

Manhood Suffrage in the Militia

A Military Fantasia With the Leading Motif "Boys of the Old Brigade"

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

ONE with the Hawkins reception; usual amount of talking about the value of marksmanship and the advertisement that a bullseye is to Canada in the Empire—in comes an ex-officer of the Queen's Own along with a peace crank, not J. A. Macdonald; into the talking-room of the Canadian Military Institute, and they sit down. Obliging waiter reconnoitres with a tray; gets order to shell the wine cellar and to bring back a lot of cigars.

By the time these are being comfortably negotiated among a gathering crowd of military and plain people, the two were into a discussion of Sir Ian Hamilton's report to Hon. the Col. Sam Hughes.

"Much Ado about Nothing!" snapped the peace man. "This country will never be an armed camp. Oh, but listen to this," he cackled, flipping to a back page where at the tail end of the report he found a pungent paragraph. "Fine slam at your city corps, Captain."

He reads—Sir Ian's compliments:

"The city corps suffer from the prevailing Canadian habit of preferring any other mode of locomotion to making an appeal to their legs, whose chief function seems to be very often to stand at a street corner waiting for a car. Consequently the bulk of the city men need training in pedestrianism before they are fit for long marches."

"Absolutely true," says the Captain.

"Bit of a haw-haw in it, though. I'd consider walking very respectable, if it weren't the pastime of Englishmen. But I remember what a Canadian traveller who has studied war as far as a civilian can in European countries said about the Queen's Own. He was talking to an Englishman aboard ship who saw the Q. O. R. in London three years ago and said they were a skinny lot—looked like runaways from an orphan's home. 'By George!' says the Canadian, 'better not say that aloud in Toronto anywhere within a mile of Pellatt's Peak. That's the Toronto crack regiment.'"

"Oh," says he. "I thought it was a scratch regiment of territorials or something."

Captain bites his moustache; smiles a bit.

"That's all right. The Queen's Own didn't go to England as a parade regiment. They went for what they are—a wiry, lean outfit that can wriggle on their bellies in the scrub, or tie themselves in knots round the boulders, and trail twenty miles by the moon over a desert with bullets for breakfast. I think they showed that at Aldershot—and I won't mention Paardeberg."

"Oh! Got any other regiments that would give thrills to Kipling or the late G. W. Stevens?"

"Yes. Half a dozen. But never mind. Stick to the report. Here's a paragraph you've missed. Here's a hand-out to the rural corps."

Captain reads, dangling his leg over a chair arm and smoking a warlike cigar:

"The rank and file of the rural corps can from the first day cover a great deal of ground. Again, the rural corps are quite at home in bivouac."

"Then, again, these farm hands are not cursed with nerves. Line them out upon a ridge and shrapnel them heavily for half an hour; they would continue to chew gum, hardly realizing that anything special is happening. Here we have a true military virtue. And this virtue at least, I am convinced myself, is possessed by the rank and file, and, indeed, by all ranks of the rural corps."

"Ever hear such tommyrot?" says the other. "Heavens! do you remember Carlyle's description of war?"

"Oh, we've got a few miniature Carlyle croakers in Canada. But what is it? Anything like Sherman's?"

"Dumdrudge, village of 500, picks thirty men, each

a handy craftsman and father of a family; sends them under a captain to Spain, where they meet thirty French Dumdrudgians just as good, men they've never seen before. Each thirty ordered to fire at the other thirty. In a few minutes—sixty corpses and sixty bereaved families. That's war. Great Caesar! where under the sun are we going to have Dumdrudgians lined out on a ridge to be fed up with shrapnel and chewing gum? Eh?"

"You never can tell."

"Have to be Americans to do it. And this is the Peace Centennial of 1813. Besides, we've got the best part of a million Americans in Canada—and three million Canadians in the United States."

"Back to the Ark!" sips the Captain.



BIRDS OF A FEATHER.

These two Boys of the Old Brigade, Sir Ian Hamilton and Colonel the Hon. Sam Hughes, are credited by some people with a desire to introduce universal military training in Canada.

