

## LORD DERBY ON OUR MILITARY ORGANIZATION.

When ever Lord Derby speaks he secures a favorable hearing, because he is certain to utter manly English sense and sentiment. Although he has shown himself on many an occasion a stout party man, he has never given up to party what was meant for mankind. Belonging to the cooler order of Conservative statesmen, he never or rarely exaggerates, but, measuring his language, he remembers the past as well as the present, and speaks with an eye to bygone as well as future history. Moreover, he has the great merit of recognizing and not shirking facts, however distasteful they may be to his mind, and he is ready to grapple with them, not as an enthusiast who sees only one side, but as a man of business, sober practical, who believes that the means adopted must apply to actual exigencies, not to fantastic cases easily conjured up by a vivid imagination. In addressing the Liverpool Volunteers on Wednesday he displayed the qualities we have described, and never transgressed the limits of reasonable appreciation. His picture of the time—“We live in an age when armies have assumed more gigantic proportions than in any period known to us in history”—is strictly accurate. It is repulsive, not to say abhorrent, to his nature, but he manfully declares that “we must accept the fact.” And English, without distinction of party, indorses his statement. Germany, wisely mindful of a threatened revenge, has added considerably to her already enormous disposable forces. France, supposed to be intent on recovering lost Provinces, and extorting an equivalent for a huge indemnity, has, after her own fashion, imitated Germany, while Russia, not open to attack like her great neighbor or the recently stricken Western Power, has entered on a system of recruitment and organization which she hopes will give her a numerical preponderance. Austria is not behind-hand, for Hungary alone supplies a formidable native army of renowned fighting men, while even Turkey has striven, not altogether unsuccessfully, to imitate the greater European powers. Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, with more or less success, follow in the same track; and Lord Derby is amply justified when he says that “never since the world began have such masses been drilled and disciplined for the purpose of war.” He looks on it as a reaction, a recurrence to the practice of primitive communities; he regards it as “injurious, almost disastrous to civilization,” but he accepts a fact which no nation can overlook without peril. No doubt there is only a superficial likeness between the army of Von Moltke and the soldiers of Arminius, and only a fanciful resemblance between the disciplined and organized levies of our time and those of a primitive era; yet, beyond question, the state of Europe warrants the language used by Lord Derby.

Nor can we be indifferent to its existence. Without imitating Germany, France, or Russia, we must approximate towards their status. A maritime power, we rely mainly on the iron walls of England, not only to keep her safe, but to guard, defend, and, if need be, increase an empire which has possessions in every land washed by ocean waters. Still, ships alone cannot do the work. They secure command of the sea, protect commerce, keep open communications between the island centre of power and distant provinces. Beyond the indispensable fleet, always our ark of safety,

we must have troops; and so widely extended dominion involves the penalties of greatness, so eloquently described by Lord Derby, we must provide for periods when the regular army, in larger proportions than usual, may be absent from our shores. How can that be accomplished save by raising and organizing those auxiliary forces which, dropped out of sight so long, were recalled on a memorable occasion nearly fifteen years ago? Taught by experience, we revived the militia, and, spurred on by the teachings of contemporary history, we established the volunteers. The country would not submit then, or now, to those sacrifices required for the construction of a powerful army based on the German, which is, indeed, the old English type; the expedients set up in its place are more suited to modern nations. Lord Derby is quite right in cautioning his hearers not to overrate the military efficiency of our defensive forces. They are makeshifts; they do not correspond to the soldier's ideal; they are superior, as we believe, to the French mobiles; they are inferior to the German Landwehr; but they constitute the only kind of supplementary force which public opinion will endure. It is true, as Lord Derby says, that in general culture and capacity the surpass the average found in the line, and it is probably that, like the American levies in the Succession War, they would excel professional soldiers in the art of shifting for themselves. But, when all these allowances are made, the militia and volunteers represent inchoate forces, and, if ever they are wanted, the work of making them really effective will have to be done there and then. It would be wrong, however, to suppose that, as a nation, we do not stand in a better plight than we did in 1858. During the fifteen years which have passed since General Peel issued his famous permissive circular, scores of thousands have not only undergone an elementary military training, but have learned to handle the rifle so skilfully as to produce trained shots whose average performances equal, if they do not surpass, those of the regulars. That alone is an immense gain, all the greater because it rests on a basis of elementary drill. Nevertheless, if war broke out to-morrow, the home defensive army, apart from the establishment, would have to be created, a feat no minister could perform unless he had ample time. That is an aspect of this important question upon which Lord Derby is wholly silent; yet it is ever present to the minds of all who take a serious view of our military position.

