

JOBING AT WEEDON.

The only parallel to the way in which the clothing department of the army is conducted at Weedon is the manner in which agricultural operations are managed by the servants of the Crown in the forest of Hainault. There is a strong family resemblance between the revelations made by Colonel Boldero and Mr. Caird; especially the common drainage of the public purse by the public servants in the two cases. The Weedon narrative is as pretty an historiette of successful and systematic peculation as these latter days have produced. The story opens with the appointment of a store-keeper. There were two rival candidates for the post, and Colonel Boldero thus stated their respective qualifications, and upon whom the lot fell.

"One of them was an old public servant of great experience and been intelligence, a practical man, but one whose character was not good. The other man not perhaps quite so keen but one who had nevertheless proved himself to be an excellent public servant. The head of the department was consulted, and asked which of those two men he would appoint. He said he should prefer the man whose character was irreproachable, and that man was not selected."

The dispensers of good things, having made this extraordinary choice, very consistently left their nominee and favourite absolute master of his lucrative situation without exercising any control over him, or making the slightest inquiry into his proceedings for the space of two years and a half. Mr. Elliot was "monarch of all he surveyed" at Weedon, just as Mr. Clutton was of the groves of Hainault; from which he drew a revenue equal to the awoken salaries of two Cabinet Ministers. What it was that awoke the suspicion of the London authorities we are not told, but the thought at length struck them that a little supervision of the establishment at Weedon might be prudent, and a "practical man" was sent down to look after Mr. Elliot, and into his books. A single peep satisfied the practical man that he wanted the help of ten more practical men to enable him to unravel the web which he found woven to his hands. From October to the following March the eleven worked at the books with such little progress that in the latter month the War Office sent down an auxiliary in the person of Captain Marten, the head of their Statistical Department, who no sooner reached the spot than he sent for ten additional clerks to reinforce the corps already employed. The reader will conclude that now at least a sufficient arithmetical power was accumulated to deal with any amount of confusion into which the books of an office ever fell. But Mr. Elliot seems to have been as clever at constructing a labyrinth as Dædalus himself, and Captain Marten, with his regiment of accountants, had no better success than his predecessors. A Commissary-General was now despatched, who took the field with eight assistant Commissaries; notwithstanding which strong measure it is enough to say that the books of Weedon are unbalanced at the present hour. Nay more, one of the defeated accountants has stated to the Committee of the House of Commons that the problem he and his associates were engaged in was not to be solved by any amount of labour or skill in book-keeping. Mr. Munro declared

That it was impossible any number of clerks could ever render the Government a true and faithful account of the amount of goods which were received and issued at that establishment; that documents were missing, no day-books kept, and that there was no check whatsoever upon the issue of goods.

Now let us follow Colonel Boldero to that portion of his piquant narrative, without which we might be apt to conclude that the mighty maze of Weedon was without a plan. It is necessary to see what doings were concealed under the wilderness of figures which "the old public servant, of great experience and keen intelligence," had involved his department. The anecdote of the boots is a match for the best story told of the Irish jobbers of the last century.

It also appeared during the years 1856-7-800,000 pairs of boots had been received at Weedon, and that 170,000 pairs had been sold, but where they had gone to it was impossible to ascertain. A person named Levy indeed, who had made a large fortune, and who was rather shy about coming forward to give evidence, had stated that he had

bought 20,000 pairs, and that he had paid for them at an auction at the rate of only about 5s. 5d. notwithstanding that they had cost the Government from 8s. 6d. to 8s. 9d. per pair. Those boots bought at 5s. 5d. had been resold to persons who were in the habit of contracting for the army, and one of the witnesses who had been examined had honestly stated that he had supplied five militia regiments with some of boots thus cheaply purchased, and that the Government had paid for them at a rate of 12s. a pair.

The Government have been driving a profitable trade in the capacity of military boot-makers. They make boots, or buy them from the makers (it is the same thing) for 8s. 9d. a pair, sell by auction for 5s. 5d. a pair, and repurchase them from the Jew buyers at the rate of 12s. a pair. Such was the commerce that flourished under the superintendence of Mr. Elliot, in whom a blind confidence was placed, which would have been unjustifiable had it been reposed in Aristides himself.

In the matter of kits the system pursued at the notable shop in question was no less admirable than in the article of the boots, commodious to the Hebrews. If the Jews are excluded from Parliament, they are certainly compensated in some measure by the handsome share the Government allows them in the pickings of such places as Weedon.

