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The Volunteer Review,

AND

MILITARY AND NAVAL GAZETTE.

"Unbribed, unbought, our swords we draw,
To guard the Monarch, fence the Law."

OTTAWA, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1872.

LIEUT.-COLONEL WAYNEWRIGHT GRIFFITHS, at present on a tour through British Columbia, has kindly consented to act as the Agent for the VOLUNTEER REVIEW in that Province.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.—Letters addressed to either the Editor or Publisher, as well as Communications intended for publication, must, invariably, be *pre-paid*. Correspondents will also bear in mind that one end of the envelope should be left open, and in the corner the words "Printer's copy" written, and a two or five cent stamp (according to the weight of the communication) placed thereon will pay the postage.

The principle of competitive examinations as applied to candidates for all civil employments is no doubt correct, provided it is not abused or pushed to absurdity.

All countries where it has been tried as the sole test, concur in furnishing evidence to the effect that it is no remedy for any of the mischiefs alleged to exist in selection by merit or through patronage.

In England the boast of the Whig Radicals and their admirers is that it has thrown open the public offices to the people, and the *plus ultra* of democratic perfection has been the consequences as far as the departments are concerned.

However, the shield has another side: Every one has heard of Mr. AYRTON, and the amenities with which his office of First Commissioner of Public Works is administered—a good specimen of the genuine democrat no doubt—but *Blackwood* for October, at page 482, says the following is a sample of the manner in which the competitive examinations are managed, under the Government of which he is a shining light, and the Commissioners of which he is the chief.

"An assistant it seems was wanted for the Curator at Kew, and the treasury having consented to allow the expense of such an office the Civil Service Commissioners were desired to ascertain by competitive examination the candidate best fitted for the appointment and to report accordingly. The Commissioners named the successful candidate and he was appointed. When he entered upon his duties it was discovered, and he himself admitted, that he did not possess one single qualification for his office."

As a knowledge of Botany theoretical and practical was all that could be required, it should be no hard matter to find a person able to fill such an office; it appears, however, that it was all *theory* and no *practice*.

Not only, however, is the Civil Service of Great Britain handed over to the mercy of Commissioners, her Army and Navy is also made accessible to ripe scholars like the Assistant Curator; in fact it would appear that the English press has written the people into the belief that all knowledge can be acquired at school, and there is no need whatever for the laborious and painful acquisition of practical application which our forefathers esteemed beyond all mere theory.

Putting aside the too familiar pen and ink portrait of the military officer of the period, with his camp stool, spectacles and map, seated in a ditch or gravel pit, while his intelligent soldiers were fighting like Indians under cover; we have the no less strange picture of what it is supposed the seaman of the period ought to be.

Colburn's Magazine, writing of English naval artillery education, says:—

"Except in the matter of gun-carriages, naval gunners have added little to artillery science. If they would do as much in other branches of the science as they have done in this, they would place the nation under deep obligations to their schools of gunnery. But a low standard of education, and a bad curriculum of scientific study, keep the naval schools of gunnery far in arrears of the corresponding institutions in the army for Royal Engineers and for the Royal Artillery. Muscular training is put for mental cultivation, physical activity for intellectual attainments, and the result is that naval artillery officers, though capital operative laborers, have little notion of scientific acquirements. Many specially seamanlike questions connected with the use of heavy ordnance at sea call for solution—new practical methods of range finding under various conditions; a proper mode of sighting guns for aiming in motion; the effect of deck curvature upon the sights; easy modes of distinguishing the most vulnerable portions of hostile ships; the best modes of manœuvring so as to expose the broadside at an impenetrable angle while hitting the enemy at right angles; systems

for combining the effective employment, under different conditions, of the three great nautical weapons—the gun, the torpedo, and the ram, in the same ship; tactics for ships with weak defensive, but strong offensive powers to employ against ships with opposite qualities; and generally, the whole area of subjects likely to be included in future naval battles, lies untouched, unstudied and untaught. These and such like intellectual problems are the proper subjects of study and of instruction for the future admirals, captains and commanders of our fleet, and not mere physical drudgery, in dragging guns about from one point of bearing to another. In the education of its gunnery officers the navy might most usefully learn a lesson from the Military Staff College and from Chatham and Woolwich."

Like Mrs. GRADGRIND they should know all the "*ologies*."

Young Gentlemen don't tempt the briney now till they are turned seventeen, they are trained in a staff college on shore, would make passable marines, horse or foot as the case might be, but as for a practical knowledge of seamanship they know as much about it as the Assistant Curator did of the duties of his office.

The old practice was to put a boy on ship-board before he had attained his twelfth year—his nautical education was cared for by the ship's schoolmaster—the practice of his profession was taught him step by step by able seamen, warrant officers and the officers of the ship—he could go aloft in a gale of wind—use a marlin spike or sail needle without kid gloves—train a gun to hit at least five times out of every six at a cables length and head his division of boarders if necessary, and at seventeen would be an accomplished seaman if he was worth his salt. In fact the whole practice of his profession had become a portion of his every day life, and it was to those men England owes her safety as well as the position she holds in the comity of nations.

Theoretical and scientific knowledge is absolutely necessary, but without practice it is useless; and the folly of requiring men whose whole lives must be passed in practical application to waste the period in which they could best acquire the habits fitting them for the discharge of their duties in mere study, is bearing its fruits by depriving the country of trained seamen and putting in their stead a class of theorists who can neither take a vessel into nor out of port.

From the time the first idea of the "Navy of the Future," as it was rather pompously called, took practical shape in the construction of the ill-fated *Captain*, we have not failed to point out how thoroughly false the theory on which it was based has been.

The notion that a vessel without sufficient buoyancy to rise to a sea without sufficient free board to prevent that sea washing her decks from stem to stern and submerging her several feet deep, with her centre of gravity placed at such a height as to make her roll through an angle of 23 to 40 degrees, her motive power dependant solely on com-