

MILITIA RE-ORGANIZATION.

To the Honorable

The Minister of Militia and Defence, &c., &c.

Sir,—At the risk of appearing intrusive, I venture to submit for your consideration a few remarks on the re-organization of the militia: believing that you will consider that the opinions of men who have for years been intimately connected with the existing organization, should have weight in your councils, and in their knowledge of the defects of the system, be able to administer intelligently towards its amelioration.

Without further preface, or attempting to place before you facts which have doubtless claimed your attention, as to the entire inadequacy, and consequent failure of the present system; I shall, with your permission, divide the subject into two heads:—

First. The deficiencies of the existing Militia organization, with suggestions as to the amendment of the Militia Law;

Second. The organization desirable under an amended Militia Law.

In order that the question of a Militia Service may be fairly considered, it is necessary that the constitutional basis for its establishment should be clearly defined. This I take to be:—"That every citizen, between certain ages, is liable to contribute towards the national defence, either by bearing arms himself, or, under certain conditions, by furnishing a substitute."

The conditions required for a sound constitutional force are:—

First. Equal conditions of service, recognizing the axiom that all are alike liable to share in the defence of their country.

Second. The recognition of the principle that every man not actually contributing his personal service during any one year should pay a tax in money which should bear proportion to his property.

The present volunteer organization does not fulfil these conditions, for four vital reasons:—

1st. Because the burden is distributed unequally: resting on the few who have sufficient loyalty to offer themselves for this service, and who at the same time contribute an equal share towards the national revenue as do those who avoid or refuse carrying arms.

2nd. Because an adequate force for the protection of the country cannot be raised as volunteers. The volunteer spirit is confined to few in comparison with the arms bearing population of the country. These few have, in many cases, served three or four times as long as they are required by law to do; and consequently have deprived the country, in case of need, of the services of two or three men who should have been trained in their stead.

3rd. Because, where the purely voluntary principle exists, the burden of raising and keeping together a corps, falls upon its officers; who, in order to maintain their corps numerically, are obliged to use conciliatory and popular measures; to the detriment of discipline, and derogation of their position as officers. This entails another evil, in the selection of officers, which must at present be guided by the influence rather than the efficiency of the man.

4th. Because the pay allowed to the men of the existing force is inadequate for a voluntary service. Were it the understood duty of the citizen, the question of pay would no longer present a difficulty.

In order to fulfil the first condition, we must have a *Service Militia* and not a *Volunteer Militia*, which exposes those who voluntarily serve to a burden of expense not shared by other members of the community—the *draft or ballot* where voluntary enlistment fails.

In support of the latter part of my proposition, I beg to adduce the following authorities:—

In the "Report of Commissioners on the best means of reorganizing the Militia of Canada," dated 1862, I find in section 48, "That the Active Force be raised either by 'voluntary enlistment,' by 'selection,' by 'ballot,' or by a combination of voluntary enlistment and the ballot." In section 53, "That men of the Regular Militia shall, at the expiration of their term of service in the Active Force, pass into the Reserve Force, and continue to be enrolled therein for a further period of three years."

In the Annual Report of 1865, Lieut.-Colonel Powell and De Sloberry make use of the following language (page 16 No. 6):—

"In all parts of the country the spirit of the people inclines to the system of volunteering, in contradistinction to the draft, for purposes of military organization, drill and discipline; but difficulties incident to the carrying out of these volunteer organizations in the rural districts point to the conclusion that the only feasible and reliable means for conveying military instruction to the great mass of the people in the country must be through the organization of the *Service Militia*." In the Report for 1867, page 16, Lieut. Colonel Cassault says of the rural companies, "It is only by the untiring exertions of the officers that their companies are kept together after the first two or three years of experience."

