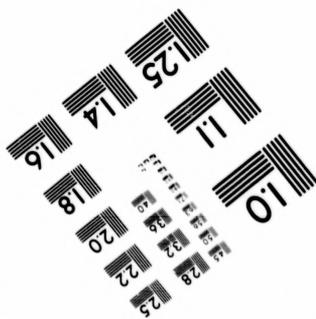
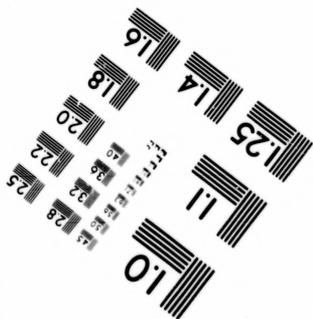
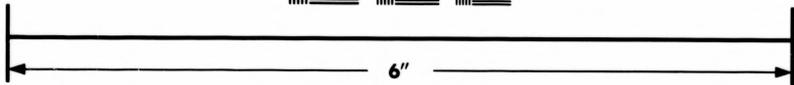
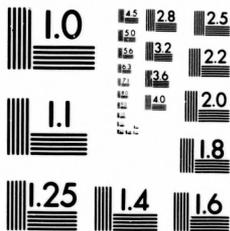


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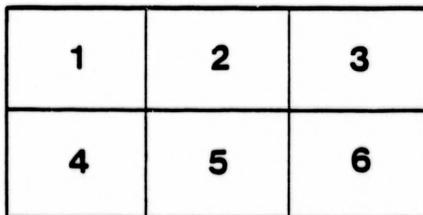
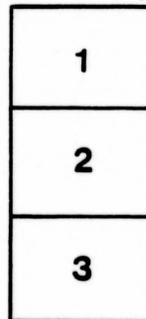
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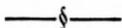
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CANADA

AS A MILITARY POWER.



RE-PRINTED FROM COLBURN'S UNITED SERVICE MAGAZINE, LONDON, OCT., 1875.



THE Dominion of Canada, steadily rising into the position of a powerful State, cannot but awaken, in the mother-country, feelings of intense interest and satisfaction. Her population, occupying the northern portion of the great Western continent, and living under time-honoured and well tried institutions, is largely characterised by those qualities of stability and energy which have made the northern nations of Europe the hardiest in war and the most persevering in industry. Within that vast territory, nature wears her most benignant as well as her sternest aspects. To win a home out of the primeval forest, or contend with the long winters of Lower Canada, while it braces the strength of a self-reliant people, is not favourable to rapid growth and progress; but the country is not all wild and rugged.

In the West there are more genial skies, and the distant valley of the Saskatchewan expands itself into an immense area of fertile soil, compared with which the neighbouring lands of the Great Republic, are but arid wastes. When the wave of population has surged through the intervening forests, it will acquire redoubled power and volume as it flows over that far West land of promise.

Without doubt the future of the Dominion is hopeful, as her present is prosperous, but it is equally certain that she is insufficiently provided with those safeguards which prudence, under the teaching of experience, declares indispensable to lasting prosperity and honour.

We by no means make light of the strategic difficulties presented by the geographical peculiarities of the country. The inhabited part may be roughly described as a narrow belt of land, in some places very sparsely peopled, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. This, of course, implies a frontier of such length and so weakly defended, that the line of defence could be cut with ease in the event of an attack from the south. War with the United States is neither to be desired nor to be anticipated; it is on the contrary remote, unlikely, and on every account to be deprecated; but in considering the position of Canada as a Military Power, we ought to form some idea of the policy which she ought to pursue in certain given circumstances, before we can judge whether her military strength is adequate to her requirements. Were such a war to take place, it would be hard for Canada to cope with the disadvantages of her long, weak line of defence, especially as she is so unfortunate to have her base of operations on the extreme left of that line. If the Canadians take more than a barrack-yard view of the situation, they will not be content with the deficient base afforded by Quebec and a sea which is ice-bound for seven months in the year, but will, on the commencement of hostilities, take the initiative by occupying Portland and the intervening part of Maine. They would thus obtain an improved base, carry the war into the enemy's country, and be supported by the British fleet and transports both in summer and winter. Such a course is, however, possible only for a country which stands always prepared.

