

The rising Phoenix: the status of the Queensland Defence Force in 1885.

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The year 1885 was a tumultuous one for the military forces of Queensland. In that year new regulations under the 1884 Defence Act came into effect; an Australian offer for overseas military service was accepted by Britain; and the threat of an international conflict between the empires of Great Britain and Russia saw Queensland troops called out on active service. From the metaphoric ashes of conflict and confusion, the Queensland Defence Force lurched into a new era.

At the beginning of 1885 there were two very public problems facing the Queensland military hierarchy. The first, carried over from the previous year, was a public perception that the Force was dramatically collapsing. It was linked to a sometimes vitriolic and personal media campaign against the Commandant, Colonel GA French, alleging his unsuitability to the task of reforming the old Volunteer Force, and also to an uncertainty about the contents of regulations he drafted under the new Defence Act. The second problem was an opposition to the establishment and siting of the proposed Permanent military force in Brisbane. The 1884 Defence Act had also enabled the formation of a Permanent Force of Artillery for the defence of the colony. Initially the proposal for that force produced no opposition, perhaps even lack of interest, from the public. However, the problem of locating the Permanent Force in barracks began to draw attention to the impact it would have on Brisbane, particularly when it also led to a massive displacement of the local Police Force from the old military barracks. These public issues were not treated in isolation nor dealt with objectively. Against a background of increasing international tension, the public were effectively bombarded with more local and foreign military news than ever before, much of it however based upon uninformed speculation.

Late in January 1885 the *Brisbane Courier* published a letter drawing attention to the fact that after nearly twenty years occupation, the police were to be removed from the old military barracks at Petrie Terrace. The police were to be replaced in barracks by the Colony's new Permanent Force of Artillery. The placement of the Permanent Force at Petrie Terrace caused some confusion. The correspondent wondered where the artillerymen were to be drilled, and where the guns on which they were to be drilled would be located. *Any reasonable being would suppose they would be stationed at Lytton.* He posed the question of which Force was more valuable to the colony - Police or Defence? *One has the immediate and direct protection of the inhabitants of the colony from the criminal classes, who are greater enemies than any of the European Powers are likely to prove themselves.*

In an editorial a few days later, the *Courier* acknowledged that the proposed Permanent Force was a body which seemed to be thought very lightly of by the public. The paper identified the Volunteers as the one sole measure of defence possessed by the colony, and suggested the Permanent Force was *intended to serve simply as a model and inducement to the attainment of appropriate military perfection*. The editorial claimed that the Defence Act and the formation of the Permanent Force and a Naval Brigade had *diverted attention from what is really the most important item of all - the condition of our Volunteers*. It went on: *For a long time their increasing deterioration and their own dissatisfaction with the existing order of things have been well known, but it was generally understood that something was going to be done, and with a vague conviction, the outside public were satisfied*. Part of that solution had been the employment of Colonel G French of the Royal Artillery to organise the Volunteers. A year since he joined the Force and the *Courier* believed he had made little headway. *The Volunteer Force is this day, and we say it unhesitatingly, in a very much worse state than it was on his arrival, and there is very grave danger that before many months have passed there will no Volunteer Force at all*.

A number of facts and figures were provided to support the editorial argument. When Colonel French arrived in the colony in January 1884, a full parade of 265 men had greeted him. The 1884 Easter Encampment saw 361 men under canvas at Lytton, while in June 314 men paraded for an inspection by the Governor. Thereafter there was a significant decrease in martial activity. Complaints of poor conditions became more common and public. It would appear the *Courier* saw itself almost as the guardian of the lost and wandering Volunteers, and the part it had attempted to play in the Force's recovery was not very subtly recalled. *It was seen that a crisis had come, which the Brigade Office seemed powerless to cope with, and this journal, after due inquiry, published a series of articles dealing with the condition of the Volunteer Force and exposing many of the abuses that had hitherto impaired its efficiency*. The resulting hue and cry saw the proposition of the Defence Bill as the cure of all ills, but it was not seen to deal intimately with the complaints of the men. The public airing of grievances obtained little perceived gain for the Volunteers and morale plummeted. On the next full paid parade, which also include the presentation of shooting prizes, only 116 men assembled. Of the 347 men on the establishment of the First Queenslanders, only forty-five paraded.

