

CANADA AND NATIONAL SERVICE

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649149599

Canada and national service by William Hamilton Merritt

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WILLIAM HAMILTON MERRITT

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NATIONAL SERVICE**

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CANADA AND NATIONAL SERVICE

BY

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TORONTO: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY OF CANADA,
LIMITED, AT ST. MARTIN'S HOUSE :: :: MCMXVII

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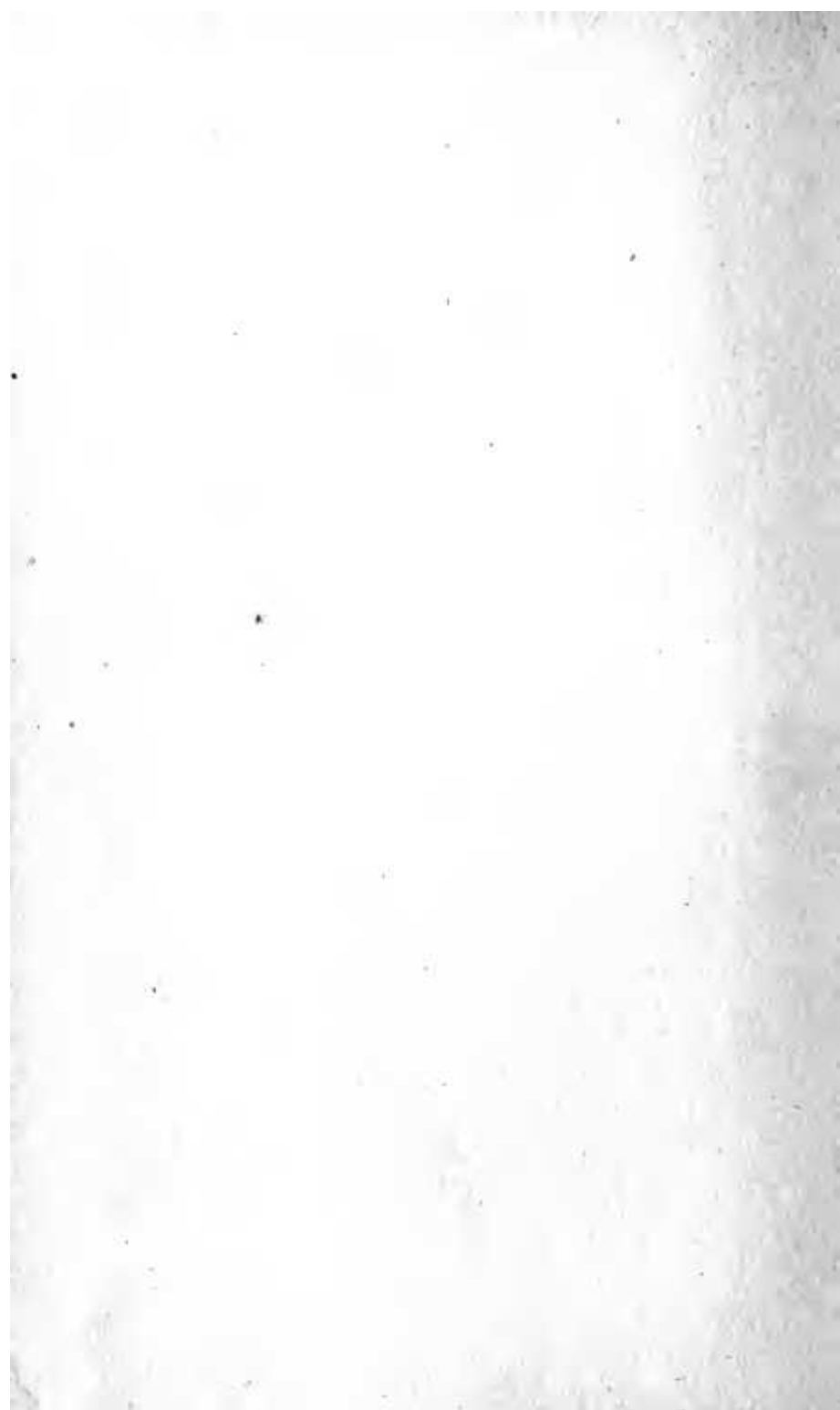
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*This book is dedicated to the memory
of my friend*

