

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

[This paper does not necessarily share the views expressed in correspondence published in its columns, the use of which is freely granted to writers on topics of interest to the Militia.]

THE MILITIA ORGANIZATION.

EDITOR MILITIA GAZETTE,—I have read with much pleasure the letters which have appeared in your paper on the subject of the reorganization of the Canadian militia by Captain Cartwright and "T," and although I feel it impossible to more than touch upon the subject in a letter as short as this must necessarily be, yet I have written these few suggestions, for which I shall be fully repaid if you think them worthy of insertion.

To begin with I don't propose to criticise either of those letters, as I agree in most part with the contents of both, with perhaps this exception, that I cannot agree with "T" in wishing to do away with the men of the permanent corps, unless you do away with the permanent corps and the schools of instruction altogether, because we can hardly expect officers in their uniform as such, doing "sentry go," orderly man, cook, servant to attached officers, manning skeleton ropes, etc., etc., for if they are not, they ought to be, Gentlemen.

There may be some who would prefer doing away with the permanent corps altogether, but so long as they are maintained for the purpose of stimulating the militia, furnishing the schools of instruction with the men absolutely necessary for the proper carrying out of their work and setting a good example to the militia generally, I am not one of them.

It would of course be very easy to write volumes upon the reorganization of the militia, if we don't take the financial aspect into consideration; but the few suggestions that I am about to make would not, if carried into effect, cost the Government one iota more than is spent to-day on the militia.

Some of my suggestions are not original, while the others are, but I think they are all worthy of consideration. However, to plunge "*in medias res*": Let us divide the militia into the two parts of which it is composed:

1st.—The officers.

2nd.—The rank and file.

With reference to the first, under the existing regulations, all officers are given twelve months from date of appointment in which to qualify, failing which they are to be gazetted out. When an officer has taken a certificate at one of the schools of instruction he is a useful man, but until he has he is absolutely useless, and all those who won't take steps to qualify should be removed from the militia, but they are not. Why? Not because it will cost the Government anything to turn them out; certainly not; but from political and other reasons, whereas if we got rid of them, we should have the satisfaction of knowing what we have and what we have not in the way of officers.

It may be argued, as I have heard it argued, that if we turn them out we can't get any one to take their places. Then, I say, leave their places vacant, and we won't be counting on what we haven't got, as at present.

Let this law be enforced; half of these men will qualify; that will be so much good done; the other half will leave and make room for better men—that will be so much more good done and at no cost.

My next suggestion is to have a "List of Officers Qualified for Staff Appointments" in the Militia List, and place upon that list all those officers who take the trouble to pass such examination as the authorities deem it necessary to set, and have all the officers on the staff of the district camps appointed from that list. This would give them a chance of learning their duties and of securing the prizes for the more zealous and therefore most deserving officers.

This would, in time, give us a list of very useful men

from which to select a staff in case of trouble, and if the standard is not too low, it would, to my mind, do more to raise the tone and efficiency of the militia than anything else; it would encourage officers to do more to qualify themselves, and it would be a means of repaying those zealous officers who have taken at great inconvenience and loss of time, the long course certificate at the Royal Military College at Kingston, such as Major McLaren of the 13th Batt., and others, who should be the first to be placed upon that list. This suggestion, if carried out, would be a step in the right direction and can be objected to by none, as it will be open to all and would cost nothing.

My third and last suggestion as to the officers, is that our senior grade should be extended and that we should have an established number of majors general and colonels, say six of the former and twelve of the latter, and that the appointments to these ranks should be made by selection, rather than by seniority alone; this would give tremendous impetus to the militia and by limiting the number it would prevent the country becoming over-run with senior officers and would make the rank more eagerly sought after; it being a so much greater prize when obtained.

It is ridiculous to suppose that because our militia was so run by the army element, when we had Imperial troops stationed here, that we are never to strike out for ourselves and have the rank of Colonel anyway, which is open to every officer who serves a certain length of time in the English militia, and that too in a country where they have a Regular Army. But here, where our militia is our first line, surely we can have the rank of Major-General, and we will have it sooner or later, and the sooner the better. This suggestion, like my two others, will cost the Government nothing and is worthy of consideration.

I now come to the non-commissioned officers and men, and to cut it short, as my letter is already much longer than I intended:—

Don't interfere with city corps, unless it is to add to their strength; for their organization, drill and discipline is good, the men are stationary and money spent on them is well spent; but as to the rural corps, I say interfere with them, don't spend any less money upon them, but spend it more judiciously, spend it on men who are always to be found, such as the officers and N. C. O.'s, and say ten men per company. There are very few rural regiments in which there are more than ten men per company who drill regularly with it each year; now instead of drilling the other thirty-two men per company, who are very often mere boys or old men who have been drummed up just before going to camp and turn out on the understanding that they are going to have a picnic and are never seen again either by their regiment or their captain; spend the money saved by not drilling, or rather not attempting to drill these thirty-two "transients" (if I may call them such) upon the officers and N. C. officers in sending them to the Schools of Instruction for two or three weeks each year in addition to the time they spend at camp, and you will then have an organization complete as to officers and N. C. O.'s and ten men per company, and with these officers and trained N. C. O.'s you would in a short time have a trained regiment if required, which under the present system, where in some corps you will scarcely find either among the officers or N. C. O.'s one capable drill instructor, it would take ten times as long to acquire the same efficiency. In the one case we would have an organization and in the other a regiment on paper. Ten men per company are plenty to teach all ranks their different duties and you would then have no more men than the Staffs of the District Camps can handle properly. This suggestion like all the others if carried out would cost nothing.

I could make many other suggestions, but time and space prohibit.

Yours, &c., DISTRICT CAMP STAFF.