

CORRESPONDENCE.

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

HALIFAX, April, 1875.

To the Editor of the VOLUNTEER REVIEW.

DEAR SIR,—Your correspondent "Fixed Bayonets," in a letter to your valued paper of 23rd March, would like to receive answers to several questions relating to Drill, as laid down in Field Exercise, 1874. With your permission, I will endeavour to furnish him with the requisite information, although if he had studied with more attention, the Field Exercise, 1874, and Queen's Regulations, 1873, he might have spared himself the trouble of asking. It must be understood that the former does not give all the information contained in the latter. Therefore, if Fixed Bayonets will turn to Sec. 3, paragraph 13, Queen's Regulations, he will find the answer to his first question. In his second question, while volunteering the information that a Serjeant-Major is not an officer, he asks when that individual draws his sword. The answer will be found in part VI, sec. 12, page 327, Field Exercise, 1874. In answer to his third question. The reason why arms are not shouldered in this case, is explained in the first paragraph contained in that section, so there is no omission either accidental or intentional. In his fourth question, he either forgets or does not know, that now there are no officers holding the rank of ensign, consequently the colours are carried by lieutenants. His fifth question as to the post of the Sergeant-Major. The colour party being in the centre of the line, the Sergeant-Major's place is in rear of the centre aligned with the supernumerary rank. So that when the regiment parades without colours, (as is often the case for drill) his post will be in rear of the right guide and marker of the left centre company. Likewise, in column of companies, or double companies, in rear of the fifth file from the directing flank, and in fours, at the head of the column. Fixed Bayonets shows his utter ignorance of the Queen's Regulations, when he asks his sixth question, as to whom the regimental colour is to be lowered. I will merely refer him to Sec. 3, paragraph 4, Queen's Regulations, 1873. In his remarks as to distance between ranks with trailed arms; it does not require a very great knowledge of arithmetic to settle that knotty question. When ordered to trail on the march, the rear rank will step short two paces, consequently the distance between ranks is increased eighteen inches, which will be regained on the word Halt. He says truly enough the ranks will be forty eight inches apart, but he seems to think the rear rank must move up that distance. I will ask him how that is to be done, unless the front rank is moved out of the way? By his idea the rear rank would thus occupy the place of the front rank. Let him refer to part I sec. 37, or part II, General Rules H. F. E. Hoping these answers will prove satisfactory to Fixed Bayonets.

I remain, yours truly,

TOMLSON.

The Wimpffen Libel Suit.

Now that the full details of the Wimpffen libel suit have come over, including a resume of the evidence, the importance of the result is easy to estimate. There is little doubt but that the decision of the court and especially the character of the testimony will prove ere long to be the best cards that have been dealt to the Bonaparte dynasty in the game of Empires since the disastrous hand on which they threw up that game at Sedan. We can all remember the cry of exultation from Germany, the wail of despair from France, after the fatal day which left the name of Napoleon covered with disaster and humiliating ridicule. The Sun of Austerlitz became a byword for contempt, and none was found to reverence the fallen monarch, whose Sphinx-like silence had filled Europe with awe, only a few short years before. And yet, amid the taunts and jeers of all his enemies, a few men were found, both in England and America, to respect the manly frankness with which the fallen emperor took upon himself the whole blame of the disaster at Sedan, and to own that it raised him above the mingled contempt and rage with which his enemies, and especially those most virulent of all, the French Red Republicans, regarded him. Of all enemies in the world, none have ever proved so thoroughly and unscrupulously malignant as these same "Reds" towards the whole dynasty of Bonaparte since Sedan. While the French in general have always been, and still are, proud of the memory of the First Napoleon, proud of his campaigns, the most masterly in Europe since the time of Frederick the Great, the Reds have occupied their time since 1871 mainly in trying to influence public opinion against the two Napoleons. Political pamphlet and speech, partisan history, and partisan pamphlet under the guise of novel, headed by the Alsatians Erckmann-Chatelain, and followed by shoals of imitators, have flooded the world with words, followed by more words to prove that the French republicans were giants in intellect and angels in purity, and that both the Napoleons were equally unscrupulous and contemptible thieves and charlatans, totally devoid of any mental energy, save in the direction of kleptomania. Especially on the devoted head of Napoleon III. were poured the vials of wrath for the surrender of Sedan, which they imputed solely to him. Public opinion in the United States was against him, and the opinion was common that General Wimpffen, who was in command at the time of the surrender, was sacrificed, by being brought in when it was too late, only to share in a disaster made inevitable by others.

