

8. These various forces have been organized for the separate defence of their respective colonies, and for each colony a local scheme of defence has been drawn up by the local authorities. Fortunately, however, the Colonial Defence Committee have for years been given annually an opportunity of criticizing these schemes, and the constant supervision of that body has insured the observance of sound general principles and the maintenance of a uniform system of defence. The schemes are all based on the general principle that Australia will be protected by the navy from organized attack on a large scale. They look only to the protection of the important ports in the temporary absence of His Majesty's ships by means of fixed defences and moderate garrisons, and to the provision in each colony of a field force to repel any attempt to land on the undefended coast-line.

9. The possibility of co-operation between the forces of the various Australian Colonies in external enterprises in war has, however, been for more than ten years in the minds of the military authorities in Australia.

In May, 1890, the Colonial Defence Committee pointed out that, in the event of a serious war, the military rôle contemplated by the Australian Colonies need not necessarily be restricted to the passive defence of their ports. These colonies would doubtless desire to accept some share in the general defence of the Empire, and to enable them to do so it was essential that their land forces should be organized on a common basis, so as to be capable of being brought together for concerted action.

This suggestion was carefully considered at conferences of the Commandants of the Australian forces held in October, 1894, and January, 1896, and a provisional scheme was drawn up under which certain existing units were selected from each colony and allotted to an "Australian Field Force," which was thus built up to a strength of one mounted brigade and one infantry division. The mounted brigade included three regiments of mounted rifles, a battery of artillery, ammunition column, mounted detachments, engineers, &c., its total war establishment being 2,670. The division included a brigade division of field artillery, a company of engineers, and departmental details, having a total war establishment of 9,526.

In their recent Memorandum No. 254 M, which was specially drawn up on the 3rd April, 1901, for the guidance of the Commonwealth Ministry in carrying out the federation of the military forces of Australia, the Colonial Defence Committee again drew attention to this matter, and pointed out that federation will make it now possible to provide a homogeneous and efficient force "which can to some extent undergo combined training in peace and which will be capable of rapid mobilisation in war."

In a subsequent Memorandum No. 281 M, dated the 1st November, 1901, on the armament of field artillery in Australia and New Zealand, the Colonial Defence Committee have further suggested that, as the Australian has proved in South Africa his special aptitude for the rôle of mounted rifleman, the Federal Field Force should be organized in two mounted brigades and one infantry brigade; that the mounted brigades should be drawn from the pastoral districts, where the physical qualifications of the inhabitants fit them specially for this work; and that the infantry brigade should be built up from general service companies raised from those members of certain corps who would be willing to undertake liability for extended service in time of war.

These suggestions have been recently approved by the Secretary of State for War, and transmitted to Australia by the Colonial Office.

10. As yet no further practical steps have been taken in Australia to complete the organization of the Federal Field Force proposed by the Colonial Defence Committee, but there are grounds for hoping that the general principles involved are acceptable to the minds of Australian statesmen, and that as soon as the working-machinery of an Australian Headquarters Staff has been set in motion the question will be definitely taken up and the necessary legal powers obtained from the Commonwealth Legislature.

Having regard, then, to the principles already submitted in sub-paragraphs (e) and (f) of paragraph 5, we shall do better if we utilise and adapt to our purpose these ideas, which have developed almost to fruition in Australian minds, than if we attempt to thrust upon them fresh proposals. A force of two mounted brigades and an infantry brigade would probably give a total strength of about nine thousand men. In time Australia may fairly be expected to considerably increase this.

11. As regards Australia, therefore, it is submitted that it should be the policy of His Majesty's Government to encourage an organization for Imperial service on the following lines:—

- (1.) The field force of the strength above suggested—viz., two mounted brigades and one infantry brigade—to be at the disposal of the Imperial Government for general service, in the case of war between Great Britain and one or more European Powers, as soon as the naval authorities are in a position to undertake the responsibility for the movement of troops by sea.
- (2.) This contingent to be termed "The Imperial Australian Force"; its officers to be nominated by the Governor-General on the advice of his Ministry and granted by the King temporary rank in the army; the right to be reserved to His Majesty to appoint, on mobilisation, a general officer to take supreme command and a headquarters staff, but the latter to be selected, in the main, from Australian officers.
- (3.) Officers and men belonging to the Force to be trained in peace-time on the same system as that adopted for the partially paid forces of Australia, but to engage for periods of not less than two years to serve in war wherever required. In consideration of this agreement, all officers and men who carry out the conditions of their annual course of training to be given a retaining fee (in addition to their military pay).
- (4.) All units of the Force to be inspected in the field annually by the General Officer Commanding in Australia, and his report to be forwarded by the Commonwealth Ministry for the information of the Commander-in-Chief.