In the same Report, page 18, Lieut. Colonel Macpherson says, "From my experience, and the conversations I have had with volunteer officers in the district, I am led to believe that the French Canadians, although as loyal and willing to defend their country as any other British subject, have no inclination for voluntary service; they appear to hold to the French system, which, when the Government thinks it necessary, orders the service of part of the male population, calling on the whole for an equal share of risks and actual service. They seem to think that when the country requires them, it will not call for volunteers, but will order a certain proportion of men for service; and were a compulsory military service introduced, I believe they would cheerfully perform their duties." Lieut. Colonel Acherley, on page 26, same Report, says, "The difficulty experienced by officers commanding companies, in 'recruiting' to their full strength, has been greatly felt, and is partly owing to the unwillingness of many employers to allow their men to join Volunteer Companies." In the Report for 1870, page 51, Col. Ross says, "The great majority of these officers (captains of companies), through whose exertions and instrumentality the force has been mainly sustained, seemed to be of opinion that, without recourse to the ballot, it would not be possible to keep their companies up to the proper strength under ordinary circumstances in the future, for although the men of Canada come forward readily when the country has to be defended, and there is any fighting to be done, still without such excitement very many withhold from joining the ranks of the Active Militia."

With these authorities—first, the enlightened consideration of the question by our leading statesmen, and officers of large experience in 1862, and latterly by the experience of the responsible heads of the Depart-

ment since 1865, borne out by the captains of companies "through whose exertions and instrumentality the force has been mainly sustained," down to the present time—the result of four Militia Bills has shown the futility of looking to a purely "volunteer" force as an adequate provision for the defence of the country.

Against the method of recruiting our Militia by ballot, it has been urged that such an innovation would inaugurate military despotism unsuited to the free institutions of this country, and dangerous to the liberties of its people. In a word, that the introduction of the ballot would be to introduce the Prussian system. That system is oppressive—first, in the conscription, which enforces three years' continuous service on a certain number drawn at hazard from the population, willing or unwilling; next, owing to its adverse effect upon the industry of the nation, from the indiscriminate drain upon its population in time of peace; and lastly, owing to the long period of military service required. That such a system, in its entirety, would be unsuited to the constitution of this country is undoubted; but why the ballot should be avoided as tending towards "Prussianization," I fail to see. We may fairly raise a Militia by ballot in time of peace, and for home service during a war; because it is just and right that every able-bodied man should be liable to service for the defence of his country when needed; but to go farther, and force a citizen to adopt a profession unsuited to, and distasteful to him, for a continuous service, is a decided violation of the right of the subject under our laws. Should we require a "Regular Army," therefore, the proper principle for its construction would be the voluntary basis; but where the principle sought to be observed is that of "equal rights to all, exclusive privileges to none," the burden of military service must be equalized to all classes of the community, and the "Ballot" as an adjunct to voluntary enlistment, and in preference to "conscription" or "selection," is the fairest way to distribute that burden.

The short period of service contemplated for the "balloted" man (three years) would prove a very slight draw-back in the pursuit of his ordinary avocations, while the advantage gained would be very great. The three years' period of service would familiarise him with drill, and enable him to receive the elements of discipline; during that time his attendance at drill, could be counted upon (or his absence punished), his course of rifle practice prescribed, and regulations for the care of his clothing and arms observed. With the volunteers these conditions are impossible. Any regulations or orders must be inoperative in a Force, the members of which, if punished for an infraction of orders, or breach of discipline, can resign in resentment to-morrow; and no officer, however zealous, can obtain efficiency in a corps the members of which are constantly shifting and changing. The greatest defect of the present system is, however, that it provides for no organized Reserve. The individual volunteer retiring from the Force, even if he completes his term of service, is lost to the military organization of the country; whereas, were 40,000 men to retire triennially into the Reserve, complete in organization and interior economy, they would, even after their legal period of service was past, be easily reassembled, should necessity call for their services. *Esprit de corps* would also assist to keep them together, and a veteran Reserve of hundreds of thousands would in a few years exist, without expense to the Government, and needing