

[Written for THE VOLUNTEER REVIEW.]

THE FAREWELL.

BY CAPT. J. R. WILKINSON.

I stood to look a last farewell
Upon our Dominion shore;
E'er I should turn afar to roam
From all I lov'd forever more.

I gaz'd upon the waters bright,
The scene recalled the times of yore;
There's none can tell how I have lov'd
Thy waves and sands, oh! peaceful shore!

The moon was shining gently forth, —
Her silver light so dear to me,
Glanced on the waves along the strand,
And shined o'er the flowery lea.

In days long gone, I often stroll'd
With Alleene by the shining sea;
But now those days, those happy days;
Will never more return to me.

For Time's relentless years speed by
With voiceless, viewless, sable wing;
Just such a night I laid her down
To sleep for aye, in beautiful spring.

She's sleeping now to wake no more—
When moon and sea are gleaming bright;
She sleeps, and I am weary now.
Away these tears, I go, good night.

Leamington, Feb. 10th, 1872.

THE AUTUMN MANOEUVRES.

A lecture on the Autumn Manœuvres was delivered by Capt. C. B. Blackenbury, Royal Artillery, at the Royal Artillery Institution, on Tuesday afternoon, last week. The chair was occupied by Brigadier General J. M. Adee, C. B., R. A., Director of Artillery and Stores; and among the officers present we noticed General Sir J. L. A. Simmons, R. C. B., R. E., Governor of the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich; General Buchanan, late Royal Artillery; Colonels Domville, Field, Gosset, S. E. Gordon, Milward, C. B., Reilly, Wray, C. B., Young, and most of the officers of the garrison.

Captain Blackenbury observed that one of the wisest of our late foreign visitors, who knew us well, said he was astonished at the progress we have recently made in the knowledge of war, but he was also of opinion we have yet much to learn. There would be some to say, no doubt—"What is the English Army to learn from Continental soldiers?" We should remember, however, the confidence with which all looked forward to the triumph of the Austrians in 1869. No soldiers could have fought more gallantly, yet the result was well known. There was last autumn great difficulty in supplying for one fortnight 30,000 men from depots in the centre of a space occupied by three divisions, close to London and in the time of profound peace. How, then, would they have fared if the war had been real, and the divisions moving daily further and further from the base of operations? The only way to test the supply departments was by actual work as nearly approaching that of war as possible. Gallantry might win a fight in spite of many errors, but it would not feed men. Besides the two main objects of such manœuvres, practice of tactics and the supply of an army with provisions, there were many other essentials which could only be properly learnt in such peace manœuvres as would best represent real work in the field. There were for example, the duties of the staff, including the important one of acquiring and digesting information without which generals could but blunder in the dark. It might be objected that full knowledge of such duties could only be acquired by actual service in the field, but