"However—it's plain that Sir Ian thinks we have in Canada a good rural militia of the dumb-sheep variety, fair artillery corps, and a first-class rough-rider brigade out on the prairies; for he says that if even the blond Eskimos should decide to invade Canada anywhere between Port Arthur and the Rockies they would be eaten up by these broncho-busters."

Says the Captain:

"I tell you we've got in this country the greatest military possibilities ever—"

"Oh, yes," he was headed off, "a marvelous variety of men and the finest military traditions in the world. But it happens that our would-have-been great generals are building railroads and factories—like our poets, and so on."

"What about Hawkins and Clifford?"

"Pot-shotters! Inspiration to the young idea, as Mayor Hocken says, to spend their youth pretending to blow the blocks off invisible enemies at a distance of one mile. Fine example of citizenship!"

"Oh! Abusing the cadets?"

"The Hughes hallucination—yes."

"But the Hughes brothers didn't create the cadets."

"Well, Col. Sam has jacked them up into emin-

ence. His brother Jim looted the kindergartens of Toronto for his toddling brigades. Niagara was a perfect red-coat Sunday-school picnic this summer. See those mannikins in the second book come straggling home with their little guns. Oh, lord!"

"Better—I saw them at camp. Perfect discipline, fresh air, good exercise. If those kids never see a war, they're ten times better off physically, mentally—"

"Morally and as citizens. Yes, usual guff. Usual military assumption that the business of people in peace is to be everlastingly worried about war. But look at the wrong ideas of manhood. Look at the cocky little folk we're rearing up in these cadet corps. Where did we get the idea?"

"Australia. Cadets are a national institution there. We're always a lap behind Australia in war matters."

"Thank heaven! But what started it here?"

"Down in Norway, in East Toronto, a clergyman organized a boys' brigade. The movement spread to other Anglican churches. Jim Hughes took over the brigades and organized the thing on a bigger scale in the schools. Sir Frederick Borden gave the movement official recognition—and some red tunics. Col. Hughes goes in to organize it on a national basis. That's evolution."

"Also jingoistic poppycock and great waste, Captain."

"Eliminate the jingo—where's the waste?"

"Thousands of boys who should be getting more respect for books and play—trying to understand a country like this by means of toy rifles. Absolutely a sin!"

Captain lights another cigar.

"My dear sir, do you know what a boy's time is actually worth?"

"Just what you make it, I guess."

"YES, a boy is a bundle of energy dissipating itself in a hundred directions and getting more as it goes along. It has no concern with dollars and cents. It can't be capitalized. But it's like Niagara—it can be hitched up at a minimum of cost. It costs more to make a soldier out of one man than to make twenty out of as many boys. A man is a mule. To break him in—look at the waste. Start him in knickers and see what you can do with him. He learns soldiering as naturally as swimming—"

"Oh, fudge! Same old argument—that you must make citizens into soldiers anyhow. But why?"

Captain grabs him by the knee.

"Can you show me any really great nation that didn't have a great soldiery?"

"But Sir Wilfrid says we are a nation now."

"Buncombe!"

"Besides, modern civilization is too complex to make land war a criterion of greatness. Nations are measured by other conquests. Railways, spread of democratic ideas, big business, ships, the march of science, improvement of the individual. Socialism—look at Herr Bebel."

"Don't omit the arts and the poets."

"But war doesn't nurture them."

"At the same time any nation that ever achieved greatness in art has been a military nation. War is the great international drama."

"Poh! For instance—the Balkan States."

"More or less barbarians; never organized. But what about Herr Bebel?"

"Loving Germany, he worked for peace."

"And still loving Germany he upheld the Kaiser in being prepared for war. It's the strong man who really keeps the peace; not the weak one who is concerned in peace for its own sake. We have too many of these peace giants in Canada. And it's a good sign that a lot of our wealthy men are colonels, even though honorary ones."

"Pellatt, for instance?"

"Is a real soldier. He never bought a commis-