

A NEW DEFENCE FORCE.

WHATEVER may be done in the way of providing military defences for the province, the first step should be the organization of an artillery corps. We mean such a body of men as shall be effective, and not inferior in training, efficiency, and skill to the artillery which forms part of the Imperial army. When it is considered that an efficient artilleryman cannot be made out of a recruit in less than three years, and then only after undergoing an arduous and unremitting course of training and instruction, the idea of expecting a locally-instructed corps to answer the demands which warlike operations of the present day make upon soldiers may be abandoned. If a war breaks out in Europe, in which Great Britain becomes entangled, it will break out in a very short time, and after it does there is no knowing when South Australia may not be made the object of attack. Whatever force, then, we intend to rely on should be established at once, for dangerous as delays proverbially are, in time of war they are destructive.

For years past the Imperial Government has discouraged the maintenance of garrisons in the colonies, and the fate which met applications for batteries of Royal Artillery, when made by New South Wales and Victoria, was not such as to give any prospect that South Australia would obtain assistance of that kind, no matter how urgent her request might be. We should be told, if we did apply, that we might rely upon having the maximum of naval protection which the maritime resources of the British Admiralty could afford to us and that for the rest we must depend on ourselves. It stands to reason that we must then be prepared on our own shores, not only to second the efforts of Her Majesty's cruisers, but to be able to do without them in case of emergency. This we cannot do without a sufficiently numerous artillery corps, equal at least in skill to that of any force which we may expect to encounter. Her Majesty's Indian army fortunately is able to provide us with the material we require, and it may be brought

material we require, and it may be brought to the colony without any cost whatever, as well as without any draft upon the effective strength of the Indian forces.

For some years past the practice has been to enlist men for the Indian Artillery and Engineers for short periods of service, and at the end of the term, if they have served with efficiency and good conduct, they are discharged with small pensions. The age at which they are enlisted is from sixteen to eighteen, and they serve for fifteen years. These men, then, at the age of thirty-four or thirty-five, are at liberty to withdraw from the service, and the Indian Government is bound to find each a passage to England, or to any of the colonies, should he prefer it. Under this arrangement, numbers of these soldiers find their way to Australia, for there is a contract between the various Indian Governments and the Peninsular and Oriental Company to carry them at a fixed rate. In Victoria and New South Wales there are permanent military forces, and they are recruited largely from this source. Queensland also gets her share, because she has had the wisdom to give land orders to those who pay their own passages to that colony from India, as well as to those who come to that colony at their own cost from Europe. The payment of the passages of these men by the Indian Government is regarded as a payment by the men themselves, consequently numbers find their way to Queensland who would not pass South Australia, if equal—or it might almost be said any—inducements were held out to them to come here.

It is to this source of supply for an efficient artillery corps that we urge the Government to turn their attention. The men can be had for the asking. All that is required is a notification to the Governments of the different Presidencies, that short-service men of good character, from the Artillery and Engineers, will be engaged by the South Australian Government in their local force for a short term—say three years—and that they will be allowed land orders equivalent to the value of the sums paid for their passages to the colony.

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Men of this class are far beyond the average immigrant in every respect. They are all men of respectable education (otherwise they would be of no use in either artillery or engineers) and of considerable intelligence. They are of good character, otherwise they are not retained in the service. They all have some pensions, so that there is no danger of their ever becoming a charge upon the public. They might be made available in many branches of the public service, where steady, respectable, and intelligent servants are required. They might be most usefully employed in the ranks of the police, or the railways; in the

Telegraph Department, Post-Office, and in other offices in various capacities, according to their merits and intelligence. But suppose, however, that such men are induced to come here with no other prospect beyond that of a short term of service in a local defence force, the certainty of three years' employment in a new and prosperous country would in itself attract many. The time it would give to an industrious man, with some small means, to turn himself round and become acquainted with the circumstances and resources of his new home, and the opportunities it might offer to his enterprise would be invaluable to him. If, then, it is worth the while of the other colonies to offer inducements to such men to settle there, it cannot be to our advantage to stand aloof. Just now, in fact, it would be policy on our part to some extent to outbid them. They have their defences already constructed and their forces organised, whilst we have nothing but some war material, without the men, and, therefore the means, to turn it to account.

The Indian artillery has long been looked upon as almost the best in the world, and if we could induce, as we easily might, say a hundred or a hundred and fifty men to come here, we should soon solve the problem of a colonial defence force. They would occupy the place of regulars, and from their skill and experience would instil confidence into any volunteers who

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stil confidence into any volunteers who
might be embodied, and they would supply
the best drill instructors for our reserves
which could be obtained. The commis-
sioned officers necessary to command such
a force could readily be secured from the
Indian army, and at a comparatively light
cost, and in a short time we could bring
into the field a defence force equal to any-
thing in existence in the other colonies,
and quite equal to any emergency South
Australia is likely to encounter from the
attacks of any of the European naval
Powers.