By December 1884 the situation had worsened, and at a parade to receive Colonel ER Drury on his return from England only eighty-six men attended, and these only from the artillery and engineers. No infantry paraded that day. The *Courier* held this up to be an indication of how low the morale had fallen, but in reality Drury's position in the Force was Commanding Officer of the Artillery Brigade, which at that time included the Engineers. There was therefore no reason for the Infantry to have been present. By far the most damning evidence of extremely poor morale was the inability of the Volunteers to gain more than nine men as a guard of honour at the opening of Parliament. Only the Instructor of Musketry, one Captain, two Staff-Sergeants, one corporal, two buglers and two privates attended.

The Volunteer Force was considered to be practically non-existent. In the *Brisbane Courier's* estimation Colonel French, as the Volunteer's commanding officer, had failed. With his very

handsome salary, French had been charged with reorganising the Defence Force and placing it on a firmer basis of efficiency and polarity. It was judged *his mission has certainly been a disastrous failure, or rather, perhaps, that his efforts have not met with the success to which they are doubtless entitled, but it is exceedingly improbable they will ever obtain.* Hinting that one of the reasons French had been unsuccessful was his lack of understanding of the men who made up the Force, as well as his disciplinarian attitude, the *Courier* outlined what it considered was the basis of all the problems. *Volunteers are not quite on the same footing as paid soldiers, and the volunteer feels himself entitled to, and will exact, a certain amount of consideration which the private soldier has never received, and has not the slightest reason to expect.*

Two days later another correspondent provided further evidence of the community response to the stationing of the proposed Permanent Force in the barracks at Petrie Terrace. *All citizens I have heard speak on the matter up to the present appear to be of one opinion, and that is that Lytton is the position for our defence force. It is not too late to erect barracks for them and their officers, and leave the police undisturbed to whom the protection of our lives and property is specifically entrusted.* A common contemporary perception appears to be that the Permanent Force was established simply to man the fortifications at Lytton, rather than for the complex training establishment that French obviously envisaged. French's detailed experience with training establishments in Canada and England made him an ideal officer to begin the task, but his inability, or his decision not to make that widely known, led to the running battle between he and the *Brisbane Courier*.

Perhaps it was Lt-Colonel ER Drury's sense of duty that prompted him to charge to the public defence of the Commandant. In a letter to the *Courier* on 2 February, Drury pointed out that the Queensland Volunteer Force had not been in an efficient state for many years prior to French's arrival. He provided evidence from the 1882 Military enquiry to back his claim. That Committee had found that *the present condition of the force is not satisfactory; that the attendance of officers and men at drill and parade is, as a rule, very irregular; that the force generally is losing ground, and that it cannot under the present system be made efficient for the purposes of defence.* A decision was made to appoint a regular army officer on the active list as Commandant. Drury intimated that he, Lt-Colonel Blaxland, Major Mein and visiting adviser Colonel Scratchley RE, had made that decision. He pointed out that as soon as French had assumed command, he had begun to reorganise the land force so that it was *similar in many features to that which prevails in Canada.* The Government adopted his recommendations and the Defence Bill was laid before Parliament. It did not however become law until 23 December 1884, because of protracted parliamentary debates on another Bill.

Acknowledging that the Force had appeared to be in stasis for the previous seven months, Drury attempted an explanation. Essentially the inability to frame any regulations in the absence of the Defence Act had been the main problem. No recruiting had, or could, take place until it was possible for the Staff to explain the conditions under which the men would serve. Although the Act was now in force in February 1885, and regulations had been framed and even printed, they had not been approved by the Premier who was absent from the colony, and therefore could not take effect. Hinging on the adoption of the new Regulations was the re-

commissioning of all Officers, and a re-organisation of the various corps under the new system. Rather than appear continually negative, Drury assured readers that the Staff had not been sitting idle and in a short time had many projects under way. For the first time it was publicly revealed that the uniform for the Defence Force was to be altered, and that the cloth might already be on its way out from England. New artillery pieces, rifles and ammunition had been ordered. Provision had been made to equip all the Land Defence Force, the new Naval Brigade, the Volunteer corps and the rifle clubs with rifles, a situation that had not been possible previously.

