

P.S.—Since writing above, your issue of 1st inst. has come to hand with Major MacPherson's elaborate defence of the General Officer Commanding. It seems a pity that the gallant major, an enthusiastic officer, and one of the best rifle shots (theoretically and practically) in Canada, should write as long a letter with so little in it. *Parturiant montes, macular ridiculus mus.*

If English officers placed in command of the Canadian Militia would tell us in plain frank words our faults and the best way to remedy them, and be less cynical and ready to sneer at us, they would be more popular and there would be no necessity for the clerks of the Militia Office, Ottawa, rushing into print to defend them. Although a firm believer in and upholder of "Canada first," I recognize fully the advantage of having at our head an officer who has seen service and devoted his life solely to the profession; but if the inspections of that officer produce no result beyond pointing out what is ridiculous, then I say his services are no use to the country.

I agree with you in disagreeing with many propositions of Major MacPherson's letter. I, however, endorse his remarks about the necessity of every militia man knowing how to use his rifle. His paid regiments would no doubt present a fine appearance, he would perhaps advise the placing of five of them at Ottawa for guard duty at Rideau Hall, and to make a fine show on opening of Parliament. *This is not what the country wants.* We have too much officialism at Ottawa already, as well as elsewhere, and our stock of Lieutenant-Colonels and Majors is already overflowing. By-the-bye, ten regiments would hardly be enough, as we would require *one for each parliament of two houses in each Province.* Major MacPherson seems to be ignorant of the fact that the Government has always provided means of instruction for officers in the shape of "Military Schools," (one was open in this city last winter, as well as other places throughout the country). Then there are "A" and "B" Batteries which have given certificates to a great many.

With respect to your remarks about head-dress, I have to inform you that that expense has come out of the pockets of the commissioned officers more than from the rank and file.

R.

Montreal, Dec. 13, 1880.

Great Guns.

We are glad to be able to state that the long-pending and indecisive controversy with respect to the type and character of our heavy ordnance is likely to be brought to an issue at last. As our readers will remember, we have constantly urged that the startling events which have recently led to so much disputation in the case of the "Thunderer's" guns and other controversial matters had justified doubts too grave to be set at rest by anything short of a thorough and impartial inquiry into the whole system. Some important changes have been foreshadowed, but the public will look askance at the adoption of any definitive plan until the whole question has been examined in the light of the newest theories and with the advantage of the most mature experience, whether official or non-official. We now understand that the War Office and Admiralty authorities have in consideration the appointment of an Ordnance Committee to report on the changes in contemplation in the Land Ordnance Service and in the armament of the Navy. The committee will consist of artillery, naval, and engineer officers, together with one or two eminent civilian mechanical engineers, and it will conduct such experiments as from time to time will be found to be necessary. It is stated that the officers of the Government manufacturing establishments will not be appointed on the committee. This is entirely satisfactory. We do not for a moment call in question either the ability or the equity of those officials, but the truth is the system which they have developed is on its trial, and those responsible for that

system cannot properly sit among those who are to pass judgment upon it. It will be for the Woolwich authorities to vindicate, if they can, the excellence of their methods and results must be also inquired into in a perfectly impartial spirit. It is not reasonable to suppose that those who are identified with any one system can show real impartiality in pronouncing upon others. At all events, it might not be easy to convince a sceptical public that the result had been attained. The committee will necessarily have power to conduct such experiments as may be found requisite from time to time, and thus will have opportunities of bringing competing theories and schemes to a practical test. We may hope that when the inquiry has been brought to an end there will be no difficulty in arming our forts and fleets with the best gun that science can devise and money buy. What we have deprecated is an expenditure on an immense scale upon the manufacture or purchase of weapons the supremacy of which has been loudly challenged until an effort has been made to ascertain whether there is any ground for the criticisms directed against them, or for the advantages claimed on behalf of rival ordnance systems.

"So the Woolwich ring is to be smashed up at last, and General, now Sir Something Campbell, who has had a very long innings, will be bowled out. I wonder if the whole eleven he got together so cleverly will go too? By constantly removing those who opposed him, and appointing men who would help him with his schemes, this clever officer has managed for many years to work the Woolwich Ring most successfully. With Armstrong in the ring he felt strong enough to defy all antagonists. In vain did the *Times* protest in unusually strong language against the iniquities of the Woolwich monopoly. In vain did Sir W. Palliser, Colonel Moncrieff, and other inventors show up the grave errors which were being made at a cost of millions. In vain was the loud protest of two gigantic Armstrong babies and a Woolwich infant, which burst with a noise that found an echo in every corner of the world. Such little mishaps were easily explained away by the Woolwich authorities and their committee, but the end of all this jobbery is approaching. An ordnance committee, consisting of artillery, naval, and military officers, with one or two civilian engineers of note, is to be appointed; but no officer from the Government factory, alias Woolwich Ring, will be on the Committee.—*London World.*

The *World* is always censorious but not always just. The term "ring" is an Americanism for an association of swindlers more or less working through politicians. We can still be thankful that no charge of money peculation can be brought against the officers designated by the *World* as the "Woolwich ring." That Britain is armed with the worst guns in Europe is a fact patent from any table of figures giving the initial velocities or momentum, and the parallelogram of accuracy of the guns in use by various Powers. And it is equally true that inventors have been for years systematically suppressed by the officers employed for that purpose. But who is responsible? Surely not the Royal Artillery, they did not appoint Sir Something Campbell, nor did they give him a second innings. Nor are they responsible for the systematic exile or retirement from the service for many years past of all progressive officers with opinions, as Sir Henry Lefroy, sent to the Antipodes, and the late General Eardly Wilmot, who went to his grave unemployed and unrecompensed, with many another honored name in whom the Artillery service had confidence. The transfer of the symposium clique from Woolwich to the War Office was not the work of the Royal Artillery, who have been allowed no professional head or chief since the abolition of the Ordnance Department, and the result has been what might have been anticipated. The present Surveyor-General of the Ord-