

CORRESPONDENCE.

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for individual expressions of opinion in communications addressed to the VOLUNTEER REVIEW.]

To the Editor of the VOLUNTEER REVIEW.

Doubtless the world would be a dull place to live in were there no such thing as diversity of opinion; nevertheless, I cannot but regret, that as Editor of a Journal which assumes to represent the ideas and sentiments of the Active Militia, you should on this question of the Draft take up a position which, I will venture to say, is dissonant with the views thereon of nineteen twentieths of the officers of that force, who can lay claim to any lengthened experience.

Your editorial remarks, however, on my letter of the 29th ult., show that the position is a very weak one; so much so, that I trust ere long to see you abandon it as utterly in defensible.

I can hardly think you serious when you declare yourself opposed to the Ballot "because it would force into the ranks the man incapable of acquiring the habits or discipline of a soldier, the coward, &c." I have lived pretty much all my life in Canada, but if there is a class of our young men such as you speak of, I have as yet failed to recognize it. An individual dull and stupid, and with no great stomach for fighting, may, no doubt, be found here and there. I know we occasionally meet them in the present force, as they will always be found in any and every force. But I deny emphatically, that in the Dominion, any such class exists, sufficiently large to form the ground of an argument against putting the Ballot in force. To think otherwise would be a reflection, and a very serious one, on the manhood of our budding nationality. Unless we are more stupid and cowardly than other people, your objection, if an argument against the draft in Canada, might have equal weight in every other country. The Prussian authorities, however, do not appear to have ever recognized the force of it.

Pardon me, if I do not consider you more happy in the objection which you attempt to illustrate by the case of Herr Krupp. If the Ballot is put in force, it is wrong to state that every man must serve. Every man of a certain age would be liable to serve, just as under the old Militia system every such man was liable to serve in case of emergency. With the Ballot enforced, not every man, but a very small per-centage of the men of the country would have to serve in order to keep on foot a force of 40,000, more or less, probably some two per cent of the male population would give the necessary quota. Nor need any Canadian Krupp dread getting into trouble through the Ballot. There could be no well grounded objection to allowing him to provide a fit and proper substitute, (indeed, you appear to have lost sight of the fact that the Militia Act of 1868, has already made ample provision for this contingency,) if his usual avocations were of sufficient

magnitude to justify him in doing so—or if thought more desirable, he might be exempt on the payment of a suitable fine into the public exchequer. But though few men, whose time was of great value, would, if once Balloted, object to being obliged to furnish a proper substitute, or pay a certain sum in money. I fear that a great many, so many indeed that their name is legion, would object, and object very strongly indeed, to having a poll tax placed on their property, because they were unwilling to volunteer for the defence of the country. Let the Government attempt it, and I am mistaken, if they do not awaken such a tempest as they will not readily forget.

That the Ballot was devised for use in case of war, is quite true. But, Mr. Editor, can you point to any system of enrolment which is not devised, ostensibly at least, for use in case of war? I differ with you, however, *toto caelo*, when you assert that for such a contingency it should be reserved. Unless there is some radical objection to its use in time of peace, (which most certainly I consider you as yet have failed to show) unless it is manifestly inferior to some other system, I am unable to see why it should necessarily be reserved for the contingency which you specify. That those best fitted by position and opportunity to form a correct opinion on this point, do not agree with you, is evident from the fact that the different Deputy Adjutant Generals of the Dominion, without a solitary exception, have, in their respective reports to Colonel P. Robertson Ross, lately published, given expression to their conviction that the time has arrived when the Ballot should be put in force. Lt.-Col. Taylor, D.A.G., No. 1 District, says:—"I am of opinion, that presuming it is required, that every corps shall assemble for annual drill in the full authorized strength—the aid of the Ballot will be required to effect this."

Lt. Col. Durie, D.A.G., No. 2 District, referring to this subject remarks:—"The Regular Militia on the other hand would give less trouble to all concerned; the musters of the men would be sure, companies full strength, and the community at large would be drilled in detail, year after year. There is no doubt but that this system is the most just and fair to all.

In connection with this district, the Adjutant General himself remarks that the majority of officers commanding corps in it, appear to consider it necessary and desirable to fill up the ranks by means of the Ballot."

Lt.-Col. Patterson, D. A. G. No. 3 District, thus expresses himself, "I do not think that corps can be kept up to their establishment by the present system of volunteering, I believe the time has arrived when the Ballot must be resorted to to fill up."

Referring to the subject of recruiting corps in No. 4 District, Lt.-Col. Jackson informs the Adjutant-General—"that without the assistance of the Ballot it cannot be done satisfactorily." And again Lt.-Col.

Jackson remarks:—"Captains find so much difficulty in recruiting, that they think the labor too great to undertake, to maintain their companies purely by the volunteer system, and the frequent resignations of the officers show the desire to escape so laborious a task."

Lt.-Col. Osborne Smith, C. M. G., A. G.; No. 5 District, states as follows:—"As a large number of men in this District, will complete their service before the conclusion of the present financial year, I have endeavored to obtain by communication with officers commanding corps, whether they consider it probable that recruits or re-enlisted men are likely to fill up the ranks of the respective Battalions. With very few exceptions the answers are in the negative, and a strong desire is expressed that the Ballot be enforced."

Lt. Col. Harwood, D. A. G. No. 6 District, reports thus:—"In more than one locality on account of the floating population, it would not be prudent to rely on even half of the men regularly enrolled. After having consulted with the officers commanding corps in my district, I have come to the conclusion that the Ballot must be resorted to."

Lt.-Col. Duchesney, D. A. G. No. 7 District, speaks as follows—"The three years having expired for the service of companies in this District, I may state that with certainty that two thirds of the Volunteers enrolled in 1868, will claim their discharge. I find by the opinions of the several officers commanding Battalions in the District, that they all concur in stating that it will be impossible to fill up the rolls anew by the Volunteer system."

Lt.-Col. Maunsell, D. A. G., No. 8 District, is of opinion—"that in some instances, chiefly in cities and towns the necessity and desirability on military grounds for completing the deficiencies in the ranks by means of the Ballot as prescribed and authorized in the existing Militia Law, is now apparent." He then goes on to observe that—"having in compliance with your instructions, placed myself in communication with officers commanding corps, you will observe, that the majority of these gentlemen bear me out and endorse the above opinion."

Lt.-Col. Sinclair, D. A. G. No. 9 District, referring to the Brigade Camp at Aylesford, says:—"All the captains but one state they cannot keep up their strength except by the Ballot, which they recommended."

The Adjutant General of the Dominion, Col. P. Robertson Ross, makes no secret of his own opinion, in his annual Report for 1871, he observes:—"A feeling appears to prevail in the force in favor of a Regular instead of a Volunteer Militia. Experience proves that the strongest national military organization, is that one which is founded on the principle of obligatory service."

The foregoing brief extracts from the various reports, leave no room for doubt as to what is the opinion of those who have had most experience in the practical working of the Volunteer system *pur et simple*. A more unanimous verdict in favor of the Ballot it would be difficult to imagine.

As this letter is already much too long, I must reserve any further remarks for a future occasion.

Yours, &c,

ROLLO.

L'Orignal, 6th May, 1872.