

Sir Henry Havelock's Army Scheme.

The scheme proposed by Sir Henry Havelock has many undoubted merits. It is the most complete and practical one yet sketched, and is, as he tells us, "the result of many years' consideration on the subject," and of a sincere and patriotic desire to settle, on intelligible principles, that condition of the Army question which is far too serious to be made the mere plaything of rival political parties. It is frequently stated that the Volunteer movement is preparing us for universal Service, and we are not prepared to dispute the assertion. We are much nearer it than we were twenty years ago. Then, it would have been considered evidence of lunacy if any man had proposed it; now, we only smile at the enthusiast who recommends it, and content ourselves with saying that we must not, or need not, Prussianise everything. But the question is as to what form of compulsion it is to be. Are we to have a purely National Army, graded according to age, as in Prussia? The Duke of Cambridge, who is not in the habit of propounding puzzles for us, has told us that our choice lies between conscription, and a small but highly expensive Army. But conscription for what? Conundrums are usual at this season, but the state of the Army, and its future prospects, are too serious for even saturnine humour. The most advanced military reformers shrink from compulsory service, or conscription, for the Line. It is hardly to be thought of, except as some far off necessity, when Great Britain shall be poor but populous, and keeping up an expensive fleet be regarded in the light of an establishment of lazy, beef eating retainers.

We have thus narrowed the problem to something like practical dimensions, and we are in a position to judge of the value of Sir Henry Havelock's proposals. Let us begin with the Line. He does not propose to substitute compulsion for voluntary enlistment. Had he done so, many would have turned from his scheme in disgust, as far too ideal for immediate, practical realisation. There would have been a suspicion that he had commenced his cogitations simultaneously with the appearance of the "Battle of Dorking." But he says, "Compulsory service for the Army is not of the question, and I hope it will always be so." We hope so too; and look forward to the time when a Canadian or Australian contingent would be ready to come to the assistance of the mother country, in the event of a war with Germany or France. Something, however, must be done for the army, and the question is what. First, let us understand the problem. It is nothing less than this—given a community in which the working classes receive high wages, and the soldiers do not receive high pay, required how to make voluntary enlistment in the Army sufficiently attractive to draw the number and the kind of men we require. This is the way in which Sir Henry Havelock puts it, though in different language:

"To many close observers it is evident that the old supply of men under our present system is worked out. The whole question is entirely one of the labour market. . . . A shilling a day for life now does not nearly represent what 6d. a day did twenty years ago; and there is no hope that things will improve in this respect. A temporary depression of wages will only prove the rule more strongly. Wages and prices will continue to rise with the enormously increased wealth of the country, and never more shall we get the stalwart soldiers of

the ante-Crimean times, except under an entire reconstruction of system."

The Army must begin a new competition. If the State cannot enable it to do this, it will be a shame, as the State is all powerful. How shall we begin? By offering an increase of pay all round. Sir Henry Havelock says 2d. a day all round—that is, for the private soldier. We go farther, and take his not too high rate as representing the depreciated value of money, say, make the same proportionate increase in all ranks. In this way, we shall the more truly realise his own idea of making the Army "a career." Our difficulty at present is with the private soldier, but, ere long, it may reach the higher grades, and we may as well be thorough. Private Smith's "shilling in the clear," as purchasing power, is not more affected than Colonel Smith's seemingly larger income. How shall we make the Army "a career for the working man"? By connecting it more closely with the life of the nation, by making it an integral part of it. Here, in our opinion lies the wisdom of Sir Henry Havelock's suggestions, as a whole. They prevent that insolation from civil life which is so fatal from the "career" point of view.

