

CORRESPONDENCE.

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MITRAILLE.

(LETTER NO. 4.)

Readers of the Vol. Rev. will anxiously expect the third instalment of Capt. Columb's admirable paper. They will be, imagine, especially interested to learn how, under the conditions he shadows forth, he will propose to provide for the adequate military defense of the colonial strategic points. Notwithstanding the grasp of the subject with which Captain Colomb has set forth the stern necessities of the case, it is too certainly to be anticipated that England will not increase her army, and it is difficult to conceive how, otherwise, those necessities are to be met.

In your extract from the *Broad Arrow* touching certain peculiarities of the "new drill" (now, be it, however, remembered, three years and a half old) mention is made of the inconvenience attending the practice of carrying the drawn sword in ordinary battalion movements. I suppose few practical soldiers will think otherwise, or that the sword should be carried drawn, except in such purely parade movements as marching past, in guards of honor, &c., or when really requisite in action. I suppose it will be long before we shall become so altogether utilitarian, as to dispense with the sword as a fitting symbol of rank and command, independent of the question whether it would be entirely utilitarian to discard it, and whether it would be altogether wise to encumber all officers with a heavier fire-arm than the army pistol. But the point does arise whether the present mode of wearing the sword be the best. Some five and twenty years ago the Admiralty took it into their heads to decree that the naval sword should be suspended straight up and down the leg by short slings, leading, I think, not exactly from the middle of the waist belt, back and front, but from a little to the left of either point, the rings of the scabbard being opposite each other back and front, and about three inches below the mouth. Considering the inconvenience of the scabbard when brought up to the waist belt hook, I am rather inclined to think the Admiralty had common sense in their view. But the navy had a "pouchant" for their long slings, and rebelled against the decree, and altho' the Admiralty do their best to have their regulations regarded as laws of the Medes and Persians, they are sometimes obliged to change. So the Navy officers stuck to their long slings, yet I doubt if the mode above described be not a better one.

'Enfin' it appears that miserable Spain is coming under military dictator-ship. The

strong rule of the sword is the only rule for which Latin races are fit in these days. It is to be hoped they will find a man strong enough to rule them with a rod of iron, tho' if the country can be prevented from being brought under one firm government, the pestilent British merchant, ubiquitous wherever gain is to be ill-gotten, will no doubt do his best to perpetuate division by continuing to supply the Carlist bigots with arms and ammunition. Apropos of which consideration arises a feeling of confidence, on second thought, that the Ashantee savage may after all reap more harm than aid from British mercantile assistance, seeing it is scarcely to be supposed that the consistent rascality of traders will permit them to furnish any arms to the "men and brethren" of the Gold Coast except such as are more likely to damage the limbs of their owners than to hurt their enemies.

Lieutenant Colonel Powell was one of the three to whom I alluded the other day, as being fit for the post of Adjt. General. Of course there may be others not personally known to me.

I very much doubt the statement that Sir W. Scott's novels, altho' sold in London at the extraordinary low rate of three pence, are now read only by the humblest class. It is very well for the "humblest class" if they will avail themselves of such opportunities to obtain so wholesome a mental food. Some years ago the "humblest class" was much more addicted to the pruriencies of G.W.M. Reynolds, and the extraordinary fictions concocted for penny newspapers. It is in the natural course of things that Scott's popularity should not be what it was fifty years ago. Scott's era was one in which conversation even was more dignified and precise, if also more prosy, than in our day, and the prosiness incidental to the period excites a little impatience now, or is quietly skipped. The quickened perceptions of to-day, which enable an author to set before us the antecedents and idiosyncracies of his character in a few light and vigorous touches, and to land us in "medias res" in the first half of a first chapter cannot, certainly, except as a matter of curiosity, endure the double or treble introduction, and the chapter after chapter of preparatory matter which were light enough to the readers of 1805-25, and passes glibly over many a somewhat pompous speech, and tiresome analysis of feeling or motive, which, to us, *va sans dire*. But it is difficult to imagine an educated person ignorant of Scott, or a gentleman's library without him. Ninety nine hundredths of passably intelligent gentlemen have but vague ideas of history beyond that of their own country, and Greece and Rome. It may be fairly assumed that the indefinite notions so possessed would be still more shadowy, but for the information so pleasantly conveyed by historical novels—not only those of Scott, but of Bulwer, Ainsworth and even James, some of whose stories are

of considerable value on certain periods of French history. The habits, customs, and tone of thought of many a dark period of history are illuminated by the research of the historical novelist, and Scott's stores of erudition were so marvellous that even now those who have half forgotten many of his novels, find fresh food for thought in another perusal.

I sometimes think it would be a boon to the public if some painstaking "litterateur," whose judgment could be relied upon, would revise the novels of Sir Walter, and excise the superfluities of speech and explanation, publishing the cream without any of the tiresome introductions whatever. The bulk might thus be reduced one-third and the trouble of wading or skipping be put an end to.

Also that the "Great Unknown," should in half a century come to require an apologist! *Sic transit gloria!* But what a half century it has been, and how apparent now becomes the progress in the education of the world which has been so beautifully and perfectly described in Bishop Temple's exquisite essay.

It is to be hoped that recent advices are correct, which intimate that the bodies of the Siamese abominations are to be purchased, for scientific information, by medical men. It is a better phase of the affair than the first hinted at. The information to be gained however ought to be as barren of practical value as the discovery of the N.W. passage, as it is to be hoped no such monstrosity would ever be permitted to live after birth in a civilized country.

We have been recently told that Sir John Fitzgerald, the senior General of the British Army, celebrated, a short time ago, the eightieth anniversary of the receipt of his first commission. The venerable officer must therefore be over 90 years of age. It appears from the authority of "who's who in 1874" that the next on the list, the Marquis of Tweeddale is 88, and the third, Sir John Bell, 92. Sir W. Gomm, the only Field Marshal besides the Duke of Cambridge, is a Waterloo veteran, and can scarcely therefore be under 80. I suppose there will shortly be a new batch of Field Marshals, to include an ornamental one in the presence of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.

There appears to be some 63 veterans on the Army List wearing the Waterloo medals, gained, now very nearly 59 years ago.

It is astonishing to find the *Globe* condescending to notice Lieutenant Col. Fletcher's pamphlet, and still more to find it admitting that "possibility" is a reason for keeping up a Force, and that a Force is desirable, its efficiency is also desirable. But an occasional oracular utterance of this kind is a cheap enough manipulation of an interest of which the habitual disregard of the *Globe* for militia matters leads one to question the sincerity. When it copies the *Canada Gaz-*