

Cabul to Candahar, which concluded with the victory over Ayoub Khan on the Arghandab. While on the march General Roberts made inquiries every day as to the number in each corps which were fallen out, and the result was that the very regiment of Highlanders which had shown such splendid endurance before was now found to be the weakest. But why? For the very same reason that, in the year before the, 8th, once a regiment that a general might swear by, and second to none in all the Queen's army, had come so miserably out of the ordeal—namely, young drafts. The regiment had been "reinforced" (save the mark) 170 men from home, and the result was that on the march to the relief of Candahar, when the fate of a British column and the honour of the country depended upon powers of physical endurance, the 72nd Highlanders had to confess to a worse marching average than their comrades of the 92nd or the Rifles.

"The average service of the 2nd Highlanders, on our leaving Cabul was—sergeants, 13½ years; corporals, 12½ years; privates, 7 years; and of the 92 Highlanders, sergeants, 15 years; corporals, 11 years; privates, 9 years. I have not the return of the 2nd Battalion of the 60th Rifles, but feel satisfied that the men were not of less service than those of the 72nd Highlanders. Such a return as this it will be quite impossible ever to prepare again if our system of short service is persisted in; and, my lords and gentlemen, let me add something more, it will be as impossible for a British force ever again to perform such a march as those magnificent troops I had the honour and pride to command made from Cabul to Candahar. No commander would venture to undertake such a service except with soldiers on whose discipline, spirit, and endurance he could thoroughly rely. I never for a moment had a doubt as to the result, but then I had tried men, not untried and untrained boys to depend upon."

Now it happened, by the chances of war, that on three separate occasions the whole weight of the Afghan war fell upon General Robert's column, and on each occasion—at the Peiwar, at Charasiab and on the march to Candahar—he was splendidly successful. The secret of his success—he now tells us was that which all eye-witnesses of his campaign will bear out namely—that the soldiers who won his victories for him were the long-service men, and it needed no apology from General Roberts for telling the country of a fact so all-important. Yet the apology itself is a powerful appeal; for soldierly feeling and patriotism combine in it to commend his weighty words to the earnest attention of the country:

General Sir Frederick Roberts, who was loudly cheered, in response, said that the services of the troops who had served under him in Afghanistan had been so signally recognized in his person that he thought he should best show his gratitude by giving the result of his experience as to the merits of our past and present system of army organization. It would not be possible to avoid touching upon debatable ground, but he was actuated by a sincere and honest desire to place the truth before the public. The army being a volunteer army, they would defeat their object if, after securing their services, they dealt with them as mere machines. Many men had a preference for certain corps, and they should not be removed except at their own choice or at the most pressing demands of the service. Every soldier experienced in war would tell them that they should do all in their power to uphold the regimental system and to foster that sensitive plant *esprit de corps*. Our requirements and those of Continental nations were different. As it was necessary to fall in with the requirements of the short service that the youngest and most unfitted soldier had to be drafted into a regiment ordered abroad the result was that, when a regiment reached its destination it was in the worst possible condition to take the field. The more men and the fewer boys there were in our army the more efficient would our regiments be. (Cheers.)

"I crave pardon," said the gallant speaker "for having

spoken at such a length. But it has long been in my heart to say to my countrymen what I have said to-night. These are trying times in which it behooves every Englishman to think of what is best for the country and the State. We have enemies without and within, and we must not hope to maintain the place we hold but by the wisdom of our council and by the strength and valour of our arms. At such a time it were little less than treason to know, or to believe that there was a flaw in our armour and not to call attention clearly and earnestly to the fact. This must be my apology. I have spoken warmly and strongly because, had I not seized this great opportunity to do so, I feel that I should have failed in my duty not only to the noble service to which I have the great privilege to belong, but also to country, and Queen."

I have sought permission to comment on these few and pregnant extracts of a memorable address that I might, from my own recollections, offer a humble support to the momentous representations of General Roberts.—I am Sir,

Your special correspondent in Afghanistan.

Sir Garnet Wolseley and Our Italics on Short Service.

The facts discussed in the General Return of the Army, Sir Garnet Wolseley considers, prove "incontrovertibly the improved condition of our army since the introduction of the short-service system," and in endeavoring to account for the dislike with which short service is generally viewed in the army he points to the fact that it adds very considerably to the daily work of regimental officers, and remarks:—

"Henceforward the mode of life of the regimental officer will have to be very different from what it used to be; many hours of idleness daily, the long periods of leave, must be abandoned, he must make up his mind to the constant drudgery of teaching his own men as the officers of the German army do; and, like them, he will sooner or later have to content himself with the six weeks' leave, which is the maximum allowed, even to the officers of the Emperor William's Guard Corps. Hitherto our army has been a pleasant home for idle men; generation after generation of officers have been attracted to it by the ease and pleasure it secured to the English gentleman—enjoyment that was only heightened by the opposite extremes of privation and hard work which an occasional campaign afforded. All this must sooner or later be entirely changed by the system of short service; is it therefore to be wondered at that short service should be unpopular with many of our regimental officers?"

In inquiring why short service was adopted, Sir Garnet says that all serious thinkers upon our army requirements at last seemed to agree to the three following postulates:—

"First. That for the protection of these Islands from invasion, for the defence of our foreign possessions, for the maintenance of our race in India, and to enable us to fulfil our treaty obligations in Europe, we might at any moment find it necessary to put in the field an army of 60,000 men, which should have behind it a thoroughly efficient Reserve of well-trained soldiers of at least equal numbers." *Why did not Sir Garnet say 600,000? Could we confront Belgium with our army of 60,000, and over reserve of ditto.*

"Secondly. It would only be by a system of keeping the great bulk of that force during peace as an inexpensive Reserve that we could hope to induce a Parliament to sanction its formation." *Why not state what 99 out of 100 soldiers believe, viz: that the least expensive and the only efficient reserve is, conscription for the militia exempting efficient volunteers. What is Sir Garnet afraid of that he shuts his eyes tight against even considering the question of conscription? Will he tell us its disadvantages? Perhaps the answer would*