It had been laid down as a rule that the soldier on joining his regiment should receive 5l. in the shape of bounty, 2l. of which sum he has to get in hand, 3l. being kept to provide his kit; the actual cost of which however, was only 2l. 11s. 3d. Now, a man named Isaac was the person who was to supply these kits, and he (Colonel Boldero) had in his possession a return which showed that a number of regiments had been compelled to return the kits which they received, in consequence of their being of inferior quality. The effect of such a system was to relax the discipline of regiments, for, if the soldier were supplied with bad articles, it was impossible to keep him in a state of due subordination.

We are curious to know who pockets the difference between the price paid for a soldier's kit and that which he is charged for it? Who fobs the 8s. 9d.? But even this sum does not represent the fraud practised on the soldier, the kit he pays 3l. for not being worth even the 2l. 11s. 3d. which cunning Isaac receives from the Government. The kits supplied by Isaac must have been of very inferior merits indeed when the regimental authorities returned them, as they are not believed to be particular to a fault when only comforts of the private soldier are in question.

We have however, to have a full inquiry into the abuses of Weedon with all the solemnity of a Royal Commission, General Peel having very properly and frankly assented to Colonel Boldero's motion. It is satisfactory to learn that the Weedon establishment is to be swept away, as well as to hear from the Secretary for War that he has already abolished the clothing system and kit system, without waiting for the results of investigations which must be tedious in proportion to the extent and inveteracy of the corruptions that call for them. These are valuable reforms as far as they go, substantial benefits to the army, and cheap improvements of the defences of the nation.

MILITARY COLONISTS IN INDIA.

Seldom has a question submitted to the Committee of the House of Commons been submitted to a fuller and more anxious scrutiny than that which now engages the attention of the Members assembled twice a week in Committee room No. 18. The great point at issue is the advantage possibly accruing to India from the encouragement of colonization in the most salubrious parts of the country, meaning "by colonization" not the introduction of European labourers, but the application of English science and skill the English capital to the development of the resources of the land. As far as the evidence has gone, the proposition has been determined in the affirmative, and the Legislature will consequently be called upon ere long to insist that the Government of India shall practically open the country to Englishmen, by making roads and canals, and introducing a system of jurisprudence, which will afford a guarantee for the security of life and property, and the exercise of

even-handed justice.

Some weeks ago we mentioned the gist of evidence of Major General TREMENEERE, of the Bengal Army, in respect to the location of European Soldiers in the Himalayas, and the feasibility of rearing their children there, so that they might become good Soldiers or civil employes. It was eminently satisfactory. We have now the advantage of reading notes of the yet unpublished evidence of Captain OUCHTERLONY, of the Madras Engineers, and this is equally conclusive in favour of the establishment of soldiers in the hills of Southern India.

Captain OUCHTERLONY has had rare opportunities of ascertaining the fitness of the hill districts for a certain class of cultivation, and for the residence of Europeans. He has made surveys. He has made a trigonometrical survey. He has been in Bombay, Bengal, Madras, China, Singapore, Malacca Ceylon, the Cape of Good Hope, Aden, &c. For twenty-four years he has been actively employed as an Engineer or Surveyor. He knows much of tracts of land elevated considerably above the level of the sea, such as the Neilgherries and Kooradahs in Coimbatore, Wynaad in Malabar, Coorg, the Shevarroy, Collanulleys, &c., Salem, the southern part of Mysore, and hill station near Bellary, the Pulney hills in Madras, and the uplands and mountain chains of Travancore, Baramahl, the north of Coimbatore, &c.

Now what is the result of this dispassionate examination of the colonization question by this intelligent Officer?

Captain OUCHTERLONY says that if the hills are elevated near the sea you may have a very pleasant climate at 4,000 feet above the level; but far in the interior 6,000 feet give a pure European climate. He considers all the hill districts adapted for colonization. Europeans, it is true, could not perform much manual labour in the low country, but they may nevertheless, if of robust constitutions, and the abstemious and temperate habits, superintend the operations on estates, whether of cotton, cereals, indigo, sugar, hemp &c., without loss of health or a deterioration of personal vigour if near a hill station to which they could occasionally resort. The most valuable and important of the hill districts are the Neilgherries, whether considered in regard to climate riches, of soil, cheapness and abundance of the necessaries of life. Very shortly these districts will be brought by a main line of rail within a few hours' journey of Cochin, a magnificent harbour on the Western Coast—the will give them a great commercial value; but it is a *Military point of view that the Neilgherries, with railways their bases, will be of the greatest importance to the Government.* Masses of European Troops can be located in these positions, where, while available to be moved at the shortest notice upon any point menaced by hostility, whether along the coast or in the heart of the British territory, their health and efficiency would be preserved, while their condition socially and morally, would be in every way ameliorated. The produce of the Neilgherries comprehends every thing needed for the sustenance of many thousand Troops and settlers. The barley for malting) and hops grow there are of excellent quality. Much beer has already been made in the hills and consumed by the Regiments—"there was not one Regiment that did not report favourably of it"—the 15th Hussars, the 51st, the 94th, all used it—it superseded, in a great measure, the use of the deleterious arrack so much drunk by the men. It cost ninepence the gallon, and as the Soldiers had to pay for the beer they were at liberty to drink it or leave it alone. They preferred it to the beer imported from England.