Now at last the testimony has come out, where it cannot be cavilled at or objected to, as sworn evidence in a court of justice. Books on both sides have been written, but books are always unsatisfactory things, as they are necessarily one-sided. A trial in court, where both sides have their say, generally accomplishes the end sought for, the publication of the truth. In this case it is the more reliable, because brought out by the efforts of Wimpffen himself, the champion and martyr of the Reds, and spite of all his efforts it has proved ruinous to his own reputation and a great mitigation to the responsibility of Napoleon III. for the Sedan disaster.

The testimony given by Generals Ducrot, Douay, Lebrun, Pejol, and Galhiet, all summoned by Wimpffen, and commanding under him at Sedan, and of other officers of lower grade, present at the surrender, was

unanimous. All confirmed the statements published some time since by General Ducrot, in a book answering one from Wimpffen, and it is a matter of remark that the book was soon forgotten and attracted little attention, tending to show the essential weakness of the book method of controversy, while to-day the world has generally made up its mind on the Wimpffen subject and rendered its verdict in accordance with that of the court. It appears that Wimpffen arrived at the front on the 30th of August, when MacMahon was still present, with an order making him second in command, that he kept that order in his pocket and did not report his arrival till next day, the 31st, still without presenting the order, as things looked serious and he wished to avoid any responsibility. That he remained at headquarters till next day, Sept 1st, when MacMahon was wounded at 6 a. m., and Ducrot assumed the command at 6:30 a. m. That Ducrot ordered a retreat, which began at 7 a. m. he seeing that Sedan was untenable and ultimate capture certain. That General Lebrun was sent to occupy the plateau of Illy, and that Ducrot had resolved to sacrifice the Twelfth Corps to save the Army, and secure a retreat. That Lebrun drove the Prussians with such vigor that he seemed to be gaining ground. That then, at 9 a. m., after two hours' fighting, Wimpffen, thinking a victory possible, relieved Ducrot, took command, stopped the retreat and the movement towards Illy, in spite of Ducrot's protests, and ordered all the troops to the front. "It is not a retreat we want, but a victory," he said, "We are going to drive the Germans into the Meuse," Ducrot's reply was simple: "Provided they do not drive us there. In an hour you will have no chance even for retreat." The Germans had then stopped firing. They were flanking. Wimpffen would not believe Ducrot. Till 1 p. m., he waited, imagining the battle was his own. At 1 p. m., the Germans had surrounded him, the battle reopened and all was lost. The rout ensued, and the Emperor took the responsibility of raising the white flag, after 15,000 men had been slaughtered. Then Wimpffen rushed to the Emperor and said he had lost the battle because his officers would not obey his orders. Then Ducrot spoke: "It was because they obeyed your orders too well. But for your presumption in stopping the retreat we should have saved most of the Army, and at least avoided a capitulation." Wimpffen then offered his resignation. The Emperor refused it. He had claimed the command hoping the fame of a victory, he must accept the responsibility of defeat.

The verdict of the jury that he was responsible for the surrender will be accepted as correct on the facts as attested by so many sworn witnesses. The responsibility of the previous movements has already been fully accepted by MacMahon, and the hasty judgment which piled everything on the shoulders of Napoleon III. bids fair to be reversed, at least for this crowning disaster. The more the history of the Franco-Prussian war is examined without passion or prejudice, the stronger becomes the conviction that a great deal of injustice has been done to the unfortunate French. In our blind admiration of success, we have been wont to undervalue the difficulties that beset them from the beginning of the war, and to attribute to a semi-supernatural skill on one side, and a fancied degeneracy on the other, what is really due to the simple superiority of enormous numbers, exercised without serious blunders. —*Army and Navy Journal.*