

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ARMY.

From the Saturday Review.

Of all the topics that may be discussed in the approaching session of Parliament, there is none which can exceed in importance and urgency the organization of the army. For the first time, the British public has been aroused to regard its military condition with prospective anxiety; and much of the dissatisfaction, and compunction, and willingness to pay for improvement that followed the disclosures of the Crimea is exhibited in anticipation of some great European conflict in which we must either sustain our pretensions or sink into comparative insignificance. We are told, indeed, that the Quixotic enterprises in which our forefathers from time to time engaged, belonged to a more youthful period of our national life, and have no place amid the responsibilities of middle age, when our talk is of bullocks, and our dreams are of money-bags. That our policy will in future be ultra-peace has already been loudly proclaimed, and the echo of the announcement has come back to us in tones that are scarcely flattering or soothing. But, say what we will, complications might arise that would force us to arms. Even in quarrels foreign to our interest we might have to strike in defence of our neutrality or of our flag; and though we were resolute to bear all, like Shylock, with a patient shrug, and to make sufferance the badge of all our tribe, still, until we see our shores protected by a fleet strong enough to meet any combination of the maritime Powers, we can never feel absolutely secure from invasion.

Though the numerous criticisms which the state of public feeling has evoked on the various branches of our military establishments would seem to have the effect of depreciating and disparaging the army, yet this is only the natural result of sudden zeal for military reform. The British public would feel thorough confidence in our troops, if equal in numbers and equally well generalised, in an encounter with those of any nation on the face of the earth. Neither Frenchmen nor Russians nor Prussians would possess any substantial advantage, man for man, over the soldiers whose discipline, instruction, and equipment have of late been so freely canvassed. But it is plainly seen that any corps we could place on a foreign field would be but a small fraction compared with the hosts whose movements shake the Continent. It would be a mere contingent, hardly to be counted in the balance of their mighty totals. More than that, we see that behind those hosts stand vast reserves ready to maintain success or to retrieve defeat; while, when our line of battle began to dwindle, we should look vainly for the means of reinforcing it. Therefore, the first and most important question is how to form a trained reserve, and this cannot be considered irrespectively of the recruiting of the regular army. French conscripts bless the lot which consigns them to the First Ban instead of to the active force; and, with us, the reserve would possess such very superior attractions that recruits, if the option were permitted, would always prefer it to the line. This is the problem that the Recruiting Commission so signally failed to solve; for, after suggesting various measures (all mere palliatives, and not thorough remedies) for inducing men to enter the army and to remain in it beyond their first term, it confessed its total inability to devise any means of organizing a reserve. It is but a fair inference, therefore, that the present system of recruiting and re-enlisting is incompati-

ble with the grand object in view, and that the remedy must be sought in total reconstruction.

There are many reasons for thinking that a division of the term of enlistment into two periods—the first to be passed in the ranks of the army, the second in the reserve—might secure the proposed result. In the first place, a soldier, once fully disciplined and instructed, does not continue to improve; on the contrary, reiteration of needless instruction and wearisome duties is more likely to cause him to deteriorate. Moreover, he wants that grand stimulus to all human exertion—hope. And to keep men in the ranks who are already sufficiently expert in the business of arms is a sacrifice of so much of the industry of the nation. One advantage of the change we have suggested, would therefore be that while keeping in hand, for a time of need, troops of the most effective class, we should restore them, still in their youth, to the active business and interest of life. And it seems certain that, as soon as the classes which supply recruits should begin to perceive the advantages of the soldier's condition—how enlistment no longer entailed the service of the best part of a life in the ranks, while it offered to a young man a fairly profitable and desirable calling—how the second period of service conferred all the honors and entailed few of the restraints of soldiery, while a character acquired in the army for ability and good conduct would be a passport to respectable and well-paid employment in civil life—we should find a very favorable change in the prospects of recruiting.

But short service in the army is incompatible with colonial service. The force thus constituted could not supply reliefs of troops for India, or Canada, or New Zealand. To raise these, under different conditions, is therefore part of the problem. But we must remember that this is only what the Company formerly did in the case of India, before that amalgamation took place which to many experienced men seemed so impolitic. It is probable that a comparatively moderate force of British soldiers, posted in well-selected parts of the country, and supported by a proportionate native army, would suffice to hold India. A long term of service would be necessary in this case, and emoluments proportioned to a protracted abode in a climate unsuited to English habits. The larger colonies must raise their own defenders; while isolated posts, such as Bermuda and St. Helena, necessary as coaling and provisioning stations in distant operations, might be suitably garrisoned by old soldiers, specially re-enlisted, whose long service would naturally exempt them from the fatigues and privations of a campaign, without impairing their efficiency as garrison troops.