We cannot congratulate the Canadians, as we would fain have done, on the success of their military organization. They became aware thirteen years ago that the Imperial troops were shortly to be withdrawn, and that the duty of defence would devolve upon themselves, but up till the present time, no efficient measures have been adopted for placing the defences of the Dominion on a sure and satisfactory footing. As in the old country, so in the colony, the absence of imminent danger lulls into false security, paralyses the arm of the military reformer, and encourages the

pursuit of trade and speculation, at the risk of a possible but unappreciated calamity.

Progress certainly has been made, but it has been slow and feeble, and is far from realising the glowing predictions with which the friends of Canada hailed her advent as a new Military Power. We find fault, not with the numerical strength of the enrolled forces, but with the disjointed and unsupported state in which they present themselves. Indeed, it may be admitted that the total enrolled force of seven hundred thousand men, out of a population of four millions, forms a proportion which could not be well exceeded. This formidable array exists, however, almost entirely on paper, the present law permitting only forty-three thousand men to enlist for the Active Militia.

It must in justice be borne in mind that in a young and expanding country like Canada, it would be most unwise to insist on universal military service of a rigorous and extended nature. Such a policy would check the flow of immigration, and seriously interfere with those industries on which, in the present stage of her history, she so much depends for her vitality and development. While, therefore, military training should be made to fall as lightly as possible on the community, and be rendered as little irksome to individuals as may be consistent with their duty to the State, it is incumbent on Canada to make the most of her resources, and to bind together, by a well arranged plan, the scattered elements of defence. That this has not been done is only too evident from the last published "Report on the state of the Militia."

The men of the Active Militia are enlisted for three years, and receive an annual training varying in duration from eight to sixteen days. Recently the period of training has been limited to twelve days, but the sum voted for the purpose has not been sufficient to maintain, even for so short a time, the forty-three thousand authorised by law; consequently we find that at the training of 1874-75, only thirty thousand officers and men were present. The strange fact thus becomes manifest, that Canada, with more than two thousand miles of frontier to protect, relies on an "active" army of thirty thousand men who can count but a few days' service. Were the Canadian army composed of thirty thousand well disciplined and fairly experienced troops, with reserves of six hundred and seventy thousand men who could take their places as effective soldiers, after a short

preparation, and above all were the officers of the entire force equal to the duties of instruction and command, the case would be very different. All would then be done in regard to *personnel*, which the circumstances of the colony require, for it is at present neither possible nor desirable for her to maintain a very large standing army. Her gigantic neighbour has but a small number of regular soldiers, and they are chiefly occupied on the Indian frontier. While, therefore, it need not be regarded as foolhardy to fix the strength of the active army at forty-three thousand, or even at thirty thousand men, in the time of peace, that number ought really to present the appearance and exhibit the qualities of soldiers. The organization, equipment, arms, and clothing of this small army ought to be in perfect order; but we learn from the Report that it is far otherwise. Major General Selby Smyth, the Commander of the Forces, states that in the most cases the officers and sergeants are inadequately instructed, that the army has no Engineer corps, that the whole fabric is in danger of dissolution from want of a regimental staff system, that the arms are in many cases badly cared for, that the reserves both of rifles and ammunition are insufficient, and that the care of the clothing calls for immediate attention. The General has arrived at the conclusion that the stores are not kept as they ought to be, and he has a strong suspicion that the arms are occasionally used for "sporting purpose." In one instance he found the arms "placed in stands for the winter, at full cock," in another he went "all over the storehouses, containing several hundred pounds worth of government property, without the care-taker being aware that he was in the town, till afterwards." He found in a certain town the stores in a "disgraceful state," and the Brigade Major admitted that "other armouries in his Brigade might be in the same condition." It appears from the reports sent in by the Deputy Adjutant-Generals of Districts, that the troops are much in want of a suitable head-dress, and that the clothing is frequently quite unfit for the uses to which it is put. We read of Artillery drivers in serge trousers, without foot-straps or spurs, of teams badly and incompletely harnessed, and of an utter ignorance of the regimental system of driving. In the Garrison Artillery a knowledge of gun-drill is, of course, universal, but there is little acquaintance with ammunition, or the numerous important duties which

fall to the lot of gunners, in the service of military machines, and the mounting and dismounting of ordnance.

The Inspection Reports show that the majority of the regiments have no bands. This is a serious drawback, although it may not be much felt at present. A band renders a corps popular and attractive, and supplies a welcome relief amid the monotony or hardships of service. Such a mode of attraction and relief is perhaps not yet absolutely needed, as more men presented themselves for enlistment on the last occasion than it was possible to accept, and the trainings are so short that tedium is unknown. The band is, nevertheless, an institution which ought to be held in readiness against the day of trial, and if its functions are duly performed, its immediate effect will be to enhance the smartness and elevate the spirit of the men.

