

tions were that they should each pay 1,500 francs to the State, and pass a very elementary examination; in other words, the old system of exemption for money, which was declared to be an abomination, and to be suppressed for ever, was revived under a new though disguised form. The commissioners who were appointed to examine the candidates for the *volontariat* were most generous and easy going, and, during the first year of the application of the new law, more than 12,000 young gentlemen were admitted. The result, of course, was, that the plan immediately became unpopular, as being a manifest favor to the rich, and was bitterly attacked, but with no result thus far. And this was not the only consequence of the invention of the *volontariat d'un an*. Under the old organization non-commissioned officers and soldiers received a considerable money premium if they re-engaged themselves at the expiration of their service. By that means two results were attained; military traditions were kept up in the regiments by the presence of old soldiers, and a supply of thoroughly experienced non-commissioned officers was assured. By the new law the premium of re-engagement is abolished, old sergeants no longer find any advantage in remaining in a service which pays them less than they can earn in civil employments, so, directly their time is out, they leave their regiments and go home. Five sixths of the *sous-officers* of the French army belonged, until last month, to the conscripts of the year 1870, whose time of service expires in August, but who, from economy or some other unavowed reason, were set free in June. We know that very few of them offered to recommence their service, for a report presented to the Chamber by General de Cissey states that not quite 3,500 outgoing *sous-officers* now renew their engagements each year; consequently, at this moment, a vast majority of the non-commissioned officers have to be selected afresh; and this happens every summer, on the liberation of the contingent of each year, the regiments being of course disordered each time by such changes. The Assembly, seeing this, has endeavoured to induce men to stay on by offering them certain civil appointments if they remain in active service for twelve years in all; but the prospect of earning £20 a year as road members or country postmen does not seem to tempt them to spend an extra seven years in uniform. Here it is that the consequences of the *volontariat d'un an* are felt; the conscripts of the educated classes would be precisely the men of whom good *sous-officers* could be made, for they would learn their business quickly, and introduce a tone of feeling which would be serviceable to the army as a whole. But, as it is, the greater part of these young gentlemen seek only to get through their twelve unpleasant months as fast as possible, so as to return to their careers in life. For these various reasons the law on the recruiting of the army is both unsatisfactory and insufficient; it most imperfectly attains, as yet, its pretended end of really making every Frenchman a serviceable soldier.

The law of military organization, on the contrary, appears to be a well imagined, practical arrangement, against which very little could be said if only it were carried into execution. It introduced into France the German system of *corps d'armée* permanently established in fixed districts, each corps being complete in itself with cavalry, artillery, engineers, non-combatant services and stores. Many years must of course pass before a thorough result is attained, for in

several districts the organization is barely commenced. The question of barracks, for instance, though £3,200,000 have been voted for the purpose, is still undecided, and in several towns the troops are camped or billeted. But the plan itself is very good; and although it does not seem likely to enable France to attain the prodigiously rapid mobilizations of which Germany is capable, it is a vast improvement on the previous utter want of regular cohesion between the elements of the army. There is, however, thus far, one weak point in this second law; the active regiments of each *corps d'armée* are composed, indifferently, of men from all parts of France, while the reserves of each corps consist of all the liberated soldiers whose homes are in the district of that corps. This mixed arrangement was adopted partly in order to avoid the political inconveniences which might not impossibly have resulted from filling up entire active regiments with men of the same origin and sympathies, and also, partly, because if a particular regiment happened to be cut to pieces, it would be deplorable that the entire loss should press on one department only. These reasons are sensible and considerate; but the effect of the arrangement is that the "reservists" know nothing of the regiment to which they would be called up if wanted. The law prescribes, it is true, that the reserves of the active army shall be brought in and drilled each year with the very object of enabling the outsiders to fall into their places and make the acquaintances of their comrades; but not one single annual training has come off as yet; the men of the reserve continue to know nothing of their regiment, and feel toward it no tie. Until this is changed, it will constitute a first difficulty in the way of speedy concentration.

