

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE STATE OF
THE MILITIA FOR 1872.

The Honorable The Minister of Militia and Defence, &c. &c.

Sir, I have the honor to report, for the information of His Excellency the Governor General, the Government, and the Dominion Parliament, on the state of the Militia for 1872, in the following order:—

ACTIVE MILITIA.

According to official Reports, made to the Adjutant General at Headquarters, by the responsible officers, it appears that 30,144 men, (including gazetted officers,) were actually present with their corps, at their muster parades, during the time of the Annual Drill last year. The above number (30,144 men) are all reported as being enrolled under the law, in various corps of the Active Militia.

In addition to this number of 30,144 men, 339 men attended the Infantry Schools of Instruction during the last year, a large proportion being officers and non-commissioned officers in Militia Corps, the remainder Candidates for Commissions.

It appears that several corps did not perform the Annual Drill of 1872-3 last year, including the Quebec Cavalry, and the 8th Battalion of Infantry. The officers commanding these two corps have applied for permission to perform the Annual Drill at their Regimental Headquarters, independently by corps, and been informed that they will be permitted to do so, provided their drill is completed before the expiration of the present Military financial year, viz., on the 30th June, proximo, on the completion of which, if satisfactory proof can be furnished to the Adjutant General that they have complied with the necessary public and military requirements, these corps would be entitled to receive pay out of the public fund voted annually by Parliament for Drill pay.

The actual force trained last year, (mainly in Camps of Exercise) consisted of 1666 Cavalry, (being an increase of 447 men belonging to this arm, as compared with the numbers trained in the previous year,)—951 Field Artillerymen, with 46 Field Guns, being an increase of 208 men and 4 Field Guns in this important arm of the service, as compared with the number trained in the previous year; 1697 Garrison Artillerymen, 106 Engineers, and 25,724 Infantry. The whole of the above corps constituted a Canadian army of 30,144 men. This army is now organized by corps, companies, battalions, and batteries, into tactical Brigades of the three arms, in nearly every instance each brigade forms a little army of itself, distributed according to Territorial Brigade Divisions, and the whole Active Force rests upon a Reserve Organization, almost the entire manhood of the Dominion, and upon a Reserve Organization, which has called forth the eulogy and approval of eminent European statesmen and soldiers.

During the past year, (for instructional purposes) 18 Camps of Exercise were formed for 16 days training, and 3 small Regimental Artillery Camps, for 8 days.

The total number of men who attended the camps which were in operation for 16 days was 24,144 and the number who attended camps for 8 days was 171.

In the previous year (1871) 22,544 men attended Camps for 16 days, there has therefore, been an increase of 16,000 men who attended such Camps during the past year, as compared with the previous one.

One corps, the Montreal Field Battery, is reported to have drilled for only four days last year.

678 Garrison Artillerymen performed their authorized drill for the full period of 16 days in certain forts and Batteries.

5,129 men performed the Annual Drill for the full period of 16 days Regimental at local Head Quarters of Corps, which number included the whole of the Grand Trunk Brigade and certain other corps.

Considerable progress has been made during the past year in training the Active Militia of Canada, and providing the Force with a description of arms more suitable for Military purposes. The tactical mobility of the force has been greatly increased. Most of the Cavalry in addition to their Sabres, are now provided with Cavalry Snider Carbines, (the same description of arms used in Her Majesty's Regular Cavalry.) Scientific instruction in Artillery exercises has been provided for, and the Field Artillery Batteries are now being armed, as fast as circumstances and the Parliamentary vote will permit, with the same description of Field Guns as those recently issued to the Horse Artillery of Her Majesty's Regular Army, in place of the old pattern Field Guns now considered obsolete.

The Infantry are all armed with Snider Breech-loading rifles, and use the same kind of ammunition as that used in Her Majesty's Regular Army—a matter of great military importance and expediency.

