

company, "*must be*" 100, of course. With the present constituted strength of 42 N.C.O. and men, including buglers, etc., what is a company but "*a skeleton*" when formed up in its full strength, and when you deduct guards, picquets, cooks and fatigue men from a company in camp, did you or any one else ever see a company which was not "*a skeleton of a skeleton*"?

Let us accept this fact, and it clears the ground at once, and we will speedily decide to drill "*all*" the corps every year, all the corps, not necessarily the full establishment of each corps. The cavalry and the artillery should be maintained as strong as possible, stronger, in fact, than they now are: but as regards the rural infantry all our means should, I submit, be devoted to "*training the officers and N. C. officers*"; and for that purpose it is not necessary to bring out more rank and file than are required for the skeleton on which officers may exercise, say 8 or 10 N.C.O. and men per company. We could recruit it up to its full strength in two days in case of trouble, if we had this backbone thoroughly efficient.

I am very well aware of all the objections that are and may be urged against this. Some commanding officers, and officers commanding companies, say that they wish to take out "*full bodies, not skeletons*," and that with this reduction they would not have "*any men to command*." In reply, I say that they "*have not men now*," and there is not, indeed, a "rural regiment in Canada to-day, except as a skeleton"; and that if an order were given to them to turn out to-morrow, enlistments would have to begin *de novo*.

Little more than a tithe of the men who were drilled in our last camps are available to-day in the corps in which they were then enrolled. The main weakness of our rural regiments lies in the insufficiency and inefficiency of the officers and N.C.O. That defect is the one which ought first to engage attention, and till that is removed it is useless to hope for anything reliable or creditable.

But no matter what the opinions or wishes of individual officers, whose vanity may cloud their judgments, the plan proposed is, I submit, the one best calculated to secure a state of efficiency commensurate without means.

If Canada had well trained officers and N.C.O. for 100 regiments it would be strong compared with its neighbor, for it would then have the means of organizing and mobilizing the raw material. If, on the other hand, it had 500,000 men merely enrolled, but without "*trained officers*," it would be comparatively weak, for it would have but an inert and useless mass, in fact, as it is now, "*an armed mob*."