Lt-Colonel Drury obviously harboured resentment for the attacks which had been made on the Officers of the Permanent Staff during 1884. He drew particular attention to Major Richard Moore whom he claimed had been driven out of the Service, despite being a zealous and hardworking Officer. Drury felt an attempt was being made to drive out the remaining Staff. *It looks as if he [Moore] was sacrificed to appease the clamour raised against the Brigade Office...* Moore had subsequently taken a civil service position, that of Police Magistrate at Charleville. In summing up his case Drury attempted to make some gain out of his letter to the paper, urging the men of the new Defence Force to their patriotic duty. *...I appeal to my brother officers and comrades to give the new system a fair trial. Australia is no longer isolated. Greedy eyes are upon her; foreign flags are being planted at her threshold. No one who watches the march of current events can fail to see that the future is pregnant with stormy trials for the great Empire to which we belong. Our kinsmen whose blood is still wet on the banks of the Nile show us that the grand old fighting spirit has not departed from amongst us. Let us not shrink from the task that is before us, but cheerfully assist in the good work. All that I ask for those associated with us for a time in carrying it out is fair play.*

The *Brisbane Courier* was little affected by Drury's plea, believing he had missed the point of the editorial entirely. In a response on 3 February, the newspaper took the Lt-Colonel to task. The paper reminded Drury that the 1882 Military Inquiry had not recommended the appointment of a regular army Commandant, though a recommendation on the salary and rank for such a person had been made. It was also pointed out that although 1882 had been a particularly bad year for the Volunteer Force, in the following year *one of the most successful camps ever held in the colony took place at Lytton*. In 1884, after French's arrival, the split encampments which took place were also well attended, though the siting of one at Westbrook near Ipswich had proved unpopular. The *Courier* demanded to know what had become of those Volunteers who had attended their duty. *It is not the new army that we wish to see, but the old one. This is where we imagine Colonel French is responsible, and with all due deference to Lt-Colonel Drury, we contend that it is 'borne out by facts.'* It was the paper's contention that the men did not believe in their new Commandant, and thus would not follow him. Nor did it believe that a re-organisation of the Force was needed, there having been many of them in the past. *Instead of rooting out existing abuses the official mind seems capable only on knocking down the whole edifice and building it up afresh.*

Drury responded yet again, with a less inspiring and somewhat rambling epistle. The *Courier* fairly well dismissed his comments as irrelevant but began to justify its own position. *Our*

interest is that of the public, which fills the Volunteer ranks, and pays for the maintenance of the force; and on their behalf we must speak when occasion demands speech. Where we differ from our correspondent is in our conception of the nature of the Defence Force. To us it seems to be a body of citizens who have undertaken to submit to a certain degree of military discipline to qualify themselves to defend their country in case of need; of men who are not and who never can become soldiers in the professional sense. The editorial found fault with the advice given to the Government to obtain a professional soldier to command such a Force. *The traditions left by an 'education at Woolwich and Sandhurst' unless counteracted by a great deal of experience in commanding irregulars, would unfit most men for managing colonial Volunteers, at least in time of peace. The difference between Tommy Atkins and a Queensland Volunteer is a radical one, and we fear that the effort to graft the one on the other will result in a very useless hybrid.* It seemed to escape the attention of the *Courier* that Colonel French had considerable experience with irregulars, evidence of which abounded in his well-recorded push across Canada as the first Commissioner of the para-military North West Mounted Police during 1873-74. That hastily assembled force of civilians (only a handful had any military training) trekked across Canada under French's command, against great odds and impossible conditions and established the legend on which the Royal Canadian Mounted Police was built. French's disciplinarian ways may not always have made him the most popular with those under his command, but he certainly had a better and experienced understanding of his command than the *Courier* gave him credit.