It may be observed that none of the criticisms to which we have referred, reflect unfavourably on the rank and file. Indeed, it is notable that the general conduct of the several corps is almost invariably commended. Never had any Government finer raw material out of which to form an army. The hardy habits of the people, and the daily occupations in which they are to a great extent engaged, eminently fit them for the realities of campaigning, while the alacrity with which they come up for drill, and the aptitude with which they learn, prove that the military instinct is strong within them, but it is hardly necessary to say that this raw material has not been manipulated in the most skilful manner.

But this is not all. There are other and essential departments of the National defence in such a forlorn condition, that the organization and drill of the troops may, comparatively, be deemed respectable and even flourishing. We refer to the fortifications and ordnance. New defensive works were proposed a number of years ago, but the proposal has never been carried out. The garrison guns correspond with the character of the places in which they are mounted, being, with few exceptions, old smooth bores, in some cases not even sighted. It may truly be said that in the face of neighbouring modern artillery, they would be of no more use than the bows and arrows of the aboriginal inhabitants. The gun-carriages are crumbling away from want of paint, and it may be inferred that the other *matériel* are in equally deplorable state, when we find the Dominion

Inspector of Artillery still obliged, on the last day of 1874, to draw attention, as his predecessor had done two years previously, to "the advisability of commencing, even on the smallest possible scale, the manufacture and repair of those warlike stores most needed for the defence of the country."

In any review, however cursory, of the military capabilities of Canada, the schools of gunnery which have been opened at Quebec and Kingston deserve to be mentioned in terms of unqualified praise. These schools are admirably conducted, their commandants labouring assiduously to instruct those who come under their care. The consequence is that considerable numbers of fair, practical artillerymen are periodically turned out by these establishments, and the influence which these men exert on rejoining their corps, throughout the country, is beginning to improve the general tone and efficiency of that arm of the service.

Another institution, although it is still in embryo, demands our notice, as destined to be of the highest value to the army. The authorities have decided on establishing a Military College at Kingston, in which future Canadian officers will receive a scientific military education. That the necessity for this has already been recognized, is the most encouraging sign connected with the defences of the country, and if the idea be wisely and energetically followed out, it will give strength and cohesion to her organization.

At the same time, excellent as these institutions are, and earnest as is the labour which they represent, enough has not been done to hold inviolate the soil of Canada, and compel the attendance of victory on the standards of her untried army. Strong and unremitting efforts are still required. The direction in which these efforts should be put forth, has been clearly indicated by those officers whom we may designate as the military advisers of the Dominion, foremost among whom are General Selby Smyth, Colonel Fletcher, late Military Secretary to the Governor-General, and Colonel Strange, Dominion Inspector of Artillery. These distinguished officers do not consider their recommendations to be absolutely the best that could be acted on, but merely the best that the legislature, in its present economical mood, can be expected to entertain. They recommend two branch Schools of Gunnery, one at Montreal and the other at Toronto, in order that the benefits of artillery

instruction may be brought within the reach of a larger number. It is also suggested that Infantry Schools should be formed on the principle which has proved so beneficial in the case of the Artillery; an Engineer Company is insisted on as a necessity; and a Cavalry School, if not allowed as a separate establishment, might be incorporated with the schools of gunnery. The wisdom of these counsels is indubitable, and the expense of their adoption need not, under careful management, exceed a few thousand pounds annually. It is further pointed out that government property would be better preserved, and economy as well as drill and discipline promoted, by the permanent employment of an adjutant and a small non-commissioned staff for each regiment; also, that the country would be better served if the district staff officers were appointed for five years, their reappointment depending on the zeal and capacity evinced during their first term of office.

Colonel Strange has ably and urgently advocated artillery reform. He has pressed on the attention of Government the necessity for replacing the old smooth-bore guns by 64-pounder rifles, in favour of which he argues that the cost would be almost covered by the sale of the obsolete weapons, and the present carriages would fit the improved ordnance. The argument from cheapness is also introduced in support of the Moncrieff system of applying artillery, which, besides being the cheapest, is the most effective, and is particularly well adapted to the nature of the country.

We think it due to this system, which is at present suffering from unheard-of treatment at home, to quote the words of Colonel Strange, an officer not less noted for his scientific knowledge than for his straightforwardness of character.