in the absence of foxes we hunted a drag to practice hounds, horses, and men. The undoubted ability and knowledge of the Prussian generals was acquired in times of peace, their school being the autumn manœuvres. In England we can hardly hope to approach the condition which rendered the Prussian imitation of war so instructive. It was not thought possible to dispense with tents for the men. We could not place the inhabitants of a district under contribution, nor pass over many portions of territory which should be free to the march of the armies. From the intense interest manifested throughout the country in the late manœuvres, and the anxiety of certain counties to be selected as the scene of the operations, we might hope that the autumn manœuvres would become popular in England, and be regarded almost as a national sport. There were two principal ways in vogue on the Continent for practising troops in the art of war—the autumn manœuvres of Prussia and Russia, and the permanent camps of instruction in France, and Austria. It was well known to all what the Prussian manœuvres were like, and some highly-interesting letters in the *Times* recently gave a description of the Russian manœuvres. A whole district was in a state of siege, and St. Petersburg, the capital was ordered by the generals to be considered as non-existent, except as affording a peculiar combination of troops. Up to the time of the late war the French had Chalons as their camp of instruction, where regular divisions were formed; and, after the usual battalion and brigade drills came great manœuvres, with their beginning and end laid down beforehand. The present Austrian system was a combination of the French and the Prussian, they had their great standing camp at Bruck but their manœuvres were much freer than those of the French, the generals being actually pitted against each other. Everybody in Austria considered the scheme a most valuable one. We in England had our camp of instruction at Aldershot. Its first establishment was a great step out of the monotonous marchings of the barrack-square. The generals obtained some practice in handling large mixed bodies of troops, and both officers and men gained a good deal of real instruction; but Aldershot, like Chalons and Bruck, had one great disadvantage when compared with the district manœuvres of Prussia. Every bit of ground became as well known to the commanders as their own quarters, and the limited number of combinations possible, when all the necessities of the case were taken into consideration, had long since been exhausted. We wanted space for our manœuvres in districts not so well known but that everybody would have to make use of a map. Yet now we had grown from barrack square drills to a small camp at Chobham, where much the same drills were carried out; from Chobham to Aldershot, with its increased number of troops and its set manœuvres; from the set manœuvres to a certain amount of freedom in the tactics of one commander against another. After that came the establishment of umpires, whose duties were to take care that the losses occasioned by mistakes should become palpable and to prevent actual blows. Lastly, we had the autumn manœuvres of 1871. Timid and tentative they were, but affording a grand platform on which to rest and gather strength for the next spring upwards. Verily, there was reason for triumphant hope. Perfect as it was now in the material to make soldiers and generals out of, perfect in spirit, courage, loyalty, and discipline, admirable in equipment and armament, who could doubt that

the British Army would be first in the knowledge of that theory called war, now that the chance was given it? There was one point, however, to which attention was needful. It seemed a little rash to bring up regiments and batteries from country quarters throw them hastily into divisions, and expect them to reap the full benefit of the manœuvres. The Prussian district corps organization made it a simple problem to begin with company drill every year, then go on to battalion movements, then throw battalions into brigades, brigades into divisions, divisions into corps, drilling the men from lower to higher, and practising first the junior, later on the senior officers. With us it was not so easy, yet neither was it so hard but that the difficulty might be overcome. It might be well to concentrate small detachments of the three armies in camp, on country commons, and let field officers and even captains have commands occasionally for special purposes, such, for instance as the passage of bridges, attack of villages, or reconnoissances. The superior officer should look on, not interfering at the time, but criticizing afterwards, and awarding praise or blame according to circumstances. Now that the power of firearms had been so enormously developed, battles were more than ever a series of struggles for positions, sometimes by very small bodies of troops. In the half-dozen or so great battles and numerous skirmishes at which the lecturer had been so fortunate as to be present, he never saw lines of men standing opposite to each other at a couple of hundred yards' distance, blazing away as they did at the manœuvres this year. There was always a heavy fire of artillery and much skirmishing for a considerable time; then a concentration of men—sometimes a strong column, sometimes only a company—a rush, and an advantage gained by one side or the other, such as affected the whole battle. At the great battle of Koniggratz it was but a very small force that well and boldly led, first slipped into Chlum almost unnoticed, and spread consternation throughout the whole Austrian army; for the small Prussian force stood behind the Austrian centre. It would be easy to mention many cases in which slender detachments of the three arms could do great things. A general would surely not be put to command them. Besides, did it not seem unnatural to expect men suddenly to know how to command a brigade in action when they had never commanded a mixed force of 1,000 men in their lives. If we could not have civilized war with well-trained armies, we must get what learning and practice was possible in peace. Of the two great divisions of the art of handling armies, strategy and tactics, the first was best capable of being studied theoretically, and least able to be put in practice during peace manœuvres. At the late manœuvres the question of supply had, from beginning to end, to be put above all strategical maxims. Tactics and feeding the troops were enough for the first year, criticisms based on any other supposition were quite beside the mark. The lecturer then described the principal events and general movements at the late manœuvres. Alluding to Infantry—that most important and cheapest of the three arms, the only one which could go everywhere and fight, both stationary and in motion—the lecturer said there arose two most important questions—was the British line adapted to modern requirements; and, if not, should it be modified? Against the stiff, British line might be quoted the opinions of such men as Colonel Chesney, and Sir Garnet Wolseley, together with the