

pose, with the consent of the committee, to make a few remarks upon the general question of the militia. My desire is to get other hon. members of this House to take an interest in this question other than what they call the colonels. They generally speak of militia day in the House as colonels' day. There are very few militia men in the House and a number of them are now out of the service. I have not now the honour of belonging to the service, because I am long past the age limit and probably my usefulness comes in being able to give some attention to the question and perhaps to offer some suggestions. I think now a very opportune time for us to seriously consider the condition of the militia of Canada, and I want to ask hon. gentlemen who represent this Dominion whether they are going to be content to have three or four, or perhaps half a dozen gentlemen in the House, because they happen to be in the force, assume the responsibility to the country for the estimates and for understanding the wants, the actions and the fitness of the militia and all the different branches of the service?

If the committee will allow me, I will bring their attention back to forty years ago; a time which marked an epoch in the history of our Canadian militia. At that time a thrill of indignation went through the British empire, because a foreign power saw fit to board a British ship and lay hands upon southern refugees who had sought sanctuary there. In what state were the defences of Canada at that time? There was scarcely a serviceable rifle or musket, and there was not what we would call today any real organization of our militia. To the great honour of Canada, over 240,000 men answered on the day fixed to the call of their country. That was a larger number than had ever responded to the call of the United States at any fixed day during the war in that country. Up to the time of the Trent affair I do not think there were half a dozen companies in our whole active militia, that were properly supplied, with arms or knew anything about the use of them.

It was then that Canada decided to lay the foundation of a military force which would be a credit to the country. That force has since then grown to splendid proportions. We have made progress. Another epoch has now arrived in our military history. The empire for the first time has availed of the colonies to assist her in her struggle against a foreign power. Let us consider if our contribution to the empire is such as is creditable to a great federated country like Canada. We have plenty of spirit and any quantity of men, but I do not think that we seriously consider the position of our military forces. This subject is all the more pertinent in view of the fact that our Prime Minister will meet the Prime Ministers of all the colonies in Lon-

don to discuss among other things the military defences of the empire. I am getting along past the time of life when I can serve my country in the field, and it is only left for me to give my advice in this parliament in the light of my experience as to what our military force should be. I am afraid I must accuse myself that in the past, like others, I have not taken our militia seriously enough. The time has come when we ought to consider this matter seriously, and when we should give encouragement and support to the boys who are enrolling in our active militia, and to the boys who have gone thousands of miles away to leave their bones on the veldt of South Africa in defence of the empire. I asked the Minister of Militia some time ago to defer his estimates until we had the report of the Major General commanding. We have that report now, and I am not depreciating the able men who formerly have been in command of our militia when I say that the report of the present Major General is perhaps the most thorough and most complete that we have ever had. This report is presented in such a common sense way that it can be understood by every man in this House, whether he has had previous military training or not. With the permission of the House I propose to consider that report briefly and to explain how our defensive force is organized. I shall make my remarks on this subject entirely free from politics, and entirely free from any fault finding, even if there be room for finding fault. It is my opinion, as I have often said before, that the militia should be kept entirely out of politics. It is above and beyond all politics. Of course, it must to some extent have a political bearing because the minister who controls our militia for the time being must belong to one or other of the political parties, but so far as I am concerned I will exclude politics as much as possible from the consideration of this question. If I have any fault to find with the Minister of Militia, or with the manner in which the contingents were despatched to South Africa, I propose to do as the Liberals do in the old country: viz., keep my criticism until the war is over and then bring the minister to account. I intend to show to the people of the world that whatever our political disagreements may be in Canada, we are ready and willing to show a united front in defence of our country and of the empire, and to leave complaint and criticism until we have conquered the enemy.

Now, Sir, the defensive force of Canada is divided into three branches, namely: The permanent force; the active militia or volunteers; and the sedentary militia. The means of instruction are under four heads: First, the permanent force or Royal schools of military instruction connected therewith; second, provisional schools for the examination of officers; third, the Royal Military