Granting that these measures are feasible, and that the service of the regular army would thus be limited to the British islands and the Mediterranean stations, a consideration which strongly repels recruits—namely, the prospect of exile—would disappear. Economically considered, the plan, though involving additional outlay, would show considerable items on the credit side of the account. All additional pay for length of service, and all pensions, except for wounds, disabilities, and gallant conduct, might be abolished. The formidable item for the transport of troops, women and children, to and from the colonies would disappear. And, as it would be absurd to give official sanction to the marriage of men whose age would not exceed six-and-twenty at the expiration of their first term of service, the necessity of providing married quarters for soldiers, and transport for their wives and families from one home station to another, would no longer exist. By thus ridding the active force of the majority of the men who now marry without leave, a great obstacle to the obtaining of recruits would be removed. For, although an unmarried soldier is as comfortable in most particulars as a civilian of the same class, yet the state of a soldier married without leave is so hopeless, and entails such misery on his wife and

children, that the spectacle cannot but be deterring to those who might otherwise enlist; and even those who, having nothing beyond their daily pay, obtain permission to marry, must lead a life of considerable privation. Under these circumstances, women of the class who are willing to marry soldiers are often the reverse of respectable; the soldier himself is frequently degraded by the connexion; the separation consequent on his absence abroad is too often in reality the abandonment of the troublesome responsibilities of wife and children; and in all these ways the service is discredited in the eyes of the population.

Supposing the general correctness of these views to be admitted, and the scheme described put in practice, we may venture to assume that the field of recruiting would soon be considerably widened. A much greater number of respectable young men would look to the army as a career when the service no longer entailed exile from friends and country, penury in marriage, or the devotion of that term of life beyond which there is small chance of prospering in a new calling. The sphere of the recruiting sergeant's operations would then include all that stratum of the youth of the country which is limited by the more outcasts of society on the one hand, and on the other, by the better class of tradesmen, their assistants, and apprentices. The problem would be how to induce the sons of labourers, small shop-keepers, artisans, and clerks of the humbler grade, to prefer the army to the vocation of their fathers. Some increase of the present rate of pay would be required, though probably not a large one, since young men of from eighteen to twenty-five seldom earn high wages, and would generally consider good food, good clothes, good lodging, medical attendance and a small supplement of cash, as a desirable provision. The best authorities as to what rate of pay would be requisite would be those who are accustomed to deal with laborers or bodies of workmen, such as large farmers, squires, and great contractors, who most thoroughly understand the needs and expectations of the class. To an increase of bounty objections have been made; it would be an additional stimulus to the frauds of those scamps who enlist only to desert and re-enlist, while the honest recruit is frequently tempted by the sudden possession of cash into drink and debauchery. Nevertheless, if larger bounties might better fill the ranks, as is scarcely to be doubted, the end would be too important to be sacrificed out of extreme regard for the morals of a few ruffians or spendthrifts, and we are convinced that liberality in this particular would be highly effective.

Nor would these be the only inducements that it is in the power of the authorities to offer. The Recruiting Commission suggested several judicious measures for diminishing the severity and irksomeness of military duty, such as reducing sentinel duty to its minimum, and limiting the amount of mere routine drill to what is absolutely necessary for the efficiency of men and officers. It recommended, too, that facilities should be afforded to soldiers for learning and practising trades. It seems very doubtful if this would be possible except in a partial degree, but no doubt, to whatever extent it might prove practicable, such a course would have excellent results.

We have thus sketched, by way of suggestion, a scheme which appears to us worthy of consideration. Can any one doubt the superior compactness, efficiency, and readiness for united action, of such a home force as we have described, compared with our present army, scattered as it is, often in small detachments, over the face of the globe, and destitute of all reserve? The plan need not be regarded as a mere experiment, since we have the great States of the Continent to show us how, in its main particulars, it affects the soldier [and the indus-