

## CORRESPONDENCE.

*The Editor does not hold himself responsible for the Editor's expressions of opinion in communications addressed to the VOLUNTEER REVIEW.*

## THE FRENCH CAVALRY—1870.

## LETTER NO. 2.

After the futile disaster which attended the first employment of the French cavalry in the war, no one was willing to accept the responsibility of having given the orders which led to so disastrous a result; and as the same misconception of orders happened at Mouzon, at Rezonville, and also at other places (while our own shortcomings at Balaclava are still so fresh in my memory) I cannot do better than give Colonel Bonie's own words; he says: "When an aide-de-camp conveys the order to charge to a cavalry officer, he must not seem in too great a hurry, for the instinctive idea of the officer is to obey at once, without as it were, taking time to reflect, as before all he is afraid of being accused of slowness or cowardice. All this is extremely natural, and if one is not careful to ascertain exactly the object to be gained and also to reconnoitre the ground, you entail the destruction of the troops engaged."

Now the cavalry was sacrificed for what? to save infantry and give it time to retreat—well a small portion of one regiment was saved, but at the cost of three times as many men and horses as there were foot soldiers saved; and there was no retreat but a rout, for the whole corps d'armee fled pell mell.

Reichshoffen was the direction taken, at Niederbromm orders were given to make for Saverne as a rallying point; and officers and soldiers, generals, cannons and waggons all in one disorderly mob, pushed along the road all night, arriving between the 6th and 7th August. Naturally it was expected that now order would be restored, when suddenly the parade call sounded, and the cavalry at once mounted and marched without rest, by Phalsbourg to Sarrobourg; how they were to live was a question which presented itself to the minds of most, for the enemy's country had captured everything at the battles of Wissenbourg and Frœschwiller; fortunately they excited sympathy from the peasantry who fed them. Arrived at Sarrobourg, regiments were reformed, and returns of killed and wounded sent in—but at midday on the 8th the order was given to saddle and bridle, and retreat to Lunneville; where it was hoped everything required would be supplied—hardly however had the unfortunate and weary troops arrived, when the German cavalry were again upon them, and cooking pots had to be emptied, forage taken from the horses, and bridling up with all haste the retreat continued by Colombey, Beaumont, Neufchâteau, and Joinville—finally the corps d'armee of Marshal McMahon reached Chalons on the 20th August.

Now what was the part played by the French Cavalry in this long retreat, simply nil, for they neither obtained information nor fought; it seemed to be a mere trial of speed, the only thought, to escape being cut off.

The route was continually being changed, the rations never came up until a late hour, and were then generally short in quantity. Moreover, owing to the bad habit of not quartering themselves in the villages, they got but little rest. During the month of August it rained incessantly and they had for camping grounds, fields under water. The earth was so soaked, that the picketing pegs had no hold: they had neither shelter nor straw to sleep on, and owing to the heavy rain, could neither light fires, nor dry clothes. The horses were equally miserable. The wind blew away a portion of their scanty rations, and pressing together, with their backs up and their heads out, they endeavoured to protect themselves against the weather. Every morning they were obliged to march, and men and horses left the species of bog in which they were encamped, stiff, tired, and out of spirits. How much better the Germans understood the art of war. Aware of the extreme importance of preserving above all things the strength of their troops, they quartered them on the inhabitants. Immediately on their arrival, the men were housed and the horses put into barns; in this manner they rested and dried themselves, were well fed, and in the best condition to continue the struggle.

By the French system of bivouacking, they imagined they lessened the cost of war for the inhabitants, but such is not the case, for soldiers who have to bivouac, lay hands on all the wood and straw that can be found for cooking and camping purposes. It would therefore be less expensive for a peasant to give a place at his fire, as he would then avoid waste.

Besides all this if you do away with tents you lessen the amount carried by the horse, and could thus get more work out of him, and you would enable him to rest himself by putting him under shelter every night.

The campaign is about to enter a fresh phase, but before giving a description of it, we will discuss the part played by the cavalry in the battles around Metz.

VIEILLE Moustache.

## THE MILITARY COLLEGE.

*To the Editor of the VOLUNTEER REVIEW.*

SIR,—Could you give your readers some information as to the West Point School, its history and results? I think that in view of the Military College which is about to be established, any information about a similar establishment would be very interesting to the Force at the present time.

It seems to me that many people are carried away with the idea that the graduates of such a college would have no openings in

life, except as engineers or soldiers, but on consideration this does not seem to be reasonable; the mixture of French and English cadets should be a practical advantage in the study of each others' languages, and an education which, in addition to the more especially military branches, would probably comprise modern languages, mathematics, history, both civil and military, drawing chemistry and geology, and should be considered equal to a University Degree and should have the same privileges, such for instance as reducing the law course from five to three years, it should also reduce the time of study for surveyors and architects and perhaps also in the medical course.

I think that men in these occupations and professions who had the advantage of a thorough military education would be found to the fore in the country's time of need of great advantage.

May 9, 1874.

C.

*To the Editor of the VOLUNTEER REVIEW.*

SIR,—I wonder whether the last resolutions of the Dominion Rifle Association in reference to the Wimbledon Team met with your approval?

The principle laid down is to select representatives for one year on the basis of the previous year's shooting.

As you have not hitherto considered my opinion on such matters of any value, I quote from the remarks of a well known shot in the Hamilton Times of last week: "Not one of the resolutions is to be commended. The first is directly contrary to the wishes of the several Provincial Associations and will be decidedly unsatisfactory to the riflemen of the Dominion generally. However, the law has been laid down and we presume the Provincial Associations must either abide by it or decline to furnish representatives. The third resolution is simply absurd. The competition is to take place twelve months before the Wimbledon meeting, and it is hard to say where the members of the team will be by that time, or in what condition to shoot. These resolutions, on their face appear to have been passed by a body of men to whom 'the use of the rifle' was an unknown subject and who had made up their minds to jump in the dark."

These resolutions are passed by an association, to which it seems to be officially recommended that an additional money grant be made by Government in consequence of their inefficiency. What next,

R,

*The Jewish Chronicle* says:—At a recent meeting of the council representing the Jewish congregations of Berlin, a motion was brought forward to the effect that immediate steps should be taken to make arrangements for the Leichenverbrennung (burning of bodies) in one of the Jewish cemeteries in the city. The motion was adopted by a large majority."