



# The Volunteer Review

## AND MILITARY AND NAVAL GAZETTE.

A Journal Devoted to the Interests of the Military and Naval Forces of the Dominion of Canada

VOL. IV.

OTTAWA, CANADA, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1870.

No. 48.

### OUR ORGANIZATION.

[From the London Times, of 8th October.]

We publish this morning a further letter from Lord Elcho, upon our Reserve Forces. Whatever opinion may be held with respect to the efficiency of his recommendation, it must be admitted that he appreciates with more than usual distinctness the need we have to meet. The problem has been stated for us with great succinctness. The British Army, like the British Infantry, is one of the best in the world, but there is not much of it. The first thing necessary is to get more of it. We want it, moreover, in the field, and not merely in hope or imagination. The lessons of the war will be entirely thrown away, unless they force this conclusion upon us. Mr. Bruce, in his recent speeches, has betrayed an inability to learn this lesson, and we fear he is but an example of too many among us. The military development of the world has reached such a point that an army of half a million of men is an ordinary force. Even this does not express the whole power of modern development. The force of a nation will for the future consist of its whole able-bodied male population. This is the grand fact which is permanently established by the present war, and which it is idle to overlook. It is a fact which has only been rendered possible by railways and telegraphs; and the present supremacy of Prussia is in a great part due to the fact that her system, though devised by her statesmen before such scientific discoveries were thought of, happened to be precisely the system which was adapted to bring the new powers into full play. That which renders an armed nation irresistible is the means provided by modern science for its sudden concentration. In the old days, a large standing army, always ready, was necessarily superior to any national force which could on a sudden be concentrated against it. But the modern fact, at least, is indisputable. We have seen nearly the whole active male population of Germany "mobilized," or gathered in hand, and hurled in an overwhelming mass upon the finest standing army of Europe. No reasonable man can doubt that the lesson will be learnt by other nations. France, we may be sure, will not again expose herself to a similar peril. The history of the world abundantly proves that every advance in the military art is promptly imitated. The

Prussian successes are as great a revelation as the campaigns of Napoleon. Their teaching may be various, but what is placed beyond doubt is the fact that the powers of nations must be measured for the future, not by their standing armies alone, but by the numbers, the vigor, and the military efficiency of their male population.

But this country, it is tacitly supposed, need not measure itself by such a standard. We are protected by the Channel, and we need only prepare ourselves to meet such an army as is likely to effect a landing on our shores—say 100,000 men. The optimists who rely entirely on this assumption forget that this country is liable, in the event of war, to be called on to meet demands for foreign and colonial service to which no other continental nation is exposed. What other nation has to provide for the security of such an empire as that of India, and at the same time to furnish garrisons for military possessions in almost every sea? If we could shut ourselves up within the four seas, there is no doubt, with a powerful navy, we could render ourselves secure with a far smaller force than is found necessary by such nations as Prussia and France. But this is precisely what we cannot do, unless we are prepared to abandon every enterprise by which British power has been advanced, and our language and influence spread over half the world. If Englishmen are prepared to abandon India, Australia, Malta, Gibraltar, Canada, and the West Indies, they may then content themselves with the modest force which would be necessary to meet a probable invasion by a Continental Power. But if not, it will probably be found that the necessities of our empire counterbalance pretty nearly the advantages of the Channel, and that to insure our independence in the presence of the enormous powers of the continent, we cannot, on the whole, fall far short of them in our preparations for defence.

Now, if this be admitted, the principle on which Lord Elcho writes will be established, and the point at issue will at most be one of detail. Let us add to what we have just said that we need be under no anxiety with respect to our force for what we may call Imperial Service. A sufficient number of officers and soldiers will always in this country volunteer for such service. Our Regular Army is enough for this purpose. What we need is a sufficient force at home to set our Regular Army free. This it is idle to pretend we now possess. We have neither an adequate number of efficient soldiers, nor the war material, nor the organization, and all these three things must obtain if we are to feel secure at home and abroad. The or-

ganization and the war material are a matter of military administration and of money; but how are we to obtain the efficient soldiers? It is to this point that, in his letter of to day, Lord Elcho addresses himself. He dismisses summarily the idea of depending upon mere voluntary enthusiasm. It never has been sufficient, and we have no reason to hope that it ever will. Even in 1803, as Lord Elcho points out, the national impulse was turned to practical account by the application of the ballot for the Militia. In truth, the whole efficiency of national life consists in compelling all to do that which all acknowledge ought to be done. If every able-bodied man in the country were competent to share in its defence, we might hold our own against all the nations in the world. Every able-bodied man will acknowledge that we ought to be able to do so, and that he himself ought to take his fair share. It is for statesmen and soldiers to decide how this general duty can be practically fulfilled, and then to require its obedience. In Lord Elcho's opinion this is a very simple matter. We may dismiss from consideration our Imperial Army. There remain the Militia and the Volunteers as the substance of our home force. Let every man be liable to be trained to efficiency either in the Militia or the Volunteers. Let the Ballot be enforced for the Militia to such an extent as to maintain that force in the numbers deemed sufficient; let no substitutes be allowed; but let men be able to avoid a term of service in the ranks either by becoming thoroughly efficient Volunteers, or by rendering themselves thoroughly qualified officers for the Militia. Let a sufficient number of our population, in short, be required to become efficient soldiers, but let the nature of their service be, in great measure, capable of adaptation to their means and their tastes.

We have acknowledged that, in principle, this proposal recognizes the real necessity of the day. It insists upon sufficient and efficient service. Our only doubt is whether it goes far enough, and whether there is any good reason for going further. It is clear that no force we may raise will be of any use, unless the force to be organized be of a definite amount and composition. How far would that be possible under the sort of self-adjusting arrangement Lord Elcho suggests? It would seem he would fix the Militia at a given number, and allow unlimited volunteering for service as officers or in the Volunteer Force. We will only say at present that even a more stringent obligation than this might, we believe, be imposed without any appreciable hardship. To take boys seventeen or eighteen years old, and