*LIEUT.-COL. GEORGE TAYLOR DENISON
(Jr.)*

*a Canadian soldier who gave his life
for the British Empire on the blood-
stained fields of France while the
printer's ink was still moist on these
pages.*

*A veritable appeal from the
grave to the Canadian people to adopt
Universal Military Service came from
him. The appeal was in a letter
received by the author after the writer
had fallen.*



FOREWORD

The recognition that all was not well with the system of defence in vogue in Canada, that we lacked even the basic principle of national organisation and preparedness, did not come to me through being told something or reading something. In my case it eventuated from a distinct process of evolution, through seeing vastly different results from other conditions, and then from enquiring into what had brought them about.

It is now nearly a dozen years ago that chance led me into the mountains of Switzerland, after more than a score of years' experience in the Canadian Militia. There, enquiry into the matter of shooting led to an unfolding of enough of the wonder of a true democracy of defence thoroughly to arouse my interest. This was the beginning of a general investigation, at every opportunity, of the Military systems pertaining to other countries, and of an examination into the conditions that prevailed in Canada in our past history. By contrast the hopelessness of our existing conditions was all too apparent.

The facts presented in the following pages concerning these things were gradually accumulated, and many of them were contributed from time to time in papers to the Canadian Military Institute,

in addresses before such representative bodies as the Canadian Club, the Empire Club, the Toronto Board of Trade, the Military Institutes at Montreal and Winnipeg, the United Empire Loyalist Association, the citizens of Calgary, and through frequent communications to the public press.

It would be ungrateful to complain at good-natured tolerance on the part of our public, but it was certainly very apparent that no great apprehension was created.

Even at the present critical time it seems that the political and commercial world is much more concerned with the matter of contracts for munitions and war supplies, and with commercial preparedness for peace, than with anything which is drastic or obligatory as necessary to win the war and to give a permanent foundation for future national security.

As this book may fall into the hands of persons who are strangers to me, and who might reasonably ask as to what experience the writer has had bearing on matters involved herein, it may be proper and indeed necessary briefly to state that from a private I was gazetted an officer and went through the grades of rank to that of a Regimental Commander and a Brigade Commander in the Canadian Militia, serving the usual tenure of command as one and the other. During that time I had the experience of serving in the North-West (Riel) Rebellion and the South African War. In the latter the service was in two periods, first with Brabant's Horse, a South African regiment (I went to South Africa at

my own expense to seek service), and second, with the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles, an Imperial unit raised in Canada. From the above-mentioned services, came the receptive mind and practical experience which enabled me to appreciate the impressions above recorded, when visiting Switzerland in later years.

Further, for the same reasons, perhaps I should state that those in kindred line of thought appear to have had some measure of confidence in my views and organising ability, as is borne out by my having been elected President of the Canadian Military Institute for ten years in succession and Honorary President for the past three years, presiding officer of the Canadian Defence League since it was formed in 1909 to further universal military training and service in Canada, and President of the Canadian Cavalry Association for the year 1912.*

I cheerfully acknowledge that a wider vision of the needs of the British Empire was brought home to me by the remarkable paper of Mr. L. S. Amery, M.P., on "Military Geography," in which he most clearly proved that the security of the Empire depends on its general adoption of universal military service. Therefore my plea before the Empire Club that Canada should not continue to be "the weak link in the Imperial chain" was founded on good authority.

I cannot do better in these few introductory remarks than by asking the question and supplying

* This Association was the first military body in Canada to advocate Compulsion. On 29 Feb., 1912, it unanimously enacted "That this Association commends and approves of the principle of universal military training in Canada."