A second difficulty, in comparison with Germany, is that the character and temperament of the French do not seem likely to adapt themselves with facility to the special exigencies of mobilization. Both the national tendency and the national teaching are different in Germany and France. The German soldier is almost a machine; his obedience is silent; his discipline is passive; he has no hesitations; he possesses subordination and submission as natural gifts. The Frenchman on the contrary, has opinions and ideas of his own which no discipline can entirely drive out; of course he is obedient, because he would be shot if he were not so; but his obedience is not inert; it is an act of reason, and is accompanied by a quantity of mental reservations and considerations which never enter into a German's head. And the Germans have one more superiority, in the event of mobilization, in the fact that their regimental companies, on a peace footing, usually include about 120 men, so that to reach the war complement of 250 they need only be doubled; while the French companies, as will presently be shown, do not average more than 75 men, and have consequently to be trebled, so rendering the process of mobilization proportionably more difficult and slow. For these various reasons, and taking also into account the insufficiency of non-commissioned officers, it is probably that a mobilization of the French army would be a long and tedious proceeding, full of hitch and disorder. Two companies have, several times and in different places, been put through the form of mobilization, their reserves have been convoked for the purpose. The results have been most singular. The armament and equipment were effected with reasonable rapidity; for the 500 men were paraded, under arms, in uniform, in an

average of five hours from their muster at the depot. But, after that, three days were needed in each case for writing down the details and the numbers of the equipments in the regimental books! This prodigious fact, incredible as it may appear, is strictly true; but, for obvious reasons, the regiments, the dates and places, are not named. It would be difficult to discover a more astounding example of the crushing consequences of *bureaucratic* and routine; and though it has directly no relation to the organization law, yet it shows good laws may be paralyzed in application by an obstinate "direction."

THE "LOI DES CADRES."

The "loi des cadres" is the last of the series; it was discussed with much vehemence in the Chamber, for two systems were in presence. The supporters of one of them insisted on the maintenance of the old regimental formation of three battalions of six companies each; while the patrons of the other advocated the German system of four companies per battalion, not counting the depot companies in either case. After much excited debating a hybrid plan was usually adopted: it was decided that the battalion should consist of four companies instead of six, but that, as a compensation for the reduction, each regiment should have four battalions instead of three. It was pretended that an addition of 160 battalions would be obtained in this way, and that, as in war time each battalion would contain 1,000 men, 160,000 extra men would thus be made available. The opponents of the scheme do not find it difficult to demolish this singular arithmetic; they show, with reason, that as the tactical unit is the company, not the battalion, it is utter nonsense to pretend that four battalions of four companies each, with two depot companies for the regiment, can be made to hold as many men as three battalions of six companies each, with three depot companies. By the new arrangement there are eighteen companies, while by the old one there were twenty one. It follows, therefore, that the vaunted addition of 160 battalions means, in reality, the suppression of 480 companies; so that, taking a company on a war footing at 250 men, there is a loss of 120,000 men instead of a gain of 160,000. Each regiment loses three companies by the new device—that is to say, 750 men; nine of its officers have consequently been put on half pay; the army is reduced, the officers are discontented. It really was not worth while to make so great a fuss in Germany about such a broken winded law as this; the Germans ought rather to have rubbed their hands with delight at the bungling of their neighbors.

These calculations apply of course to the nominal strength on a war footing; the real present effective of the French army is a very different matter. The budget of 1875 puts the total of the army at 425,000 men, and tells us that the infantry regiments are composed of 1,800 men each; but there are abundant proofs that these figures are fictitious and imaginary. The officers declare that their regiments are mere skeletons; and the truth of that description is evident to every one who looks on at parades or drills, for, on those occasions, one usually sees companies of forty men. It may, however, be said that a portion of the men are recruits, who do their work by themselves in squads, and that, consequently, the public aspect of the companies is no test of their true force. But when a great annual review takes place in Paris, when it is notorious that orders have been sent to all com-