

"RAMROD" ON THE PERMANENT CORPS

AND

THE MONTREAL BATTALIONS.

The report of the Major-General commanding the Canadian Militia has naturally been the chief topic of discussion during the past month among the officers and men of the Montreal force. It has, I think, been very generally received in the very best spirit, and there exists a feeling that eventually it will be productive of good. There are, however, some points alluded to by the General which while their truth cannot be denied, might have been toned down a little, for the fault lies at the door of the Militia Department, and others upon the shoulders of the entire Government; not where the words of the General would place it. As the General first takes up the "Schools of Instruction and Permanent Corps," and as I have been at one of the "Schools," I know the opinion of the officers and non-commissioned officers on some of the points which he condemns. He complains of the great waste caused by desertions and purchase; so that practically the majority of the recruits are men of a year's service or less. I have often heard this fact discussed, and the cause was said to be two-fold: 1st, the absolute want of a future for the men, there being no pension as in the Mounted Police; 2nd, the worry which the men experience from the mistakes made by attached officers while drilling them. A sergeant in the school I was at, who was at one time an Imperial soldier, told me upon one occasion that the men would rather drill the whole day under their own officers than for a brief hour under an attached officer. This can be readily understood, for an officer undergoing instruction is like a young chess player—often making mistakes in his moves. My advice is to give the officers and men of the Permanent Corps the same pension as the Mounted Police. We will then have fewer desertions, and fewer putting in their purchase money. We must have a small body of permanent soldiers in Canada. Let the Government recognize this, and treat them as the soldiers of every country in the world are treated, except in Canada. The General says, "Their administrative system * * * * is marked by a want of uniformity." This I have heard discussed, and the remedy suggested; which was to form the four companies of the Infantry School corps into a regiment, with a colonel at its head, who would be Inspector of Infantry. This has been done in the Artillery, and is, I believe, certainly part of the reason

for the efficiency of the regular batteries and Militia batteries to which General Herbert alludes, for this colonel is Inspector also of Artillery. I hope that the committee of officers detailed to elaborate a scheme for uniformity will give at least a passing thought to my suggestion. I now come to that portion of the report headed "Active Militia," and I have read over certainly more than a dozen times the General's definition of the Volunteer and the Militia system, with a view of thoroughly understanding it, and I believe I have succeeded. The Volunteer in Great Britain is, I judge, a man who gets nothing for himself, but all for his regiment, while the Militiaman gets daily pay for service done during a certain number of days. Canada clearly then has—as I think it is termed—a Militia force. The General apparently condemns the officers for requiring the men to transfer the whole or portion of this money into a regimental or company fund. It would be better, certainly, if this money remained in the pockets of the Militiaman, but then the best is not always obtainable. In most rural battalions I think the money remains the property of the receiver, but in city battalions, where expenses are high, and the great majority of officers not men of wealth, it is practically a necessity. If the recruit on joining his corps agrees to so dispose his funds, who has the right to object? Officers and men are enrolled for the defence of their country. I think the burden should fall proportionately on each. I fancy that the General will find it a pretty hard matter to change this particular point, as regards officers and men bearing a proportionate share of the burden. The remainder of the report is such as must commend it to all well-wishers of our national force, and I am sure I but re-echo the sentiment of not only the Montreal force, but also of the public of Montreal, when I say that unless the Government acts on the suggestions of the General at as early a date as possible they will assume a heavy responsibility.

The discussions and the ill-temper produced in the various Montreal corps over the Queen's Birthday manoeuvres still continues, and I fear will in the end act injuriously. If the General Commanding thinks such movements necessary, instead of the usual review of that day, in the name of all that is fair and reasonable why does not the Government pay the, to them, paltry sum necessary for expenses. Why call

upon the Montreal officers to put their hands into their slim money-bags and contribute from \$25 to \$10 to enable them to go through what will be about as hard a day's work as they have put in for many and many a day.

The various city battalions are busy at work preparing for their inspections, which, I may say, are this year not looked forward to with the same confidence that they formerly were. None of the regiments are, I think, shining up in such good numbers as I would like. The "Vics," who have always boasted of "over-strength," looked very weak the last time I saw them march from their armoury to the Champ de Mars.

May 16, 1892.

RAMROD.

ITEMS.

It is announced that Col. T. J. Walsh will retire from active service, and has resigned his command of the 63rd Rifles. The colonel has been over 31 years in the regiment; he was enrolled 8th February, 1861; promoted to the rank of sergeant 28th July, 1865; was on active service during the Fenian raid; promoted to colour-sergeant 22nd July, 1868; ensign, 17th May, 1871; captain, 23rd October, 1874; major, 20th August, 1880; served as junior major of the Halifax provisional battalion at the North-west during the Riel rebellion of 1885; and was promoted lieutenant-colonel 18th April, 1890. Lieut.-Col. Walsh has also been a successful rifle shot; among other prizes he has been a winner of the president's prize at D.R.A. Ottawa, and of the final of the P.R.A. challenge gold medal; he is also the holder of several other medals.

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No expense is to be spared in fitting out the regimental band of the 48th Highlanders. The best instruments and most brilliant uniforms have already been ordered, and Mr. Griffin—formerly bandmaster of the H. M. 62nd regiment (1st Battalion), will take charge. This is as it should be. A richly-uniformed and well-trained band is a powerful factor in attracting recruits and maintaining the efficiency of a corps. With few exceptions, the best bands in the Queen's service belong to regiments of well-earned reputation for popularity, efficiency and valour.

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The 13th, Hamilton, will parade with the 48th Highlanders, at Toronto, on Her Majesty's natal day, on the occasion of the presentation of colours to the 48th, by Lord Stanley. A large turnout of the former corps greeted Col. Gibson at the Drill Hall last Friday evening; the colours were trooped, and some general battalion drill performed.