

The Dearth of Artillery.

DEAR SIR,—Although the so called "Army Mobilisation Scheme," just produced appears to be pretty much an instance of *parturient montes, nascitur ridiculus mus*—a case of what is called in soldiers' dialect, "as you was"—still its tendency is in the right direction, and considering it merely as adumbrating dimly shadowing forth, what may become the nucleus of an effective system of complete and practically moveable army corps, it may be worth while to look for a remedy for its great deficiency of so serious a nature, that in point of fact it renders the whole scheme nugatory until it is provided for. I refer to the deficiency of field artillery. An army without a thoroughly good and sufficient field artillery is, in the present day, simply no effective army at all—a mere easy prey to any enemy which is superior in amount and efficiency of what has of late years more than ever become, without prejudice to the value and necessity of the other branches of a field force—the "principal arm."

In my own opinion the keeping up of a regular garrison artillery at all at present is an error; the officers and men attached to that branch are actually set to skirmish (with carbines of 500 yards range) on field days—even before His Royal Highness the Commander in Chief! If a real war came upon us, we needs must employ our whole regular garrison artillery with field guns—with what results, after the "separation" of field and garrison artillery, instituted of late years in deference to the views of pamphleteer, gunners, it is not difficult for those who remember the Crimea or who served in the 1st Brigade a few years ago, to estimate. This, however, is not essential to what I desire at present to call your attention to, though I may return to it on another occasion. Neither does it come within my present design to point out the great waste of men and horses, and the other injuries to a really efficient artillery, entailed by keeping up what is called "horse artillery"—an arm which was very useful in old times, when it could gallop up close to a square and annihilate it at short range, but which has been rendered obsolete by long range rifles and rifle instruction. Our pamphleteers and Prussianisers seldom remind the public that there is no "horse artillery" in the German army. They know best why.

But the point I wish to lay stress on is this. In our field batteries at present the six wagons are horsed and equipped to accompany and to drill with the guns. This is not only unnecessary, but wrong; every field artillery officer who has seen service elsewhere than on Woolwich Common knows that his ammunition wagons, if he must have such, must keep well away in rear, and never, if possible, at all near his guns or under fire. It would seem, then, that these wagons might be suppressed in a nucleus army. Of course, it would be better to have them always at hand, but that cannot be done with our present stock of men and horses, and is by no means necessary. The men and horses now attached to the wagons might be formed into nucleus six gun batteries, which would just double the field artillery of our nucleus army corps, at no expense. No increase of officers would be required; give the nucleus field batteries a major and two lieutenants, which would be ample for peace time and not insufficient for war if kept up; and officer the "garrison" batteries, if such are to be retained, with the captains and two lieutenants each, which would be quite enough also—only that they must be in the flesh, not on paper

as at present; very many of the present garrison batteries have only one, many actually no, subaltern with them!

This would also afford useful commands, or rather supervision posts, for the present plethora of lieutenant colonels and colonels. At a station I lately visited there was a colonel or lieutenant colonel present for every battery of a considerable artillery force! Of course they had nothing to do but to worry and interfere with the majors, to the destruction of all real discipline and efficiency. My scheme would provide real work suited to their rank for many of these officers. Many more, of higher qualifications, might be employed very usefully in an intelligence department, the present one being only rudimental, not a tenth of what is required: and not at all necessarily, at any increased expense. But this again is a digression into another question of the future.

It will be observed that what I now actually propose is—in peace time the nucleus horse and field artillery battery should consist of six horsed guns only, with a major and two lieutenants. This would double our nucleus field artillery; the expansion in war time by adding the necessary wagons would be infinitely easier than the sudden improvisation of batteries, cadres and extension, out of nothing.

Very possibly you and your readers may disagree with me, partially or completely but the question is worth discussion.

Yours truly,

SWINGLETREE

Junior United Service Club,
Dec. 9, 1875.

DEARTH OF ARTILLERY.—NO. 2.