Although the Active Militia force of Canada trained last year did not much exceed, in numerical strength, that of an army of 30,000 men, its military power and strength however, is now organized, as far as circumstances will admit, like the strength of an army; the annual training of corps is no longer limited merely to Regimental Exercises, but the various corps of the different arms are trained, in addition, in military combination for mutual support, in tactical Brigades, and the whole Force performs, annually, a prescribed course of Rifle Instruction and Target practice.

The ease and celerity with which the force can be assembled is now very remarkable.

If an emergency should arise, and the public service required it, a signal flashed by telegraphed would, at any moment, call to arms, and concentrate in a few hours, the whole, or any part of the whole available Force, in tactical Brigades, of the three arms, at any point within the limits of the respective Brigade Divisions, whether for defence of the country, or the preservation of internal law and order.

Those who have experience in military matters, and who may be responsible for the defence, and preservation of internal order should an emergency arise, can best appreciate the value of this tactical Brigade organization, and the promptitude with which such Brigades can be brought to act.

I attribute the increased great efficiency of the Force to the practice of concentrating the various corps of the Active Militia in Brigade Camps of Exercise, for the performance of the Annual Drill, which has been carried on for the last three years, as far as circumstances allowed, with great success, and to the fact that the officers and men are then altogether withdrawn from civil avocations, and the time devoted as it should be, entirely to Military duty; I recommend that, in order to maintain such efficiency, this system be continued.

I have no confidence in the system which formerly prevailed of allowing Corps to perform their Annual Drill independently at

local Head Quarters in Drill Sheds, at any time of the year, and in any manner they pleased, the abuses which resulted from such a system were notorious.

Practical Rifle Instruction and Target practise cannot be carried out at all in Drill Sheds, and skirmishing only imperfectly taught, yet these are the most essential Military Exercises.

The camp is a better school for a soldier than the Barracks Square, and so long as the Annual Drill of the Militia is carried out in camps of Exercise, the country may rely upon the Force being kept reasonably efficient.

It is not enough for officers and men to obtain some knowledge of Regimental Drill and Duties. Officers who are afforded an opportunity of learning only this part of their duties, can gain but little insight into the many other duties required of them, in the event of an emergency.

By the performance of the Annual Drill in Divisional or Brigade Camps of Exercise, an insight into all duties required of them is obtained. The local Brigades, each with its proportion of Cavalry and Field Artillery, are practised periodically in concentrating with rapidity at the place of rendezvous, and the officers and men of corps, resident in the same Territorial Brigade Divisions, are annually accustomed to meet and work together under their own responsible staff officers, all annually practising in their respective positions a rehearsal as far as possible of the duties that would devolve upon them in the event of hostilities, or their action being required.

A prescribed course of Rifle instruction and Target practice—the first and most essential part of military instruction—can be regularly carried out, under proper supervision—this being a matter of the greatest importance, and one which, until Brigade Camps of Exercise were instituted, was, from force of circumstances, greatly neglected or confined mainly to the practice of a certain number of individual experts,—whilst last, but not least, of the many advantages resulting from the concentration of the Active Militia in "Camps of Exercise" at the time of the Annual Drill, a complete stop can be put to any false musters of officers and men, which is an evil of great magnitude, and a shameful waste of public money.

The Brigades and corps of the Active Militia trained last year, presented as creditable an appearance on Parade as could be expected under the circumstances, and it is beyond doubt that that, although as may be expected there are yet many deficiencies in detail so provide for, the Active Militia force of the Dominion of Canada, as a body, has made great strides, within the last three or four years, towards, attaining a high degree of efficiency.

No doubt, still greater efficiency might be attained, did time and circumstances permit, by assembling corps, in the first instance, for a few days in regimental camps, at the headquarters of corps, previous to their joining the Brigade Camp. Such a course would, undoubtedly, afford Commanding officers of corps an opportunity of getting their corps well in hand, previous to the general assembly, and other advantages might result, yet, as all Regimental Exercises can be carried on at the hours, and on the days set apart for such, equally well in Brigade, as in Regimental Camps, and many other exercises and duties of great importance, in addition, the place of Assembly of corps, at the time of Annual Drill, should be, as a rule, the Brigade Camp.