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SUGGESTIONS FOR AN IMPERIAL MILITIA SERVICE.

By General E. F. CHAPMAN, C.B.

THE question of the future of the Militia Service is immediately important, because, upon the rôle which may be assigned to it in our national system, must depend the adaptation of our present military organisation to Imperial requirements.

The plan by which the Regular Army was territorialised, followed Mr. Cardwell's reforms in 1872; it has been tried in peace, and has stood the strain of war; it is sufficiently satisfactory and admits of modification from time to time, but the Militia of the United Kingdom was not remodelled to adapt it to what was then found to be necessary for the Regular Army.

The Militia is the true Reserve of the Army in war, and must be re-organised to prepare it for that purpose; it should no longer be classed as belonging to the Auxiliary Forces, but should be regarded as a portion of the Army, forming the second line of troops in war.

A Militiaman ought to be considered a soldier at all times; not only during the one month of the year that he is under military training, but also during the eleven months or non-training period, when hitherto he has been regarded as a civilian, and neither county nor military authorities have been concerned with his welfare.

The annual bounty paid to him by Government is a retaining fee, binding him to come up for service when called upon; this constitutes him a servant of the State, and, therefore, a soldier. Should he fail to meet his engagement he is regarded as a deserter, and is liable for trial accordingly; though technically he is brought under the Mutiny Act only during the period of annual training.

Further training than what he at present receives is needed for the Militiaman, for it is criminal to place him, untrained, in line with our Regular troops in war.

Fortunately the Volunteers have shown us how such a training, as is necessary, may be given, in local drill halls and on local rifle ranges, mainly as an "after dark" system, where the teaching can be arranged without interfering with the regular civilian avocation of the Militiaman.

In plain clothes or in uniform, by companies or half companies, and under local conditions, the Militiaman may be trained without being withdrawn from his ordinary occupation.

His uniform must, however, be his own property and should be available for his use at all times. His arms must be equally available and ammunition to be expended on local ranges. Local drill sheds and stores will be required in counties for the Militia, and such allowances must be made to officers and men as will allow of their undertaking the additional training that may be found necessary.

The training of Militia recruits ought, however, to be carried out at the headquarters of the regimental district, and should be the complete training of a soldier, including musketry; the assembly of the battalion for annual training ought also to be conducted under the superintendence of the officer commanding the regimental district.

Officers of Militia should as far as possible be regarded as on the same footing with those of the Regular Army, and non-commissioned officers of Militia should be graded with non-commissioned officers of the Regular Service. Officers and non-commissioned officers of Militia might be eligible for courses at our military schools with those of the Regular Army, and officers of Militia might be allowed to enter the Staff College, and even to hold staff appointments either at home or abroad.

Battalions of Militia should be held available for embodiment without a national emergency arising, and in the case of both battalions of the territorial regiment being abroad at the same time, the third or Militia battalion would be embodied to serve on the home establishment, all the battalions being equally regarded as belonging to the Active Army, though in peace-time the Militia would only serve at home.

A free exchange in all ranks might be allowed between battalions of the same territorial regiment, qualifications being equal, officers, non-commissioned officers and men being passed from the Militia to the Regular battalions and *vice versa*, for the good of the Service and the convenience of individuals.

A Reserve for the Militia should be formed and the expansion of the Active Army may thus be arranged to take place automatically at any time that it may be found necessary to add to our military strength.

The advantages to be derived from dealing with the Militia Service in the way herein indicated by making it a portion of the Active Army, ready to take part with the Regular Service as troops in the second line fully instructed, are great, inasmuch as this division of duties places the Volunteer Force in the third line, clearly defining its position and responsibilities. These ought to be the defence of the British Isles, the organisation and the strength of the Force being adapted to this purpose,

and Volunteers when required in an offensive war being employed as a further reserve to the Active Army as third line troops.

In this way the numbers required to increase our fighting power may be provided without withdrawing too large a proportion of our population from their civilian occupations.

But the chief object of these proposals is to show that on the re-organisation of the Militia and on the adaptation of the Militia system to Imperial needs depends the union of our Colonial forces with those of the mother country in any plan that may be adopted for Imperial defence. No single one of the Colonies has reason to maintain or can support a Standing Army as Great Britain, from its position in Europe and owing to the possession of India, is obliged to do; yet each of the Colonies possesses a power of fighting strength which may undergo a military training suitable to the requirements of war in a Colonial Militia, held available to fight in line with our national Army for Imperial purposes either offensive or defensive, and besides, in every Colony a great number of Volunteers may, as in our own case, take part in a purely local defence.

Thus the adaptation of all our forces to Imperial purposes may be carried out on uniform and economical lines, our Militia in all parts of the Empire becoming a truly Imperial Service.