Let us explain. We are now troubled with three questions—how to get soldiers, how to keep them, and how to find them when they are supposed to be in the Reserve. His plan renders all these questions less burdensome. A youth wants to enlist, and does so, with no very definite notions. What is there to keep him steady, well behaved, and ambitious, as things go? Not much, truly; and it is a credit to us, as a nation, that we have turned out, and continue to turn out, so many good non commissioned officers and pensioned privates, in spite of comparatively small advantages. Sir Henry Havelock aims to make military service "the stepping stone to improve civil position for every lad who enlisted." Short service was a blundering beginning, and that is all we can say. The idea was good, but there was so little behind it. Lord Cardwell should have thought more about civil life, and less about paper army. Take the proposed system. A youth enlists at twenty for five or six years, agreeing to enter the army Reserve for the same period. He gets his 1s. 2d. a day. If he knows a trade, there will be workshops in connection with every brigade depot, where he can continue it, under trained constructors. If he wants to learn a trade, or a new one, he has the same privileges; but, in both cases, he must first prove himself to be a good soldier. He is to have the option of putting a portion of his money in the savings bank—that is, not drawing the whole—receiving 4½ per cent. interest for it (we agree with Sir Henry that 3½ per cent. is "too small"), till the day of transfer to the Reserve. With a saved fund of £15, £20, or £30, he commences civil life in earnest. Employment is to be guaranteed him as long as he is in the Reserve. Gas, railway, and canal companies applying to Parliament for new Acts, are to have a clause inserted requiring them to keep so many vacancies for Reserve soldiers. Such subordinate Government and civil employments as are now jobbed away by private patrons, are to be reserved and graded for deserving soldiers. Places for non commissioned officers are to be found in the Customs, Post Office, and Excise. So shall we honour those who are willing to defend us, and shall we best compete with the outside world, on the lines of industry, probity, and real merit. Indeed, we have no hesitation in saying that this question of guaranteed civil employment

solves an important problem as nothing else yet suggested has even done. Make it a system, and the thing is easy. The men are where they can be found, and still on their good behaviour. A brigade depot committee is suggested for discipline and inquiry. The fear of dismissal would be an effectual deterrent. It is proposed to continue the pay, as at present, but to raise it from 4d. to 8d. a day. With inducements like these, we could raise an army of 150,000 men in twelve months, if we wanted one of that strength.

Compulsion must find a place in the system, not in the Line but in the Militia. Here, again we have an idea of Lord Cardwell's grasped, expanded, and worked out into practical detail. Matters have advanced greatly in this direction since the best part of the Army Regulation Bill was quietly dropped in committee. The military service is essentially defensive; it is the constitutional force. The idea of compulsion in association with it is an ancient one. Pursue it as far as we may, we cannot reach a period, except it be an Edenic one, when the duty of defensive armament by the able bodied was not recognised. Perhaps, in some respects Sir Henry Havelock's details might be improved and toned, but they are mature and well developed all the same. We want a compulsory Militia service which shall be as light as possible, and this notion has been borne in mind. At twenty one every male is liable to service. Or, perhaps we had better put the matter in Sir Henry's own words:

"Starting from the principle that six months' continuous drill is sufficient to make a Militia soldier, I would say to each person,—Your military obligation consists in this,—that at twenty one years of age you must be ballotted for. If you are drawn to serve, you must then show that you are sufficiently drilled already to be able to pass muster as a formed soldier in six weeks from that time or else we must keep you at drill at the headquarters of your Militia regiment (the brigade depot) for six months, or for as much less a time as may suffice you to learn your work in. How soon you can get through depends entirely upon your own exertions. If you stick to your work, we can dismiss you, a drilled soldier, in six weeks; if not, you must not blame us if we keep you the full six months."

Now, if we had drill schools, six weeks would always be about the time. Here we have another chance of utilising the brigade depot system. There should be weekly gratuitous instruction at these depots and other neighbouring and convenient centres, for all youths between the age of sixteen and twenty one who chose to attend, who should be provided with a serge suit and arms, and whose progress should be carefully recorded. It is proposed to give working men 4s. or 6s. for their Saturday afternoon drill, and the idea is not a bad one. But all who received money should undertake to serve without a ballot. The Militia obligation is to extend over four hours, with biennial periods of twelve days instruction for the less advanced. The question of an intermixture of classes is the one to be overcome which presents the most difficulty, but we cannot regard it as beyond the skill of a good organiser. It is more a question of companies than anything else, with the right of selecting mess companions in reserve. "Each mess room or tent would be a society of its own, though all would stand shoulder to shoulder on parade." Separation in the one case would be better, however, followed by separation in the other.