"I would take for examples of the efficiency of the proposed change the case of young Recruits arriving at Madras for the Artillery or Infantry. If they have to join their Depots at Madras itself they at once enter upon a train of instruction and duty which the novel and oppressive climate renders most irksome and unbearable. The *crux* of their life, confined as they are within the walls of their Barracks between 8 and 8 a.m., and 5 or 6 p.m., with only drill in the morning and evening to chequer the monotony of their existence, soon induces habits of intemperance, and the Regimental records would show that premature loss of life, or of constitution is the result. But if their Depots were on the hills how different

would be the history of the Recruit. His drill and training carried on, as in England, in the middle of the day in a bracing and exhilarating climate, agreeable and congenial occupation, either in gardening, cricket, football, or other English amusements and athletic exercises; he would at the expiration of his term of instruction; be a far more able-bodied man than when he first landed, while his mind would be toned to receive better impressions of the Service and duty he had undertaken than any he could have gleaned in the tap-room of the canteen or in the Camp sutlers' hut. It is not too much to say that, by this mode of operation, disembarking the Recruits and fresh unacclimatized Troops at Cochin, whence in a few hours they could be conveyed (the railway having been completed) to the summit of the hills, hundreds of young lives would be annually preserved to the public service; a result which, apart from the consideration of humanity, would exhibit an absolute saving to the State, calculating that each Recruit as he lands in India is worth to the public £100—a sum which would go far to repay the interest of any amount expended upon buildings erected to furnish the necessary shelter and accommodation. Upon the same principle I would argue that it must be manifestly for the interest of the State that all instruction and training, whether of European Officers or men, which involve out of doors employment, should, if possible, be carried on in a climate where the health of its servants can be preserved, and where much more work can be got out of them than in a locality where the temperature engenders lassitude, and predisposes to illness, if any undue exertion, though restricted to the few hours of the day when the sun's rays are not oppressive, be made. Therefore, I would have the training for the Artillery, for Engineering duties, and for other professional employment, all pursued on the Neilgherries, instead of as now near the town of Madras."

Pursuing the consideration of the advantages offered by these bills for the location of masses of European Soldiers, I would submit there is no district in India which can boast so many. Supplies of all kinds are procurable from the surrounding districts to an almost unlimited extent, and when the railway is completed, at an exceedingly moderate cost; this we have proved with the 74th Highlanders; the greater demand is for supplies the more rapidly the natives seemed to bring them in, and as the men would not require in so good a climate, the number of native servants to attend upon them, which are indispensable in the plains; while they would be able by the work of their own hands to produce their own vegetables out of plots of ground which it would be wise to allot to each Regiment to brew their own beer, make their own bread, and even pursue their respective trades in meeting Regimental requirements, there can be no doubt that a Battalion of European or Artillery would cost the State less in the aggregate while stationed in the hills than when cantoned in the low country.

The 74th were sent to the Neilgherries when fresh from England, and there never was a sick man—sickness, indeed, was unknown among them; they were able to drill at any time in the day; pieces of garden ground were given to them, and they were perfectly happy, because fully and profitably employed. The Engineer Officers occasionally had large working parties of the Highlanders, and gave them three shillings a day. They became most useful servants of the State, as well as trained Soldiers, and were actually employed in building their own barracks.

All this is very cheering, corroborating as it does the opinions of other able and experienced men. We should add that although Captain Ouchterlony does not go so far as General Tremeneere as to recommend an increase of marriages for the purpose of augmenting the European population in the hills, he is strongly of opinion that European children should be reared there, and that the prospect of their being healthfully and advantageously employed would popularise the Service in India, and materially aid the efforts of the Recruiting Officer in this country.

In a few weeks the Colonisation Committee will have closed its sittings, and we shall look forward very hopefully to its Report and the practical results that will ensue.—(U. S. Gazette.)