Although editorials proclaimed the Volunteer Force was dying under mis-administration, other columns of the *Courier* were reporting a slightly different story. On the evening of February 12, about sixty men attended a meeting at the School of Arts to discuss formation of a purely voluntary rifle corps. The chairman of the meeting, Captain AJ Thynne, recalled a similar meeting in 1867 at the old School of Arts building to form a Volunteer Force, which he had joined. He now proposed the formation of a new corps, with the support of Major Adams and Lt-Colonel Blaxland. Aware of the mixed community feelings, Thynne wished it *distinctly and emphatically understood that they would profess no antagonism to the Defence Force.* The offer of service, with thirty signatures already appended was left on the counter of the School of Arts for a few days before being forwarded to Colonel French. Successful recruiting was not limited however just to a Volunteer company. Applications for the proposed Permanent Force were being taken at the Brigade Office, and although the authorised establishment was sixty-seven, about 100 men had already put forward their names by the second week of February. The new Force was expected to take up their controversial lodgings in Victoria Barracks on Petrie Terrace almost immediately.

The impact of the Soudan campaign

By the second week of February 1885, the newspapers of the Australian colonies were filled with details of the British expedition to the Soudan and many *victorious engagements.* On 12 February, apparently seized with patriotic fervour, the New South Wales government offered a military force for service in the Soudan. The British Government undertook to consider the proposal, and the NSW military immediately began preparations to field a force if the offer was accepted. The news created an intense excitement in the other colonies.

In Queensland, on hearing the news, Colonel French convened a hasty meeting of Officers of the Defence Force in Brisbane. In attendance were Lieutenants-Colonel Drury, Blaxland, and Snelling, Major Webb, Captains MacFarlane, Foxton, Des Voeux, Ricardo, Gannon, and Thynne, and Lieutenant Drake, RN. Major the Honourable Richard Sheridan, an Officer on the unattached list, also attended. French sought their advice on the possibility *of forming a body of men from the members of the present Volunteer and Defence Force, and others of past experience, whose services might be tendered to the British Government.* Captain Ricardo believed that he, with the assistance of Captain Gannon, might be able to raise a corps of mounted infantry 200 strong, particularly because of the current level of unemployment amongst stockmen and other capable riders. Lieutenant Drake felt he might be able to raise a naval brigade of around 100 men. Generally however there was a reluctance to guess at what size force could be raised, because many men were uncertain about the provisions of the Defence Act. French even considered offering the battery of 9-pounder cannon on their way out to the colony be diverted to aid the British cause in Egypt. Finally, on the advice of his officers, French arranged an appointment that day with the colony's Premier, Samuel Griffith to discuss the matter of raising a Queensland contingent.

Presumably after meeting with French, the Queensland Premier telegraphed the New South Wales Acting Colonial Secretary, advising that Queensland should have no difficulty in also raising a contingent if the offer was accepted. The Queensland Government adopted a wait-and-see attitude towards the Soudan crisis, but the same could not be said for the population. Financial offers of assistance towards the expenses of sending a Queensland contingent to Egypt were made to the government, by citizens such as Robert Wilson, who offered to contribute £500. Mr J.S. Lyster offered £1000 towards the equipment of a force of 500 men and 400 horses, which he would undertake to raise with the assistance of the mayors of provincial towns within 14 days. Mr Lyster promised to provide an efficient staff. He further undertook to arrange for the supply of arms and ammunition from England but asked the Queensland Government to provide for the transport of the force to Suekin. Lyster also offered to give each man a £50 bonus upon return of the contingent and £100 to each officer; and to provide medical stores during the sea voyage and to pay a salary of a medical officer to travel with the troops. On 16 February Premier Griffiths telegraphed the Agent-General for Queensland in London with the message *Men wishing to volunteer for Soudan offer services to Colonial Government. Enquire and state by telegraph a whether assistance from Colonial corps is desired by Her Majesty's Government.*

The *Brisbane Courier*, demonstrating that patriotic fever had not tempered good judgement, urged caution in the matter of sending military forces overseas. Recognising the duty of executive government to assume responsibility for situations imposed upon them, the paper was unhappy with the precedent which had been set by the NSW colonial government in committing their colony *to an indefinite expenditure for warlike operations without either asking or obtaining the consent of Parliament.* The paper urged Premier Griffith to call Parliament together to sanction any action it decided upon.

