

the Imperial Government it would insure the presence of a Canadian contingent, but the only way to make the affair a success here would be for some particular regiment or regiments to make arrangements for covering their own expenses in other respects; for we are sure that no system of provisional battalions selected by government could ever be satisfactory either to the men themselves or to the militia department.

JUST at present the question of rearming the Imperial forces, and a comparison of English rifles with those of other countries, are the topics uppermost in all the English service papers, and the importance of the issue seems to justify the time given to its discussion. Ever since Mr. Lowe wrote to the *Times* in September last, there has been a succession of condemnations of the Martini-Enfield, while very little has been written in its defence. The consequence is that the manufacture of the new arm, which appears to have been more extensive than the public were led to believe, has been stopped, and England is now in the dilemma of being dissatisfied with the present service arm, and totally at a loss where to look, not merely for a better one, but for a better one than that of any other power. The points to be decided, and decided promptly are, what shall be the gauge, rifling and breech action of the future arm, and last, but not least, whether it should not be a repeater.

WE begin the publication in this issue, with the author's consent of course, of a historical sketch of our militia, originally published on the 8th of March last as a lecture to the Young Men's Association of St. Paul's church, Montreal, by Lieut.-Col. Oswald, the popular commander of the Montreal Brigade of Garrison Artillery. It is a brief epitome of what led to the formation of Canadian militia, and their achievements from the time of Wolfe down to to-day, and will be, or at least should be, of interest to every Canadian, and will form not the least valuable portion of the GAZETTE when bound up in our current volume.

The Rifle Question.

THE discussion on the new rifle, and cognate questions, which was started by Lord Wemyss and Mr. C. F. Lowe some six weeks since, and which bid fair at one time to be conducted in a lively and profitable fashion in the columns of the *Times* and *Daily Telegraph*, has, like so many controversies on military subjects, been doomed to become somewhat fitful and desultory. It is something, however, to find that the conductors of great dailies deem their readers sufficiently interested in technical military questions to allow of their columns being open to even an occasional letter on such topics. The present debate was opened, it will be recollected, by the publication in the *Times* of September 11, of a letter from Mr. Lowe, traversing a statement which had been made by Mr. Woodall in the House of Commons, to the effect that the new Enfield Martini had elicited the warm approval of the skilled volunteers who shot with it at Wimbledon last July. Mr. Lowe, as one of the "skilled volunteers" alluded to, asserted, on the contrary, that the new weapon had been found in many respects unsatisfactory. Sir Samuel Baker followed Mr. Lowe, condemning the existing form of stock, and declaring that the Martini "action," which it is proposed to use in the new weapon, was the worst in existence. Soon after the publication of these letters, the *Times* had a leading article in which it practically endorsed the views of its two correspondents. The *Times* soon afterwards gave insertion to two other letters—one from Capt. Walter James, late R.E., in which the desirability of introducing a "repeating" rifle into the British service was strongly urged. On the other hand, "a Ranker," writing in the *Daily Telegraph*, warned the nation against the danger of introducing the repeater. Mr. Lowe soon returned to the charge in the *Times*, describing several improvements which his long experience shows to be necessary in the present and proposed rifles, and, assuming that a repeater of some sort will become a necessity, went on to urge the Government to abandon the old prejudice against the "bolt" action, by which only it would appear a single-loader can readily be turned into a repeater. But the strongest appeal in favor of the introduction of a repeater was that made by Lord Wemyss in his letter to the *Times*, which was reprinted in our last number. Mr. Lowe's reply to Lord Wemyss will be found in another column, but it does not touch upon the question or

repeating rifles. The *Daily Telegraph* has had two articles wholly or partly on the subject of the military rifle—one a regular "leader," the other what is termed a "headed article." In both, the necessity of the speedy introduction of a repeating arm into the British service is ably urged. Meanwhile "Ranker" again protests against it as a dangerous and unnecessary weapon. On the whole the result of the discussion seems to be this, that the proposed Martini-Enfield finds no favour in the eyes of any of the correspondents of the *Times* or of the *Telegraph*, that the Martini-Henry in its present form is, except by Lord Wemyss, considered imperfect, but good enough to go on with, while all of them except "Ranker" are of opinion that a repeater of some kind should be introduced as soon as possible.