DEAR SIR,—In your issue of the 11th inst., you kindly permitted me to call attention to the great deficiency of field artillery which at present exists, and to suggest, as the most possible and practicable mode of remedying it, and of making a sufficient and efficient nucleus field artillery at the least expense, that the men and horses attached to the wagons of the present field batteries should be attached to guns instead; that each of these nucleus batteries should have attached to them a major and two lieutenants, leaving a captain and one lieutenant for the "garrison" batteries, thus requiring no additional officers, and doubling our field artillery in a manner which in peace time would entail no additional expense whatever, and in war time would admit of completion and expansion in the easiest and most feasible way, and would besides damage no "vested interests" of any kind.

The authorities have since, following the lead of the Press and the public as usual, also admitted that our field artillery is insufficient; and it is intended in consequence to raise two new field brigades.

This, if it could be done, would give at most sixteen new field batteries—nothing like enough; for it must be recollected that if we had to take part in a serious war, not only could we not remove one battery from India or Ireland, where most of our field artillery is a present, but, on the contrary, we must necessarily send more to both stations. But besides this there are four reasons against it, any one of which is sufficient to condemn it in the eyes of practical and experienced English soldiers; though not, most likely, in the eyes of the Prussianisers, pamphleteers, and essay writers, who are blowing our weak authorities about in so many different directions at present.

1st. This mode of increasing the artillery entails most expense with least result; requiring the appointment and payment of a large "brigade" staff, which, except for routing purposes is really only a useless encumbrance; and further diverts a number of officers from the proper military work. Of course, it increases patronage—whether this is an advantage, objectively or subjectively, thinking men will seriously doubt.

2nd. It perpetuates the brigade system, which some seventeen years' bitter experience has proved to be the worst conceivable organisation for artillery—a view held by every artillery officer I have ever heard speak of it, always excepting the staff at home clique at Woolwich, and the expectants, *fautores atque assentatores* of the Horse Guards.

3rd. It still further increases the number of lieutenant colonels, already much too large. That an effective system of promotion—or what comes to the same thing, of retirement—is sadly wanted in the artillery, is evident from a glance at the Army List, where there are still some dozen captains of near nineteen, and more than two dozen lieutenants of thirteen, years' service, a state of things which is not merely personal to the sufferers, but is injurious to the Service in many ways not at first obvious. But increase of senior officers will help this but very slightly; and further only for a time, as the present relative proportion of officers of higher ranks in the artillery will certainly not be permitted to exist once it is seen and understood by the public. The present immense supply of colonels and lieutenant colonels in the R. A., which gives one to each battery at most large stations (ridiculous as this may seem) necessarily implies interference with the majors (the proper "battery fathers"), fidget and worry and trouble of all kinds, and has a good deal to do with the present unpopularity of the artillery and impossibility of obtaining sufficient recruits of a good class.

4th. I have reserved the strongest reason for the last—two new brigades may be raised on paper, and the cry for artillery thus be diverted; and officers can be got for them, but *men cannot*. The present brigades are notoriously very short of their establishments, even though recruits "of all sorts" are taken; how then are two new brigades to be manned? It simply cannot be done, and the proposition is merely a sop to Cerberus, with the extra advantage of creating more patronage, which seems to be the real "final cause" of a deal of our late so called army reform.

It is time something real was done towards making an efficient English army. Multiplication of titles and appointments won't make good officers; depreciations of regimental work and exaltation of staff and departments won't improve the morale of the army; and, *pace* H. R. H. the Commander in Chief, mere money won't get recruits till the Service is rendered more respectable, less irksome, less slavish, and the everlasting interference and worry, which was suited to the times of the crimp and press gang, but is not suited to a people becoming, thank God, every day more educated and enlightened, is abolished and replaced by a more considerate and liberal system, which is perfectly compatible with even greater strictness in things essential than now exists.

Yours truly,

SWINGLETREE.

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