In the meantime the Volunteer Brigade Officer reported that it had received large numbers of applications from Volunteers and others willing to go to Soudan. It was suggested that those willing to proceed on active service who were not already Volunteers should enrol in the Volunteer Force so that they might be trained and ready when the marching orders were received. Such was the interest in all things military, that a large number of spectators watched the weekly night parade of A Company, 2nd Regiment at the drill shed in Ipswich on Tuesday 17 February. Captain Ackerley was in command, and the men were inspected by Captain Des Voeux of the Staff. Des Voeux explained the proposed new Defence regulations and the men went through good drill. Afterwards Captain Ackerley, Lieutenant Smith, the medical officer Dr F.O. Hodson and fourteen other ranks volunteered for service in the Soudan. Many others already in the Force also volunteered. The crisis also had an effect on the formation of the new Volunteer rifle corps. Forty signatures were quickly collected and the list remained open until the evening of 17 February for further signatures. A rumour that only men who were good rifle shots would be selected was denied. The corps was to be based, as all others were, on the British Volunteer corps. The proposed course of instruction was advertised to include the *usual field and rifle exercises and also a course of musketry instruction and practice.*

Patriotism however, was not the only motivating factor in offers of military service. A correspondent signing himself 'Carpe Diem' wrote to the *Courier* on 17 February pushing a rarely seen point of view. Urging the Queensland Government to quickly seize the moment and offer troops to the Soudan, the correspondent also wanted some inducement to men, allegedly numbering thousands, who were wishing for, and would gladly accept, any assistance to leave Queensland or the other colonies. 'Carpe Diem' revealed himself to be a digger since 1854. *I am quite ready to go for anything in the 'scrimmaging' line, and don't care one 'twopence' whether its a "Yah yah" or any other foreigner bar Cousin Yank and the "jolly French", and I am sure, as a participator, that there are not hundreds, but thousands, of us who now find our occupations gone, who have done the 'roll-ups' of the Australia from the Stockade, Buckland, Turon & c., to latter day turn outs, who would gladly go in for the Arab gentlemen if we had a chance.* Alluding to his Maori wars experience under the *brave Von Demskey*[sic] the writer believed men of his calibre would well be able to *hump our drums, carry out tucker, and fight besides.* He suggested Egypt would not be an extraordinary matter to men *who have footed it backwards and forwards from the Barrier Ranges to Yam Creek, and I think we should make as smart soldiers as your counter-jumping Volunteers.* Obviously demoralised and a little bitter about the unemployment situation, the writer finished off with a challenge ... *if you think the colony would be glad to get rid of us, as we should be to turn our backs on the colony, why say the word, and we will come to the scratch in any quantity.*

This independent, almost mercenary figure was not alone in Queensland at the time. There were numbers in the following months who proposed 'irregular' or 'guerrilla' corps when war seemed imminent. Colonel French did not recommend the acceptance of any of them, believing the discipline of the Defence Act was necessary to provide him with a Force capable of defending the colony. Men like the anonymous 'Carpe Diem' may well have volunteered for a Soudan contingent but it is unlikely they would have joined or contributed to any of the Defence Force or Volunteer Corps.

The Queensland government had still not decided to offer troops for the Soudan by 19 February, awaiting more information from the Imperial Government on which to base its decision. The South Australian Government inquired whether Queensland was in favour of sending a united Australia Brigade, and Griffith gave tacit agreement argument without committing the Government to any particular action. Although no invitation to enlist was yet been issued by the Queensland authorities, several offers of service were allegedly tendered by volunteer corps. The *Courier* noted *...men of all sorts and conditions are constantly calling at the Brigade Office and offering themselves as volunteers. No steps, of course, can be taken until instructions are received and all that has been done is to take the names of those who have presented themselves, who will be notified to attend if their services should be required. Of course, in any case, trained men will have the preference.* Meanwhile the Premier turned his attention towards the new Defence Force Regulations. No doubt the importance of quickly adopting the regulations for Permanent Force, Defence Force and Volunteers had been impressed upon him by Colonel French.

