

Annual Report on the State of the Militia for 1875.

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TRAINING.

The training of the Militia during the past season may be considered as having in a satisfactory degree carried out the principles of the organization. With very few trifling exceptions, the various corps of Cavalry, Artillery, Engineers and Infantry, assembled with their ranks complete, and I was informed that in the majority of Corps, double the number of men would willingly have joined had it been possible within the limits of the parliamentary vote to have paid them. I am also led to believe that in most corps the officers and men would willingly have continued embodied for a much longer period than that, necessarily for the same reason defined by general orders.

It is possible that this general willingness to attend training this year may in some degree be attributable to some temporary depression in the trade and labor market, but I believe it more probably foreshadows the increasing popularity of the Militia and the general feeling that a larger share of public interest is taken in the system which is year by year assuming in a marked degree the evidence of greater solidity and permanent endurance. Too much credit cannot be bestowed upon the many patriotic and zealous officers of the Canadian Militia who have from the infancy of the movement, in spite of discouraging difficulties at the beginning, resolutely applied their minds and devoted their energies to build up by slow but sure degrees what has now become a permanent and powerful Military organization. Amongst the many I may point to one who has worked at the root of the system from the outset and who so deservedly received the approbation of the Government and the Legislature this year by being promoted to the position of Adjutant General of Militia.

Difficulties doubtless still meet those who strive to prepare means of defence here the possibility of disturbance or of war is hardly believed, because never yet felt, and money is in consequence sparingly granted because it may not directly produce a tangible or visible return, therefore the solidity of the Militia organization may be still considered as hardly corresponding with the steady progress and increase of the Country. By patience and perseverance we may hope little by little to improve the means of national defence and add to the Military Institutions of the Country upon a scale becoming its growing importance. Happily the strong good sense of the people of this country is not to be swayed or distracted from its patriotic course by the idea of any who in sober earnest could aver they would prefer to teach their sons to be drunkards or gamblers rather than soldiers. What would this country now have been but for the soldiers of England in years gone by. What would have been the fate of Great Britain herself through all past time, but for those strong pillars of the Empire under which her influence and her commerce have flourished, and who have carried her flag and extended her Dominion into the remotest regions of the earth.

It is a mistake frequently fallen into by many, that an army and navy are necessarily conducive solely to purposes of war, and therefore they oppose them upon humanitarian principles, but whereas they are indeed and in fact more conducive to purposes of peace. The moral power of a nation without being backed by physical power

would have but small influence if any, in the politics, and the councils of the nations of the world, but when supported by physical power, it must possess in a corresponding degree the weight which strength can command, and so tend to peaceful solutions of questions which might otherwise drift into an opposite direction.

And in this, none are perhaps so directly interested as soldiers themselves, for upon them falls the shock and the destruction of war. Seeking little reward, their duties and their lives are devoted to the defence of their Sovereign and her Empire; for the protection of their native land they freely risk their lives; but can it be supposed that life is not as precious and has valuable to each of them individually as to any of those who are so ready to turn and condemn armies as barbarous institutions, forgetting or ignoring in their security what would be their own condition and that of the Country, but for the moral and physical power of those Military Institutions which the wisdom of the nation has experienced the necessity to maintain.

It is sometimes stated that training the Militia in camps, is productive of little value to Regimental Officers and still less so to the men, and that the Country is called on to pay too dearly without corresponding advantage. But what is the object of the training and discipline of bodies of armed men? It is not that a certain number of men paid for by the civil population should be in a condition to serve their Country in whatever capacity they may be called upon for the preservation of peace or protection in war. The experience of all past history has shown that for such men discipline is the main requisite. By discipline men are taught to subordinate self-preservation to the fulfilment of whatever service the State requires and to encounter readily, dangers and hardships which only a few men constitutionally bold would otherwise face. This system of discipline has in all past time varied only in trifling details, and armies are found fit or unfit according as their training has imbued them with moral qualities which will enable the men to perform the duties required of them, in whatever form that requirement may occur. Habits of obedience and of order, with a strong feeling for the honor of his corps are among the first essentials of a soldier, inculcated by discipline, including careful preservation and training in the use of his rifle. To this end no doubt that moral qualities are of equal importance with physical qualities and the influence on the minds of men collected in large bodies originates habits of thought which cannot but produce the best results in turning their attention into trains of ideas connected with their profession.

Though I consider the annual camp trainings of the Militia fulfil in some important degrees the above conditions, and beneficially produce friendly rivalry and emulation, yet to give fair and productive effect I know it to be important that a proper system should be established to give early training in habits of discipline and the management of men to young officers and non-commissioned officers, without which the theoretical education derived from books alone, be the student ever so studious, will fail him in time of need.

Theoretical education supplemented by practice in dealing face to face with disciplined men under arms, subordinate to his orders and looking to him for example in times of danger or times of peace, is the only training of any value to constitute a commander of whatever rank or degree he may be.

The few days annual training of the Militia cannot fully produce the conditions necessary for the young officers or sergeants—the mansprings of an armed corps; and therefore I venture with all respect to repeat my proposition of last year for the establishment of two or three small enrolled companies as training schools for both Cavalry and Infantry, at which all the rudimentary instruction essential for discipline and the management of armed men could be cheaply and sufficiently inculcated. Thus, and experience teaches us thus only, a constant current of instructed officers and men would flow into the ranks of the Militia capable of usefully imparting that instruction in the camps, and of handling their men with good effect on all occasions.

I need hardly again instance the excellent result, which the Dominion Artillery have derived from the two batteries which form model schools of instruction in that branch.

Exceptional opinions have been expressed, that the establishment of such training schools would be but the introduction of a standing army. It is useless to combat such vague opinions. A small standing army this Country, like all other countries desiring to hold a position in the family of nations, eventually in the nature of things will have; but the occasion has not yet arrived, nor is the Country in a position as yet to maintain such a permanent establishment.

Failing the enrolment of such training schools as I have ventured to propose, on whatever ground they may be objected to, the next alternative is to have a batch of Garrison Instructors selected from amongst officers educated professionally up to the highest modern standard. Ten such officers, detailed through the Military Districts of this Country, would be an inexpensive and very valuable means of imparting military instruction to the raising young officers and sergeants of the Militia, although the most useful instruction of all—the practical management of bodies of disciplined men—would still be wanting.

In reverting to this plan for rudimentary regimental instruction I by no means wish to press my opinions obtrusively nor beyond the candid expression of views from which I know, by long experience, the Militia of this Country would derive very practical benefit.

Previous to my departure to the North West I had the pleasure of inspecting several of the camps of exercise in Ontario. I only regret that owing to the assembly of the corps in Quebec and the Maritime Provinces at a latter period it was not possible for me to attend their camps also. Those that I did inspect struck me with a high estimation of their attention, efficiency and general aptitude. I did not hesitate to state this at considerable length when addressing the various brigades in detail, and as the opinions I then expressed were accurately reported and no doubt read by those interested, I need not recapitulate them here. Briefly I may say, the impression formed was, that the Militia attracts great interest and is very popular, that the officers are zealous, intelligent and capable. Such of them as have had experience and opportunities are admirable soldiers, surprisingly up to the mark considering the long intervals without practice, many able commanders of battalions capable of handling brigades with the opportunity of more practice, the younger officers, soldiers at heart, anxious to learn but without the means, their few days of camp exercise should be employed in instructing their men; but how can they teach, who have but partially learned. Great zeal and enthusiasm distinguish the officers