that almost immediately on the publication of that report, that the Imperial authorities

had ordered all the troops to be concentrated in Montreal and Quebec, as it would be impossible to defend the frontier of Upper Canada without a large supply of Militia, and there was no such support organized? Do you remember hearing or reading of all this Sir? Will you cast a glance at a map of Canada and show where there is a spot on the frontier from Rouse's point to the New Brunswick line that a man cannot step over Look where New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine cuts right into Canada the frontier of both States and Dominion, being only an imaginary line. Look at the Niagara river with its bloody record of three or four invasions and again to the Detroit river, what is there from Amherstburg to Sarnia to hinder an invader from making his own choice where he shall attack and where he shall land? and yet you say, Canada does not need to be an armed nation. There is where I differ with you and I think you held other ideas yourself on this head not very long ago, for if I don't mistake one of your strong arguments in favor of this New Bill, was that it would make us an armed nation, and that is just what we want to be. We cannot afford a standing army and an efficient militia will have to take its place, but we will never have that in Canada till the system of its administration is changed. Switzerland with nothing like our resources with a poor country and a scanty population has maintained its independence for hundreds of years although surrounded by enemies, attacked time and again by powerful foes, the Swiss have always come out of the conflict with honor. How did they manage this when the country does not maintain a standing army? simply they have the best militia system in Europe and the Swiss are emphatically an armed nation. But, Mr. Editor, they do not do in the Swiss militia what is the rule in Canada. There are no appointments made there like what was made the other day in the Simcoe Battalion, no man with the stifled report of a court of Inquiry kept back in the pigeon holes of the Militia Department, is appointed second in command of a Militia Battalion, no man like the late Adjutant General is compelled to resign because he endeavours, as he should do, to maintain the efficiency and discipline of the force entrusted to his charge, but which he is prevented from doing by the Minister of Militia because his action would touch some of Sir George's political partisans. They order all these things better in France. I cannot flatter you on the experience you speak of in your last paragraph where you say "a committee would not have improved the Bill anyway." Now I do not think the experience of the Parliament of Canada and Sir George Cartier to boot is more extensive than that of Great Britain, France, Prussia, or the United States. All these nations except England have re-organized their armies within the last three years, all under committees or commissions. France under Generals Niel