

OUR MILITIA SYSTEM.

Apart from its necessity as an adjunct to good Government, one of the strongest arguments in favor of a military system is its tendency towards nationalization. The history of the world has proved that the nation, possessed of the soundest military organization, based upon the principle of self-defence, and not of aggression, and in accord with the requirements of a free people has also manifested the strongest development of national spirit, and has at the same time advanced steadily in wealth and civilization. But as soon as the military spirit has succumbed to inordinate desire for gain, or love of luxury, the national spirit has then correspondingly decayed, and the nation has become degraded, if not effaced. History repeats itself; and in the application of the foregoing to our own national history we see a sufficient proof of its truth. But a few years had elapsed after the conquest of Canada by the British, when conquerors and conquered stood side by side to resist the invasion of the American rebels in 1776. Reluctantly, at first, the hardy Canadian *habitans* obeyed the call to arms; but when they beheld their land overrun by the invader, and the sanctity of the soil polluted by his footstep, the love of country was aroused in their bosoms, and forgetting national feuds in the common cause, French and English unitedly delivered their country and vindicated the honor of their flag. When again invaded in 1812, against odds that could only have been sustained by the most ardent patriotism and devoted courage, the Canadians successfully defended their country. What was the result of that conflict? Borne by a weak and scanty population, deficient in supplies, and with no internal resources, the close of the war found the Canadians more united, more nationalized, more self-reliant and hopeful, than years of the most unrelenting prosperity could have made them; and the effects of that struggle are still apparent. Again, the Trent difficulty—the Fenian invasion of 1866—and the Red River rebellion of 1869, have each and all evoked the national spirit of the people. Can any one deny the rapid growth of national feeling since 1866, created more by the necessity of banding together for the defence of the country than by the Act of Confederation, which has so far, effected more in the legislation of the country than towards the establishment of national unity.

The corollary of the proposition is, therefore, that, the establishment of a military force is not only a necessity as a safeguard which, as a people, we are bound to maintain against possible danger, but that, in itself, it is advisable as a means towards nationalization. Taking this ground, we submit that an efficient militia system is a matter for the close and earnest consideration of all who have the interest of Canada at heart.

That the present system is in many respects incomplete and unsatisfactory is universally conceded. The last speech of the Governor General admits the desirability of amending the existing law, as well as the fitness of the present time for doing so. The question then remains, "What are the conditions necessary for a sound militia system, and how are they to be carried out?"

In answer to this question, we have a host of criticisms, but few really sensible suggestions, from our military population. Pamphlets have been written by Lieut. Col. Fletcher, Lieut. Col. Davis, and "Centurion," each advocating different ideas, and starting from different bases. There has been an article from "Miles" in the *Canadian Monthly*, and numberless letters in the daily papers, each and all showing, that the matter, even if intelligently dealt with by those whose experience should make them competent authorities, still does not admit of a ready solution. That the question is a vexed one, and that the difficulties with which it is unavoidably beset have been augmented by the introduction of the party element into an organization which would be essentially non-political, is only an additional reason why the greatest care should be exercised in framing the proposed amendments so as to meet all objections. As there is at the present moment but an inadequate representation at Ottawa of the militia element of our own land, or of the practical experience in actual warfare which we can draw from the old country, and as it need not be treasonable to suppose from the antecedent occupation of the Minister of Militia, that he brings to his new position no very thorough or practical acquaintance with the duties of his office or of the requirements of the country in this respect, we are inclined for the present to think, before deciding upon any alterations or making any changes, the Government should appoint a commission to examine into, and decide upon, the evils of the present system, and the value of the remedies to be applied. Upon some such expression of opinion, alone could the Government proceed with confidence, that the best measures would be adopted, or that the country would be satisfied with them. All-powerful as we admit, and all-sufficient as we, in theory at least, conceive the House of Commons to be to deal with all the questions that come before it, still it must be admitted that it generally shows that lack of information as well as lax indifference on all militia matters.

A step has already been taken in the right direction by the introduction of series resolutions by the Minister of Militia, providing for the establishment of a Military College upon a plan resembling that of the military colleges at Sandhurst and West Point. But this is only a provision for the future, and is neither a relief for the present force, nor a direct means of creating a new and more efficient one. It is very little use to have educated officers unless you have also trained men, for the success of an army depends more upon the discipline and morale of its constituents, than upon a skillful application of the art of war.

We will not now enter farther into the details of the changes that seem to us to be called for, but my remark that a great deal has to be done before Canada can rest satisfied that her militia force is suited to the requirements of the country, that it is adequate in strength to meet any probable emergencies, or that it can be, or will be, kept up to a point of creditable and serviceable efficiency.—*The Nation*.

CORRESPONDENT

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MITRAILLE.

(LETTER No. II.)

I venture to think that the annexed article, from the *London Free Press*, deserves the further publicity of your columns. The subject of Military Studies, at least rudimentary, and Drill, in public schools, has long impressed itself on my mind as probably one of the most efficient means of promoting such a military spirit as would keep the ranks of our Battalions full. It is within my knowledge that this subject was earnestly pressed upon the attention of Colonel (now Major General) Macdougall, as long ago as 1865 by a friend of mine. That officer was fully impressed with the importance of it, but was powerless to induce any practical steps.

It would do credit to the present Ministry if they were to give the matter serious consideration, and it might tend to induce the resolution to do so, were they to bear in mind that it is a principal already effectively acted upon in the States. In that of California with systematic energy.

"Though Judge Drummond's aphorism that "No defence is the best Defence," has not been acted upon in Canada, yet it is apparent that all that has been as yet attempted among us has had reference to the nucleus of a force. And under the system that has prevailed it can never be anything more. A proposition is now made to establish a scientific school, somewhat on the plan of West Point, in which a certain number of cadets should be educated in the art of war. This is going a step further than was taken when the Military Schools were established, which declined more from the want of sufficient pay than from any other cause. One method of instilling military ardor into the youth has been, however, wholly neglected; we mean that it has never been made a portion of the public education. The lads who go to the Common Schools would be delighted enough if once or twice a week they were to be drilled soldier fashion, having their colors and dumb-rifles. Had such a practice formed part of the scholastic system the prevailing distaste for militia service would not have presented itself. The youth that have risen into manhood during the last ten years would have carried with them the taste and aptitude for a service which is now left to be irksome. It may be well enough to secure the services of officers who will be able to estimate the differences in effect between "left wheel" and "right wheel," and have some knowledge how an inferior force should conduct itself in the presence of superior numbers, but it is on the rank and file that reliance must at last rest. Hence the necessity of doing something to popularize the militia service, and we believe that it will be found that there will be no way so effective as that of teaching a little less Rule of three and grammar at the large public schools, and doing something towards making education a little less sombre and somewhat more useful by the introduction of military exercises. A man that has learned