"I am not singular in supposing that detached gun-pits on Major Moncrieff's system are the best means of meeting modern attack on an effective and sufficiently economical principle. With great admiration for the sister service of the Royal Engineers, I cannot divest myself of the idea that they inherit not only the talent but the fancy for building in Louis d'ors, attributed to the French Engineers by Louis Quatorze. Laying aside costly iron shields, granite structures, and ingenious devices for doing away with the destructive effects of recoil, Moncrieff simply trusts to the broad bosom of Mother Earth, digs a hole for his gun, and

chains the destructive giant of recoil an obedient slave to his gun-wheels. Time does not permit me to explain the system. . . . As to its advantages, they are self-evident—protection from direct fire, while it gives an all round fire, thus enormously increasing the value of a single gun, and its inexpensiveness compared to the bastioned and polygonal trace, with ravelins, caponiers, &c. Its only vulnerable point is liability to vertical fire; but you who are riflemen may judge for yourselves of the comparative value of such an objection, by considering the difference between hitting a visible upright target, and dropping a shot upon the same target when laid flat on the ground.”

With regard to the question of fortification, it is recommended that Ottawa, Kingston, and other strategic points should be placed in a state of thorough defence, and that plans for securing their communications with one another, and with Quebec, should be accurately prepared and be held in readiness at the Seat of Government. Complete registers of the quota of men, arms, and ammunition, and of the means of supply and transport, should also be kept there, so that in case of threatened hostilities, the whole organization might be intelligently expanded, and set in motion with smoothness and rapidity.

But after all, what can be done with an army which has little or no training? Nothing can possibly make up for the deficiency. A more extended period of drill and instruction is, perhaps, the greatest want, and the most important reform to which these distinguished officers have directed their attention; but should this extension of training not be possible for 30,000 men, on the sum voted by Parliament, it is deemed better that the number should be still further reduced, so as to afford to the few thousands who would then represent the active army of Canada, a reasonable time for being moulded into a serviceable force.

Such is an imperfect summary of the professional opinions which have been officially placed at the disposal of the Government.

* There is only one error, if error it may be called, into which these officers have fallen, and they have done so naturally, and with one consent. They seem to take it for

* The printed official reports of the three officers referred to contain no statement of opinion that Canadians cannot be formed into soldiers without a nucleus of Imperial troops. It is not fair to tax them with opinions they have never expressed.

granted that Canadians cannot be formed into soldiers without what they term a nucleus of Imperial troops. Now, why it should be desirable to make soldiers in England and send them over to Canada, rather than to make them on the spot, it is not easy to understand. If a few hundreds of the smartest men of the Active Militia were embodied under the best officers to be found in the Dominion, and carefully supervised by such authorities as those whose counsels we have quoted, it would not be too much to expect that they would eventually furnish as correct a model of style and standard of efficiency as any regiment in England. The British soldier can certainly adapt himself with wonderful facility to climate and circumstances, but the Canadian must be the best man for Canada, and he is more likely to unite with his military acquirements a useful practical knowledge of the best methods of roughing it in his own country. Every national army has some national peculiarities founded in the fitness of things, and it would be wiser to allow them to develop themselves, than to insist on an unreasoning imitation either of a gunner or a guardsman.

A matter on which severe comments have justly been made, is the vast number of persons in the Dominion, who wear military titles without ever having performed any corresponding duties. An extremely loose system of conferring these titles seems to have prevailed. They have been obtained without professional examination, frequently on the ground of local popularity, and sometimes, perhaps, as a recognition of political services. Nothing could be more ruinous to the military well-being of a country than such irregularities, the nature of which is to become worse and worse the longer they are tolerated, and to check which becomes a task of magnitude as well as of extreme difficulty and delicacy. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that the hands of the Major-General Commanding should be strengthened in the work of remedying this great evil, not less than in the other salutary reforms in which he is entitled to expect an active and generous support. The mere fact that officers are numerous does not of itself imply anything reprehensible; on the contrary, the more officers a country possesses, if they are vigorous and well-instructed, the more powerful she is. Reserves of good officers, where an army consists largely of reserves, are essential to success, and most difficult to maintain; but

hosts of useless and merely nominal officers are not only a disgrace, but a source of weakness and danger. It may be very unpleasant for individual officers and corps to be driven out of their old grooves, and obliged to conform to a correct system, but Major-General Smyth is acting for the good of the army and of the country, in his endeavours to bring the constituents of his command into a higher degree of harmony and efficiency.

