

CORRESPONDENCE.

The Editor does not hold himself responsible for individual expressions of opinion in communications addressed to the VOLUNTEER REVIEW.]

VOLUNTEER vs. MILITIA.

To the Editor of the VOLUNTEER REVIEW.

SIR:—While coinciding with the views expressed in your editorial of the 20th inst., as to the injustice the volunteers of Great Britain have suffered at the hands of the people, the Government, and the press of that country; I cannot help remarking how admirably some of the remarks of the *Broad Arrow* are suited to the condition of the Canadian Volunteers. No language could better describe their condition than the following:—

"The Volunteers are a splendid material, by turns petted and neglected. Sprung from the military spirit and patriotism of the nation, they have been permitted (after many long years of tentative probation) to remain without any organization worthy of the name—to subside into a sullen sense of wrongs undeserved."

Without attempting to detract from the meritorious services that have rendered the volunteer organization of Canada what it now is; I claim that in these few words the history of the Force is contained. Dating from the first organization, when Government furnished nothing but the arms that were put into their hands, through the successive Acts from 1863 to the present time, the Volunteer has had scanty justice meted out to him. True, at the time of the "Trent" difficulty, and in the successive "Fenian" scares, the volunteers were at a premium; but once that excitement was over, the old cry of "needless expenditure," which defeated the "Lysons Bill," has again and again been raised; and the crusade of partisan politicians; peace-at-any-price demagogues; and unpatriotic employers of labor, defeated any efforts to place the constitution of the Force on a suitable basis. And herein lies the proof that the volunteer system *pur et simple* is not suited to this country. Once let the principle of equal military service be recognised; let the existence of a constitutional Force be placed above partisan warfare; and by a direct tax levied upon all able bodied men not actually serving, raise the sinews of war; and the machinery of a perfected organization (call it as you will "Volunteer" or "Militia") can proceed without let or hindrance. But so long as the burden falls unequally upon the different classes of the community, so long as the existence of the Force depends on an annual grant wrung from the fears of the Legislature; no administrator, however efficient, can perfect an organization; no Staff however zealous can carry out that organization. To again quote the *Broad Arrow*:—

"The truth must be spoken: the bud and flowering of the volunteer movement has passed away."

We have passed through the crisis; the

reaction has set in and though our Brigade Camps have shewn a creditable turn-out, the force is neither a reliable nor an adequate provision for the defense of the country. To continue my quotation:—

"The Volunteers have been allowed to linger on still unorganized, as if they were looked upon by the Government not as available troops, but simply as a spontaneous happy-go-lucky school of elementary drill."

"By this means a very large proportion of the manhood of the middle classes has been passed the ranks of the Volunteers and obtained that amount of military training which will undoubtedly leaven the whole mass of the population, and make it comparatively easy to raise reliable troops, should the crisis requiring their employment occur."

Although I grant that much has been gained by the "little leaven," which is eventually to leaven the whole lump; I submit that this is not the position that should be held in a country thrown entirely on its own resources for military protection. We require an organization that can be turned out on short notice; perfected to a certain degree in drill and discipline; and not an armed rabble won to the ranks by the temporary excitement of a call to arms. Let our "Volunteers" exist, but they should be "Auxiliary" Forces; and to the "Militia" we should look as our main defence. The attachment to the name "Volunteer" as indicating the character of our service; with due deference to your opinion, I look upon as purely sentimental. We are no more volunteers than every soldier in Her Majesty's service, is a volunteer; differing only in the *privilege* (so called) that enables the half drilled man to leave the Force before completing his term of service. And this same "privilege" is the ruin of the force. To take another suitable illustration from the *Saturday Review*.

"The Volunteers might also perhaps with great advantage adopt a new title, if a satisfactory one could be found. The name frequently affects the nature of a thing, and the word Volunteer has already to some extent come to be looked upon as the title of a man who does a little soldiering because he likes it, but need not do more than is agreeable to him. We do not mean to say that all, or many, Volunteers entertain this feeling; but we suspect that some do, and, at any rate, the name is misleading. The volunteering should cease from the moment when a man has assumed military duties, otherwise the ostensible addition to the force of the country, being uncertain and variable, may be rather an inconvenience than the contrary."

This uncertainty and variableness is the great drawback to the efficiency of the present Force. A company, which may have mustered fifty-five at the last Brigade Camp, and which profited by the instruction and experience gained while there; may next year have twenty-five recruits who don a uniform, and shoulder a rifle, for the first time when they march into camp. Truly, the "like leaven" may exist in the country, but nevertheless it is very hard to expect a captain to raise (excuse the pun) a company

every year. And this is not the only difficulty. Intelligent and amenable to discipline as our Canadian Volunteers have proved themselves to be, yet they are not heaven born soldiers and one years experience is not sufficient to constitute them such. Yet these are the men that we call "our Canadian Army," and upon whom we rely as our first line of defence in case of attack. Is it reasonable or prudent to do so? God forbid that we should be exposed to the perils of war, but we cannot ignore that it is to provide against such an emergency that our Volunteers are raised. What would be our position were such an emergency to arise immediately? We call out our Volunteers hastily, taking recruits to fill up the ranks, and having perhaps a proportion of 10 per cent of fairly drilled men. We then have 45,000 men in the Field, having Battalion organization only, armed and equipped, and with 40 rounds of service ammunition per man. Some of these men have perhaps never fired a rifle, most of them have never "formed fours;" they have a mysterious idea of the intricacies of drill, and the ordinary routine of a soldiers life; yet these men must in the exigency of the hour march straight to the presence of the enemy. They are dependent upon the District staff for all supplies, food, ammunition, stores of various kinds, and for their organization into Brigades and Divisions. Now let us see who is to perform the Herculean tasks.

The Deputy Adjutant General cannot—for in him is vested the command of the Troops, and he with his Brigade majors must take the field—where he will assuredly find plenty to do in the organization of his division.

The District Quartermaster must therefore be the happy man to act as Control Officer, Quartermaster General, Purveyor General, Storekeeper; with the trifling addition of having to perform the duties of the Deputy Adjutant General and Brigade Majors during their absence. I fear the mortality among District Quartermasters would be great in those days.

It may be said that the right men to perform these duties exist in the "leaven"—or that they could be taken from amongst the service volunteers. But in time of war is no time for selection, and good officers could not be spared from Regimental duties. Why not therefore, utilize the present; by the creation of Brigades nominating their staff; selecting the Division staff, and providing for the fulfillment of the various duties that would require to be performed?

Our Canadian Army therefore resolves itself into this. We have 45,000 half drilled recruits, possessing their arms and service ammunition and stores. No officers to enrol and organize fresh levies when the District staff has gone to the field—no medical staff to organize Hospital and ambulance service—no Engineer train to carry trenching and other tools—no tools for them to carry—no maps to guide operations in the field—and last, but most to be considered, if war is imminent—No Time to make preparations.

I am not a croaker, but I simply wish to provide for possible emergencies, and to recognise in the organization of "our Canadian Army" that "what is worth doing at all is worth doing well."

CERTURION.

23rd Nov. 1871.