

may deny the necessity of conscription, but the Commander-in-Chief and the *Broad Arrow* have at last expressed an opinion in favor of what the C.M.R. has been the first and hitherto the only journal to advocate. God grant that the English people may in time recognize the duty every subject owes his country. When the day of dire necessity arrives, it is too late to institute new military organizations. A forgotten clause in the statute book, each year set aside, is not a recognition by the people of the duty every subject owes to his country. Major Jones we spoke of as conscientious, zealous and able. No doubt, as his letter states, the course he has taken he considers his duty.—Ed.]

"No one who has ever risen to any great height in this world refuses to move till he knows where he is going. He is impelled in each step which he takes by a force within himself. He satisfies himself only that the step is a right one, and he leaves the rest to Providence."—Froude.

THE BROAD ARROW AT LAST!—"BETTER LATE THAN NEVER."

We have long viewed the idea that the English people would not approve nor willingly submit to the Militia ballot as one of those absurd superstitions which seem to have been accepted as arguments, so greatly to the detriment of every practical scheme which has been put forward for providing a sufficient defence for the country; and if any English Minister would be bold enough to test the question by omitting to ask for a Militia Ballot Suspension Act—thereupon putting in force the Militia ballot—we believe the veil would drop from his eyes, not only with regard to this fallacy, but with regard to many other doubts and fears as to what men with reasoning faculties, and thoroughly awake to the dangers which an altered state of science and society has brought upon us, would be prepared to submit to both for patriotism and self-interest. With the ranks of the Volunteers thus doubled or trebled at an infinitesimal expense, with the militia battalions constantly kept at their full strength by a very light ballot to supplement the Volunteer recruits, and with our regular battalions also constantly filled, either on the peace footing or on the foreign service footing by means of volunteering from the Militia battalions of each territorial regiment, we should be in a position to keep with the colors a much larger proportion of fully trained soldiers than ever we can hope to do by the unaided assistance of the short-service system, as applied solely to what are now, for all practical purposes, the two full service battalions of each of our new regiments.

H. R. H. At Last!

The Duke of Cambridge hit the right nail on the head in his remarks the other night on Army organization. As to comparisons between the English Army and Continental armies," he said. "our position was entirely different from the Continental position. He had not heard anyone use the word 'conscription,' and yet it was conscription that made all the difference." To hear some of the learned talk about "reserves" and "first lines," one would imagine that British soldiers could be called forth by a mere wave of the hand, or a whistle, like Roderick Dhu's Highlanders. The fact is, that if we are to have a strong foreign army and a strong home army too, as well as inexhaustible reserves, some form of conscription, whether called "balloting" or by any other name, must necessarily be faced. By conscription, and by conscription only, does Germany produce her large force; and if we would follow suit in one respect, we must do so in the other. While admitting that it was impossible to resort to conscription for the Army, the Duke said he still entertained a decided opinion that there ought to be conscription for the Militia if it were necessary in order to fill up the ranks.

Majuba Hill.—A Lesson in Tactics.

To the Editor of the Canadian Military Review.

Sir.—Having seen many references to the disaster at Majuba Hill, in papers civil and military; all of which attribute the result of that unfortunate event more or less directly to bad shooting on the part of our infantry, I am induced to ask your permission to state briefly what appear to be the real causes of our defeat as I think a lesson is conveyed thereby which should be taken seriously to heart by all soldiers.

I must promise that I write with no information beyond that available in the public prints and therefore cannot vouch for the accuracy of the details. The Hill occupied by our forces appears to have been a lofty summit on the proper right of the Boer positions with a cup-like hollow on the top and having very precipitous sides—and it commanded and took in flank, though apparently at a very considerable range, the Boer position.

I shall not enter into the strategical question as to whether the occupation of this hill was or was not desirable, under the then existing circumstances, which apparently forbid, (through lack of numbers) any co-operation by the troops left in front of the Boers during the engagement which must inevitably have resulted; but shall confine my remarks to the two following points.

1st. Was the Hill occupied a suitable position for defence?

2nd. Was it properly occupied, tactically?

Both these questions must I think be answered in the negative.—There is nothing more certain than that a very steep slope is the worst possible fore ground for musketry defence, because in order to fire down such a slope the defenders must lean over and so expose themselves largely to the fire of the assailants, and when, from its inequality, the slope affords natural cover to the assailants the danger from this cause is greatly increased. The inevitable result took place at Majuba as it did over and over again in the Russo-Turkish war; defenders rather than expose themselves fired, without looking over the edge of the slope, in the air; hence of course the Boer losses were (if truly stated) absurdly small, but this was to be expected, and should not be a matter for the least surprise, nor does it need to be accounted for by supposing that our infantry cannot use their rifles, if properly posted.

In the second place we are told that the edge of the basin was occupied by men at 10 paces interval, the remainder of the troops being massed in the cup shaped hollow, in reserve. Now the position was a purely defensive one, no counter attack from it was possible, and it is therefore quite clear that the accepted rule for posting troops in such a position should have been followed, viz: that the shooting line should have been given the greatest possible strength, or in other words, that the men comprising it should have been placed as close together as possible, consistently with freedom of use of their rifles. The reserve was of minor importance; it was proved to be useless, for when the Boers arrived at the summit, there appears to have been no time for it to act, they had been allowed to come up close in superior numbers without loss, and the battle was therefore, as a necessary result: lost!

A minor cause of failure may, I think, be found in the composition of the force, made up, as it was, of dribblets of various corps, sailors, marines, and various infantry regiments, being, I believe represented; it could not have had any efficient discipline or cohesion.

I am, Sir,
Yours faithfully,

G. R. WALKER,
Major, R.E.

Royal Military College,
Kingston, 26th May, 1881.