The recommendation that the periods of training should be extended, even at the sacrifice of numerical strength, is worthy of the most earnest attention. Whether any, and if so, what proportion of the Active Militia should be permanently embodied in time of peace, it is not for us, at this distance, to say; but we cannot avoid the conclusion that the first line, be it small or great, of the Canadian army, should be composed of perfect soldiers, and that the remainder should be capable of being mobilised, in succession, on short notice, so that Canada, being always ready, may strike the first blow and secure advantages which she could never otherwise obtain. If, as General Smyth remarks, "not even the subduing of a street riot could be confided with any safety to the efforts of undisciplined bodies of men," how can the honour and existence of a State be entrusted to untrained levies scattered over an immense area, without any connected system of fortified positions, without Engineers, modern ordnance, or matured arrangements for transport and supply?

In order to consolidate and extend the power of defence, its foundation should be laid in the ordinary schools of the country. The Military College might, with advantage, be supplemented by establishing in the higher schools a military department in which engineering, interior economy, drill and gymnastics might be taught as a part of the educational course. With a little encouragement in the shape of prizes, nominations to the Military College, or commissions in the Reserves, this plan would be invaluable for fostering those habits of obedience and self-reliance which bear the best fruit in every sphere of life. It may be held to follow logically from the principle of universal liability to service, that the Government of a State in which this principle prevails, may require all schools to furnish instruction in drill. If a man may at any moment be obliged to take up arms, he should likewise be obliged to learn their use in some degree, and this can best be done at an

age when the active business of life has not yet engrossed all the powers of body and mind. The drill-instruction of the ordinary schools would necessitate the employment of a number of non-commissioned officers, whose duties could be carried on under the inspection of the District Staffs, but the trifling expense incurred would be well repaid by the good groundwork thereby insured.

It would, of course, be out of the question to put into execution any scheme of fortification without a comprehensive reference to the distribution of the troops. The troops should be formed into several *corps d'armée*, each complete in itself, and having, as its head-quarters, one or other of the principal strategic points to be fortified. It will doubtless be found that the Moucrieff system, as recommended by the Dominion Inspector of Artillery, is calculated to be of immense value for the defence of these positions. There are also many other points where this system alone would be suitable, on the shores of the lakes, and on the lines of canal and railway, where great lateral range is needed, but where it would be foolish, were it possible, to build expensive and conspicuous forts. There is, however, at present very little encouragement to hope for an early improvement in artillery and fortification, when we look at the extraordinary policy of the Dominion in requesting to have the Canada Defence Act repealed, and in declining a proffered gift of rifled artillery from the Home Government. Colonel Strange referred to this a short time ago in the following terms:—

“As a mere soldier, I was struck with amazement at what you probably did not notice, viz., the repeal, last year, with the concurrence of both the Imperial and Dominion Governments, of an Act of Confederation entitled the ‘Canada Defence Act,’ which provided for the transfer of the guaranteed loan of £1,000,000 for the defence of Montreal (the utterly defenceless commercial capital of Canada) to that political maelstrom the Pacific Railway. At the same time the Canadian Government declined the free gift of a new armament for the Quebec and Levis forts, provided for by the Canada Defence Act.”

In discussing the subject of this paper, it would be extremely unfair to overlook the large amount of voluntary exertion in behalf of national defence, by which Canadians are honourably distinguished, and it is to this spontaneous energy that we look not only for urging the legislature to

sounder and more liberal action, but also for keeping up the martial spirit and strengthening the Military position of the Dominion. To this it is due that time and labour are freely given to voluntary drills, that a flourishing Rifle Association sends its representatives to Wimbledon, that a Military Journal, in itself no mean Intelligence Department, is supported at Ottawa, and that a United Service Institution, on the model of that in London, has been founded at Montreal. Colonel Strange is now leading the way, in his own field, by giving the first impulse to the formation of an Artillery Association, and we may anticipate the happiest effects from the self-denying example which he has shown, in thus generously inviting an addition to the already heavy burden of his professional cares.

Should any of our Canadian kinsmen honour our remarks with a perusal, they may probably be tempted to remind us that our own house requires to be set in order, and supplies abundant matter for criticism, not to say condemnation. While fully admitting the justice of the retort, we would only add that it may not be improper or unprofitable to turn our attention occasionally from our own mistakes and experiments, to those of our friends, and in so doing we wish them an earlier deliverance from a state of transition and uncertainty than we ourselves are likely to enjoy.