We look, we confess, with a feeling akin to dismay at the prospect before us. Supposing—a very bold supposition—that no great emergency should arise for years, we apprehend that what will happen will be something as follows: A certain number of the M.E. rifles will be issued to the regular troops. There will be complaints, well or ill founded, from all sides, especially from the outside, and practically it will be several years before the regular army, to say nothing of the auxiliaries, is armed with a weapon which the military authorities now consider to be the best available. During this time there can be very little doubt that the whole question of repeating arms will have been thoroughly worked out by most, if not all of the great continental powers, though, if what we hear is true, the principle has been already substantially accepted by Germany and Austria. Assuming then, that repeaters are adopted within a year or two by the great armies of the continent, and that we continue to manufacture and squabble over the single-shooting Martini-Enfield for at least the same space of time, we shall have in the end and at the very best to commence the manufacture and issue of our repeaters when other armies are already equipped with them. If we are at war and likely to go to war, we must make our resolve immediately, accept the best repeater we can get, and manufacture and issue it with the greatest speed and at any cost. If, on the other hand, we are still at peace, we shall have the old heated controversies, the old objections, and then the old delay; and we may at the last find ourselves obliged to face European armies at the same disadvantage as Austria was at when she opposed her muzzle-loaders to the Prussian needle-guns in 1866.

On the whole it appears to us that the *Times* and *Telegraph* are right in the conclusion to which they have come—viz., that there seems to have been no sufficient reason shown at present for the introduction of a new rifle, of which both the rifling and the breech action are condemned as at least obsolete by the most competent judges, and in which the sole important advantage over the Martini-Henry is the lower trajectory, involving of course, the corresponding great disadvantage, for some years at any rate, of what has been termed a "break of gauge." The new rifle has, moreover, the special disadvantage that its "action" cannot, we are told, be possibly adapted to any form of repeater. We are by no means blind to the importance of having for military purposes a rifle of the longest possible range. We must sooner or later come to such a rifle, and must put up with the accompanying evil of a new calibre. But we think that no necessity has been as yet shown for the introduction of what we may call a transition weapon, and that the whole energies of those immediately concerned ought to be concentrated upon the question of "repeaters." We are aware that the question has been already studied, but we have yet to learn that the main point has been settled—i. e., whether the British army is or is not to have a repeater. When that has been settled no time ought to be lost in finding out the best form of the weapon. But the first points ought really to be decided, and might be decided without delay. It may be hoped that "Ranker" of the *Daily Telegraph* is right, and that an army with single-shooters will be at an advantage against one armed with "repeaters." But we cannot conceal from ourselves that all the theoretical arguments which he brings against the repeater *versus* the single-shooter are at least equally true in regard to the breech-loader *versus* the muzzle-loader. The great Duke of Wellington was always said to look with much doubt upon the substitution of rifles for smoothbores, and insisted, it is said, upon the term "rifle-musket" being always employed for the long Enfield, least his famous Line Infantry should take to looking upon themselves as "Riflemen." No doubt there were plenty of opponents to Frederick the Great's iron ramrods, to Maurice of Nassau's substitution of musketeers for pikemen, and probably to the suppression of the bow and arrow by fire-arms. It does not, however, follow by any means that every change is for an improvement. But the English nation will have a heavy reckoning to cast with any government which may neglect to discover, as soon at least as foreign governments have discovered, any really vital improvement in the armament of its troops; and we therefore reiterate our assertion that the next thing to be done before any new form of single-shooting rifle is introduced is to settle the question whether a repeating arm is or is not to be the future weapon of the British army.—*Volunteer Service Gazette.*