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## The Volunteer Review,

AND

### MILITARY AND NAVAL GAZETTE

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

OTTAWA, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1875.

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 at 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.

LIEUT. J. B. VINTER, of Victoria, and Captain H. V. EDMONDS, of New Westminster, are our authorized Agents for British Columbia.

In another column will be found a description of "The Bunker Hill Celebration," and of the speech of General DEVENS, of the United States Army, on centennial anniversary of that memorable episode in the history of the British Empire and of modern civilization.

The United States *Army and Navy Journal*, from whose columns the article has been taken, deals with it in the liberal and enlightened manner, which would be naturally expected from an educated soldier whose training enabled him to distinguish probabilities from possibilities, and whose honor would not be sacrificed to sentimental patriotism.

While this regard for historical truth and the inexorable logic of facts is so conspicuous in the military critic, it shines with equal luster in the orator; General DEVENS has had a most difficult part to play, and he has played it with admirable skill.

The account given of the battle in all its main incidents are substantially correct, and as might have been expected from so distinguished a soldier, given with a clearness and precision which makes the whole action easily understood and the tactical blunders of the assailants abundantly conspicuous.

It matters little as to what numbers of the *Colonial peasantry* stood behind the hastily improvised and ill-judged defences of Breda & Bunker's Hills on 17th June, 1775—the fact remains the same that British officers deliberately led tried and veteran British soldiers to slaughter in defiance, not only of all rules of warfare, but of common sense.

Not only was an attack in front unscientific and dangerous, but even in reverse it was unnecessary—two gun boats, one on the *Mystic* the other on the *Charles River*, would have compelled the evacuation of the works or the surrender of the insurgents without landing a soldier or risking the life of a man.

History has dealt too leniently with the character of the imbeciles, whose stupidity broke the sceptre of British supremacy, not only on this continent, but as far as the interests of humanity are concerned all over the world, and instead of peace, has given it a century of bloodshed and crime, which should not be charged to the intrigues of politicians.

Our contemporary's article, with the synopsis of General DEVENS's speech, is worthy of careful perusal.

We publish in another page an article on "Heavy Rifled Guns," from our contemporary the *United States Army and Navy Journal*, which is a review of a work on ordnance, by Captain J. G. BUTLER, of the ordnance corps United States Army; and we give below a synopsis of a report from *Broad Arrow* of a debate in the House of Lords on the same subject. It is very evident that the great mistake made by the British Government in this matter of heavy guns—a mistake known to all practical seamen as well as to every intelligent mechanic long before the birth of the first "Woolwich Infant"—originated in the folly of leaving the armament of the fleet to mere artillery officers whose knowledge was necessarily limited by their professional practice, and the error did not end by the mere adoption of a vicious and faulty system in the construction of the gun, but compelled the naval architects to furnish unwieldy and unhandy warships as platforms for clumsy and inefficient artillery.

The failure of Sir W. ARMSTRONG's system of breech-loading may be traced to a too rapid twist in rifling, and the use of gun powder not adapted to the propulsion of rifled projectiles. To the artillery officer fighting his guns on a solid and stable platform the idea of the mechanical action of the propelling force of that used on the gun would be the last thought-of; it would be

better to invent a machine to control the force than to modify the force to the machine—hence the Woolwich abortion. Our neighbors of the United States were wiser; they saw at once that in order to have a powerful gun they would be compelled to control the explosive force in a measurable degree, and hence all the varieties of gunpowder with its cabalistic marks and variable degrees of explosive force which characterize the artillery of the day.

The debate in the House of Lords shows in reality how little attention have been paid to this question which is further illustrated by a letter of a distinguished British Admiral, which is also published below. Lord CARDWELL does not seem to have learned much respecting artillery during his occupation of the war officer—under the old regime of cast iron ordnance an occasional *gun busting*, an operation by the way his Lordship dignifies by the term "explode" did not deter seamen from discharging their duty—it was by no means an unusual occurrence though it hardly amounted to one per cent. of the armament of Great Britain, and we dissent from his opinion that "If they had ninety-nine guns which did not explode and one which did explode such a feeling of consternation would be produced amongst soldiers and sailors that one gun would do more harm than the ninety-nine others did good." This is the calibre of the man who is mainly accountable for the present dangerous and unsatisfactory state of affairs. This subject of rifled artillery has not yet, as a great problem, received a satisfactory solution:

"In the House of Lords the Duke of Somerset, in moving for a return of the different classes of guns and projectiles now in use in the navy, expressed his opinion that the employment of breech-loaders would be preferable to the use of muzzle-loaders on board ships of war. He observed that we have at present 38-ton guns, and that an 80-ton gun was in the course of construction, which must of course be of great length, and he remarked on the inconvenience which would necessarily be entailed thereby, as guns of an enormous length would be extremely heavy, and great delay and difficulty would be experienced in loading muzzle loaders of that size. The present time was, in his opinion, a favourable period for the consideration of the matter, and it would be unwise to defer deliberation on the subject until the moment when war might be impending. Lord Malesbury said there was no objection on the part of the Government to give the return moved for. The whole question had been considered in 1866, and there had been no change since in the decision then arrived at. Then a new invention had been made, by which muzzle loaders might be loaded by means of a hydraulic machine, but there existed a doubt whether it could be used with safety. A means of strengthening the breech in breech loaders had been discovered by Sir J. Whitworth, and if that should prove successful, the breech-loader would no doubt be adopted, but the change must be effected gradually in time of peace on account of the great expense entailed by alterations. The Government would continue to watch any ex-