In the present state of public opinion, perhaps always, we shall go on as we have gone on for nearly two centuries, trusting to fortune, British pluck and the energies of an hour, to parry the blows of emergency. Our sagacity and practical vigour are almost absorbed in politics and trade, excepting, of course, the navy, which is organized, nourished, and sustained on sound principles. We are sometimes described as a warlike but not a military nation, meaning that we are always ready to defend ourselves or our belongings anywhere on the earth, improvising the means as we go forward, and yielding, in a contest, only to indisputable necessity. While we maintain a navy on a basis of long sighted calculation, preparing for probable war and possible contingencies, our military forces are kept just abreast, occasionally below, actual everyday needs. In that respect we differ from all great Powers, the chief reason being that we are girdled and guarded by the sea. Another is the rare necessity which impels us to

take part in Continental wars, and the apparent remoteness of a danger, which, nevertheless, may come at any moment and find us relatively unprepared as we were in 1827 and 1854. But probably the main effective reason is that “desire to get on industriously and socially,” that “wish to get settled early in some permanent employment,” to which Lord Derby referred, and we may add that British dislike of restraint which ages of independence have fostered and confirmed. Otherwise, the advantages embodied in the idea of making the army “something like a great training school,” where order, punctuality, obedience, discipline, readiness to cope with sudden demands, in one word, duty in its largest sense, might and should be taught, would not have escaped the notice of a practical community. Lord Derby lightly touched on this “favorite idea of many people who speculate on military matters,” and dismissed it with the remark that he had “always been sceptical” as to the plan we have described “getting itself realized on a large scale.” His scepticism is founded on a correct appreciation of British human nature. The opposite proceedings, which he so rightly approved, that of meeting danger and hard tasks by an outburst of voluntary spirit—suits at least existing opinion better than any largely forecasting systematized preparation. He spoke of an eagerness to serve on the Gold Coast as if it were only on the part of the officers, but he might have added that there was not less promptitude among the men. So long as that spirit lasts, he said, so long as a sense of public duty is kept alive, “defects of organization may, indeed, give us trouble and inconvenience, but we need not doubt that we shall come right in the end.” Yet it would be well to remember that in a real and sudden ordeal involving the very life of the country, we should suffer more than trouble and inconvenience by relying on patriotic forces improvised to encounter a stupendous peril.

THE NOVGOROD RUSSIAN MONITOR.—The *Borsen Zeitung* gives a description of the first vessel of the future Russian Black Sea fleet—the monitor Novgorod. It resembles a huge circular kettle of more than 100 ft. diameter, and only rises a foot and a half out of the water. In the midst of it is a turret a fathom high and seven fathoms in diameter, with two 11 inch steel guns fitted to a moveable platform. The Novgorod is set in motion by six screws, and in the trial trip it moved at the rate of six and a half knots an hour. When fully equipped it draws 12 ft. 4 in. of water at the stem and 13 ft. 4 in. at the stern. The total cost of the construction of this new sea monster and of its conveyance from St. Petersburg, where it was built, to Nikolaïoff is 2,500,000 roubles. Since the naval review held by the Emperor of Russia last August, at which 18 ironclads, including six frigates, three turret-ships, and seven monitors, and 30 other ships were present, an ironclad corvette, the German Admiral, has been launched at St. Petersburg. The engines of this vessel are stated to be of 6,300 horse-power, and its plates were constructed in the factories of the Russian Admiralty.

The canton of Neuchâtel, Switzerland, has resolved to place a portrait of the late Prof. Agassiz in his legislative hall.