

## GUNBOAT PRACTICE.

Last Monday the Gunboat *Prince Alfred* cruised out on the lake for the purpose of having target practice with the Armstrong guns. After getting out a suitable distance, a barrel was thrown overboard, and when a distance of about 1,000 yards was placed between it and the boat, the guns were brought into position, under command of Capt. Thomson, and were worked with such skill and ability, as would have made it dangerous for any vessel to occupy the position of the barrel. The shells all burst in the proper place, scattering the water in all directions around the barrel. A number of the visitors on board amused themselves with firing at it with the Snider Enfield, and very good shooting was made. The men on the gunboat have now acquired considerable knowledge in gunnery, as exhibited by them on Monday, and will no doubt, should occasion require, make themselves useful. A number of visitors, among them the members of the *Goderich Press*, were kindly entertained by Lieut.-Col. Ross in command.—*Goderich Star* 3rd

The Garter King at Arms, who has been kind enough to send us out an heraldic blazon that nobody can understand, has been rivaled in Winnipeg. There the insurrection bears a flag "Argent"—two crosses or, Metal upon Metal! No insurrection could survive that.

It appears, according to the *New York World*, that negotiations for the adjustment of the Alabama claims have been re-opened by Minister Motley. The details are, as yet, unknown, and of course it must be a long time before anything definite enough to be laid before the public is done.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor of the VOLUNTEER REVIEW.

SIR,—Your talented and gallant correspondent "G. W." in the two admirable letters which appeared in the *Review* of 15th November, and your last issue (6th December) has so completely exhausted the question of the bearing of the Militia Act on the stability of the Volunteer force, as to silence all cavilers.

Thoroughly agreeing with him in the main points he has so admirably illustrated, I must again repeat the axiom that "the people will not be drafted," and it is not because they "are self-willed and incapable of submitting to restraint as the people of the United States," but simply because their circumstances will not permit them to make such a sacrifice without sufficient reasons being shown therefor. It will be very difficult to persuade the mass of our agricultural population that they are to be compelled to learn, what you, Sir, happily term the "intricacies of the goose step," without any motive beyond that of Captain A., being a very zealous and energetic officer, wishes to keep his company full, or that Captain B., without any of those abilities but having a turn for displaying authority, wishes to do so at the expense of his neighbor's time and feelings. As a general rule the agricultural population, from whose ranks a military

force must necessarily be raised, are men whose social condition more nearly approaches in a general way that equality of which theoretical republicans rave, than any other, hence the extreme difficulty or delicacy of binding them to an abnormal condition, which would interfere with their ordinary pursuits. In discussing this question of an efficient military force for the Dominion the fact that British America has no surplus population to deal with has been lost sight of. The soldier is a mere consuming animal, and produces nothing; the farmer is, on the contrary, a producing animal, and every hour he is prevented from following his lawful occupation so much capital has been substrated from the public wealth.

With the exceptions of the British Colonial Provinces every other country in the world has a surplus population, the whole or greater part of whose time would be well employed in learning the honorable and useful practical portions of a soldier's duty. But in Canada especially the abstraction of one per cent. of the whole population would be severely felt, for, let it be remembered, 40,000 fighting men would be equal to one-fiftieth of the whole male population between the ages of 15 and 60.

The Militia Bill, by the elasticity of its provisions, is capable of being rendered available at any sudden emergency, and I cannot but think that "G. W." overlooks the fact of the rapidity with which men like our Canadian farmers may be made soldiers. The late Field Marshal Lord Hardinge stated before a committee of the House of Commons that "sixty days drill would be sufficient to convert a Suffolk farmer's lad into a good and steady soldier." Now, our people are considerably above that class in intelligence and every other quality necessary to constitute a true soldier. Moreover, they have farms to defend, a direct interest in the soil, and all the consequences of war would fall more heavily on them than on others, it is therefore more reasonable to suppose that far better materials exist in this country for the immediate creation of a military force than elsewhere, and the past history of the people prove it. Under these circumstances your gallant correspondent will not be surprised if I cannot see the necessity or policy of placing in the hands of practically irresponsible men a power which would be sure to be abused, and to differ from him in one particular, and that is the idea that the time has arrived when "compulsory service might most advantageously be urged on the country." But I am happy to say that a direct Militia tax, which would compel the scoundrels which he so graphically describes, to *fork over* or serve is as easily imposed now as at any other period of the history of Canada, if the House of Commons could be compelled to listen to common sense. It is a shame and a scandal that the Volunteer force have been treated

so badly and that large hearted and patriotic men should be sacrificed in time and means for the crotchety dreams of stupid theorists who are fond of exhibiting their anxiety for the public interests at the expense of its honesty.

There is no inducement to either officers or men to remain in or join the force, on the contrary, every difficulty is thrown in the way of its development, but the Militia Bill is not to blame for that or any other evil afflicting it, nor is the Minister of Militia to be blamed; no matter how firm his determination or how iron his will the House of Commons cannot be controlled by one man, and consequently if the Volunteer Force is to be the nucleus of our national army the efforts of its officers and their well wishers must be directed to influence the members of Parliament to grant sufficient encouragement to the force. On service \$15 per month and rations for rank and file with proper equipments would be a fair remuneration; anything below that is less than the value of the service rendered and an injustice to the individuals, and the Volunteers should seek no less.

I think "G. W." will agree with me that the class of men which would form our military force would be considerably above that of the regular service, and looking at the slight social difference which exists between the different classes of people, and that they will return to the same neighborhood after the period of service has expired, the necessity of allowing a choice of officers as far as possible is apparent enough. As a general rule strangers would not be as careful of the men's welfare as those who are best acquainted with and live amongst them.

The only direction in which the Militia Bill could be improved would be in the training of the whole population fit to bear arms at stated periods, and that could be easily effected by enacting say one or two legal holidays every three months, and in compelling the municipalities to take charge of the clothing and arms of Volunteers or other militia soldiers, as well as provide drill sheds and armories for them. I believe Lord Elexho's opinion of the Canadian Militia Bill to be valuable as that of a thoroughly practical man understanding the subject on which he speaks or writes, and I am also certain that the old English militia law was neither as effective or well considered, and in reality bore very hard on the lower class of the population.

In conclusion, I am sure both "L. C." and "G. W." have nothing so much at heart as the interests of the country and its preservation from danger. But it is evident that as actual contest can be only with our neighbors across the lines, and even they smart as they call themselves, must give some note of warning before they can strike, and both your gallant correspondents may rest assured that there will be no need of a draft