

Letters to the Editor.

THE INEFFICIENCY OF OUR CANADIAN MILITIA.

SIR,—I view of the prominence given to war-scare matters in the public press of late, the efficiency or inefficiency of our Canadian militia is thrust upon us as a subject of very vital importance. It seems to be generally conceded that the force as at present constituted is not effective, and not in a position to make a proper stand against an invading army, and this state of things exists notwithstanding the earnest efforts of many volunteer officers to make the corps to which they are severally attached a credit to themselves and to the country.

As a militia man of long standing I have had much experience of camps, drills, rifle matches, and recruiting, and I venture to assert that although we have many well drilled and equipped city regiments and a number of fine officers and men, yet our militia system in itself is for modern requirements entirely wrong.

With weapons brought to such absolute perfection as they are at present for long-range firing, the essential qualification of the soldier is that he should be an intelligent man, and a good marksman. The men comprising the rank and file of the present force, especially in the rural battalions fall very far behind the above standard, and the natural conclusion must be that no sufficient inducement exists to draw into our militia ranks the better class of young men in the country. Bi-annual drill camps for the rural battalions as at present conducted are an almost useless waste of money, time and energy.

Officers and non-commissioned officers may possibly get a little useful instruction there, but to the ordinary private the monotony of goose-step and marching up and down a field all day is uninteresting and useless, and the only recruits that can be obtained to undergo the ordeal are men and boys who have no other object in view than to earn fifty cents a day and their board. One result of filling up companies with recruits such as these is to bring volunteering into contempt instead of its being, as it ought to be, the healthy ambition of loyal Canadian subjects.

Now as to the question of drill. I think we have too much drill. If all officers were obliged to qualify for their positions as should be required of them, they could, in the event of being called to active service, teach their men all foot drill actually necessary in a very short time.

Drill and discipline do not mean the same thing, and the popular notion that regiments should display absolute perfection in their marching and counter-marching, is a grave mistake when applied to the volunteers. I would therefore suggest that Brigade Campos, instead of being as they now are, places for learning this kind of drill, should be organized with a view to giving chiefly a thorough course of musketry instruction.

To attain this end, a competent Musketry Instructor and staff should be attached to every regiment, and a Brigade Instructor appointed for the whole camp, individual, company, and regimental prizes, being awarded at the completion of the course. The working hours in camp being thus chiefly devoted to the theory and practice of musketry, the foundation would be laid for making good shots of our men. A beginning only, but a beginning that might have an extensive continuation, whereas the work as at present done in camp begins and ends with twelve days drill. In order to continue the education initiated in camp it would be necessary for the Government to assist in establishing local rifle ranges, and to encourage rifle matches and the practice of shooting by liberal grants of money, ammunition, and use of arms to individual volunteers. For a man can learn drill in a short time, but he can become a reliable marksman only by long practice and experience. If the question of economy must come up in this connection, one hundred good shots would be of more effectual service in resisting an invasion than one thousand ever so well drilled men who could not shoot.

Young men almost without exception, especially in rural districts, like to use a gun, and if volunteering were made pleasant to them instead of irksome, the better class of them would come forward and join the ranks, and the country would in time be full of trained rifle men ready for any emergency. To exclude undesirable men the pay on first

joining the volunteers might be merely a nominal sum, to be increased according to efficiency and length of service. Keen competition between individuals and corps would soon result from a system such as the one advocated, the volunteer service would become popular and our best young men eager to join it; and certainly an enemy would hesitate to invade our country if it were known that he would find sharp shooters all along the line. And we ourselves would feel a confidence begotten of our strength, and in dealing with international questions would more and more enjoy our full share of that unquestioned prestige that belongs to the great Empire of which Canada forms no inconsiderable part.

HENRY AYLMER.

PROFESSOR RONTGEN'S MARVELLOUS DISCOVERY.

SIR,—It is decidedly refreshing, this news from Germany; quite a change of scenery, altogether a change of language, which must have proved quite a relief to editors of English newspapers, who almost exhausted their vocabulary in abusing Kaiser Wilhelm, from Silly Billy to Autocrat of all Germans. I am surprised how the poor fellow has stood it all, and a greater wonder how the German nation has survived it; such heavy batteries are not brought into action every day, but then we must take into consideration the aggravated situation, the Schleswig-Holstein embroglio of 1864 is nothing compared to the present little unpleasantness; however, it had to happen, and perhaps it is just as well that it did; it has cleared the atmosphere, and I am sure the world is large enough for both nations to get along, and the fittest will survive. The Germans are fitting themselves for that occasion, and the future will tell. Nobody will deny that they have done remarkably well during the last thirty-five years, but of what is yet to come, Professor Rontgen's discovery is a sample of it. There is more to follow, and you need not send your flying squadron: we will hand it over without a shot being fired for the great benefit to be derived by mankind. But what profound ignorance English newspapers displayed as to this eminent savant's nationality. For days and days no mention was made and people were allowed to believe that he was an Englishman and a good many do so even now; then we were told that he was a Frenchman, followed by the Dutchman, then came the Dutch-Austrian (whatever that may be) and, after a few more wanderings over the Continent, he was allowed to be identified with that great Teutonic race, the irrepressible German, with a Vienna Warzburg University thrown in, an institution not in existence. And this is what some people call journalism. I was afraid that we were to have another Waterloo, Rontgen doing all the fighting, and some other fellow stepping in and claiming all the glory. The credit had to be given. I am sorry it was done so ungracefully. If this erudite German had belonged to any other race, columns on columns would have been filled with the Professor's past career; but now we get only the wonderful success his English scholars have had and how they are going to improve it, *sic*. But further, in one notice it was stated that a Frenchman named M. Lebon asserts that he has taken photographs in this manner for several years. Well, what a pity; how utterly selfish to keep it to himself all these years. This is what an American would call "too thin;" but then he was a Frenchman, and has always to make an allowance for a member of that erratic race, notwithstanding the "rapprochement" between the English and the former. What a combination. It reminds me of a picture I saw a few days ago, showing how in the much-talked-of Transvaal a zebra and a mule are harnessed together. The same old story: mixing oil and water. But then, you see, we are so splendidly isolated and how are we to reach those infernal Germans, that is the great problem. I will tell you some day.

Wilhelm Conrad Rontgen was born 1845, studied in Zurich, from which University he received his degree of Doctor of Physics; he was assistant to the celebrated Dr. Kundt, wrote an important paper on his favourite subject, and placed himself prominently before his countrymen. In the year 1870 we see him appointed Professor at Wurzburg University; in 1872, after the conquest of Alsace and Lorraine, he was called to the University of Strassburg and subsequently was made Professor of Mathematics at the School of Forestry at Hohenheim. In the year 1876 he returned to Strassburg, and 1879 saw him Director at the