The matter of the removal of the Police from Victoria Barracks still sparked some comments in the local newspapers. Acknowledging the Permanent Force must be housed somewhere, the *Courier* did not see that it needed to be at the Barracks, though it conceded *It would probably be most convenient to have them quartered in Brisbane when they are fully disciplined.* The paper was unreliably led to understand that some of the Permanent Force would be used to perform certain duties now discharged by the police, much as the British Army garrison of the 1860s had been. Unfortunately no one bothered to publicly correct this notion, and the *Courier* continued *to hope that they may be largely used for police work.*

The march of current events

The British expedition in the Soudan was not a battle with one of the major European powers. It was more what has latterly been described as one of 'Queen Victoria's little wars'. Confrontation between Russia and Britain over conquests in Afghanistan was not far off however. In February 1885, Russia was reportedly moving 30000 men to the South Caspian, which in many minds equated with a movement to Afghanistan. *All this may mean nothing,* ran the editorial of the *Courier* on 23 February, *but an attempt to gain a point by threatening, for it undoubtedly amounts to that. But when threats between two nations are accompanied by movements of large bodies of troops, they become dangerous. And England dare not yield to an overt menace in India where she is watched by her millions of subject natives, who are not reconciled to her rule as the conquered Tartars are to that of the Czar.* In the face of a possible international crisis, the effect the Soudan crisis had on the colony was considered to be a valuable lesson. *We know now that there would be a ready response to any appeal for aid from the mother country, because when we find our people so willing to help in an affair like that of Soudan, we are sure of the uprising that would answer any real cry for help.*

On 24 February, the Secretary of State for the Colonies telegraphed the Governor of Queensland advising *... the probability that the military operations now in progress may be suspended during the hotter months of the summer has precluded the immediate employment*

of any force not actually prepared and equipped like that tendered by NSW. They will, however, consider carefully and without delay what arrangements may best be made for employing an Australian Force at a later period of the year, and I am glad to understand that the question of uniting the Colonial contingents into one Australian Brigade is being considered. The response, when made public, quelled some of the jingoistic enthusiasm and only a few individuals ventured forth from Queensland to join the New South Wales contingent.

The new Regulations for the military establishment of the colony were issued on 25 February. The *Courier* thought their release to have come at an opportune moment. The despatch of the NSW contingent to the Soudan had been *the means of calling out a vast amount of latent enthusiasm in all the Australian colonies, and it may be hoped that the martial fervour elicited by the action of Mr Dalley [NSW] will be replaced on its subsidence by a steady determination on the part of the colonies to organise such measures of defence as will place these communities beyond the reach of insult or attack.* In Queensland under the Act and Regulations the Defence Force was making a new departure which it was hoped *be the means of supplying the colony with a numerous, well disciplined, and thoroughly efficient force.* Knowing full well the laborious and painstaking task French had undertaken in drafting the Regulations, did not stop the newspaper taking another shot at the Commandant. *Much, however, must depend on the personal qualities of the commander. A born leader of men like Garibaldi can raise an army that knows no law or regulation but the will of its general, whereas an individual who is incapable, and unable to secure the confidence and respect of those under him, will prove a failure, although provided with an ideally perfect set of regulations.*

The paper went on to discuss the virtues and failings of the regular army soldier and the volunteer. The identified problem was to combine the intelligence, initiative, and independence of the Volunteer with the ready obedience of the regular soldier. A stern warning was issued to the officer corps of the new Defence Force. *...if those in command are out of sympathy with the colonial modes of thought, and forget that they are not dealing with Tommy Atkins, as the typical private is called, but with men whose sense of independence is almost too keen, it is to be feared that disgust will be generated, and if the service once becomes unpopular it will be simply impossible to keep up the strength to an effective number.*

The warnings were apparently unnecessary, as armed with definite regulations recruiting for the Defence Force began in earnest. A recruiting advertisement for the Brisbane Engineers provides a relatively rare glimpse of that process at work in 19th century Queensland. Requiring only a few men, the Engineers preference was for men already with knowledge of military drill. A minimum height of 5 feet 6 inches was necessary. The advertisement appealed to *mechanics and others desirous of self-improvement.* Practical instruction in military engineering including bridging and field work, was promised as was *submarine mining (including Electricity, and c.,).* Field surveying, telegraphy and signalling by Heliograph and lime light were also activities that would be instructed to new recruits.

Explanations were often needed when discussing the effects of the Regulations. Colonel French addressed the Engineers on the subject on 10 March. He mentioned that some misunderstanding appeared to exist regarding troops being sent out of Queensland. He made it

known that all able-bodied colonists, whether in the Force or not, were liable to be ordered out by the Governor to defend their country, and that was all that was contemplated by the new Act. French considered it absurd to suppose that the Governor or anybody else could send them to the Soudan, which appeared to be a fear held by some.

The colony's Agent-General in London had in the meantime been summoned to the War Office where Her Majesty's Government were anxious to impress that they had not refused the offer of other colonial troops for the Soudan, but were delayed in accepting them from a military point of view. The Agent-General reported to his Government that the War Office appeared likely to use colonial troops in its autumn operations. Other international events soon became more pressing. Reuter's Agency reported on 13 March that plans to dispatch 72 000 men, representing 2 army corps, had been made in Great Britain and India, as a result of possible hostilities with Russia. This kept the enthusiasm for defence measures active in Queensland. New corps such as the Queensland Naval Brigade were quickly enrolled to their establishment level, and uniforms and accoutrements obtained. Many corps, bolstered by substantial numbers of recruits, began to ready themselves for the annual Easter Encampment of training and instruction. It was expected that 600-700 men would be in camp over the Easter holidays.

Quite dramatically the fortunes of the Queensland Defence Force appeared to have changed within a few short months. It was to continue to improve as hostilities with Russia seemed to become almost inevitable, but that story can be related at another time. It is arguable however, that the change evident in the Queensland military forces actually began when Colonel French arrived in the Colony. Statistics would appear to bear out that hypothesis. French claimed a 207% increase in the numbers of effective volunteers within his first twelve months, noting the Force stood at 1097 of all ranks by the end of December 1884. As the force had only increased by two companies to that date, it is obvious that a large percentage of existing Volunteers must have returned to the ranks, a fact not recorded in newspaper reports. From the time of Colonel French's arrival in January 1884, to the end of June 1885, there were twenty-one new Corps formed. Of these, only two were formed in 1884, one in Brisbane the other in Cooktown. By June 1885 the Queensland military force had increased in membership by 456% since November 1882. Although the membership of the Volunteers increased by around 200 men during 1883, it dropped back to the earlier figure of just under 530 men by January 1884.

Under the new Defence Act, five new Defence Force companies that had been planned earlier, were established between February and March 1885. These included A Battery, Permanent Force; Head-quarters Band; and D Company, 1st Queenslanders in Brisbane; B Company Townsville, and A Company Charters Towers. In addition, services were offered and accepted from the Brisbane Grammar School Cadet Corps, the Brisbane Volunteer Rifles, and the Brisbane Company of Mounted Infantry. The formation of the latter two is likely to have been the end result of the burst of adventurous patriotism prompted by the prospect of going to the Soudan.

From 14 April the Governor called out the Defence Force for active service, in the belief that war between the British and Russian empires was inevitable. Almost immediately additional

offers of service flooded the Brigade Office. Not all were accepted, but to the end of May when the scare had evaporated, the service of one Defence Force Company and seven Volunteer companies were sanctioned. Only two of the eight were Brisbane-based, the remainder were from the country areas. Even after the war scare, and up until the Muster at the end of June, another three country corps were formed, one Defence Force and two Volunteer.

At the Muster of June 1885 the Force numbered 2382 men of all ranks. These figures were based on effective men, not on establishment levels. Since French's arrival in January 1884 there had been a 450% increase in the membership of the Force to June 1885. The *Brisbane Courier's* earlier fears that the Force might again collapse proved groundless, and under French's command it never looked back.

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