

LECTURE "On the Connection between the Ordinary Work of Soldiers in Peace time and Warlike Efficiency," delivered before the Royal United Service Institute on Tuesday, 1st April, 1873: Lieut. General His Grace The Duke of Wellington, K.G., in the chair, by Lieutenant J. F. Maurice, R.A., Professor of Tactics, Royal Military College, Sandhurst.

My Lord Duke and gentlemen, I do not intend to apologize for my being here to night. You gentlemen have been kind enough to invite me, I was I think bound to address you as soon as I had obtained leave to do so, and to do my best to lay before you that which seemed of most practical importance in relation to the great end which we all have in view, viz, the safety and honour of our country.

I must confess, however, I feel very strongly that there is a certain dogmatism in the form which a short lecture almost inevitably assumes, which is very unsuitable to me in addressing you. I am going to tell you what I myself very strongly think and believe. I think I can promise you that in no instance shall what I say, have been the result of very hasty examination of the question. I think I can also say, that I have not intentionally missed any opportunity I have had, of consulting those whose opinions are of value on such matters. Where I have been able to quote these they will no doubt have their proper weight with you. But, after all, what I say must go for what it is worth, and you must judge for yourselves whether it is true or false. I am anxious to urge this, because I cannot help feeling that when I have said my say, many will be disposed to ask what right I, of all men, have to speak about the facts to which I am going direct to your attention. To which my only answer can be, that I observed that the particular points of which I am about to speak, have not hitherto been brought under your notice. That as they are the most commonplace, so also I believe them to be the most important of any; and that I think it at least possible that the very fact that all soldiers know them well, may prevent any particular soldier from speaking to you of them.

Pardon me; I speak for the moment as if we soldiers came here to address you not as soldiers but as citizens. I think from what I have noticed among you, that there is one sense in which you would with much justice repudiate that assumption.

There was a time when, as it seemed to me, some of the most zealous Volunteers were not very certain "wherefore they were come together"—when you would at least have been contented with a programme which proposed to you "to interest nearly 1,200 separate localities in military questions; to awaken them to a patriotic sympathy with the Army; and partially to prepare to anticipate and provide against the consequences and risks of an invasion." (a) But the truth is, you have very nearly carried out that programme.

Thanks mainly to you, the relationship in which the Army stands to the nation is one altogether different from that which it held forty years ago. If any one doubts how changed that relationship is, let him hear this description of what it was to be one who had had better means of knowing it than any, and who never modified his statement of that which he believed to be true, for any object on earth. "It is an exotic in

England. The Officers and soldiers of the Army are an object of dislike and suspicion to the inhabitants while serving with their regiments, and of jealousy afterwards, and they are always ill-treated." (a) To be sure that that was true on the 22nd of April, 1829, it is enough to say that the Duke of Wellington said then that it was true. Is it true now? I for one thing that we owe it mainly to you that it is not so.

But I am also very strongly impressed with the idea that you now meditate a further step in the programme. If I had doubted it before, I should have been convinced by the reception which you gave to some things which were so well said here last week, (b) and notably by the heartiness with which you responded to the words in which your Inspector General told you that you were now definitely part of the force of the land, and must expect to meet with that plain English in which at present, thank God, it on whom the honor of England depends, are told what they have yet to learn, if they would be worthy of her glorious service. If I did not mistake the tone of that meeting, in so far as it represented the Volunteers, those who have held on despite the recent changes, have taken a very serious responsibility upon themselves. Let me explain what I mean. Your military training has taught you the great strategic lesson that defence can only be by counter-attack. You know if war comes, no matter how purely defensive on our parts its origin may be, and we are then governed by one Ministry that is not absolutely insane. It will not be on the scared soil of England that the contest will be fought out. And if I mistake you not, you do intend to do your utmost to prepare yourselves for this, that no fear for a sudden attack upon their hearths and homes, shall prevent the heaviest possible blow which we can deliver, being struck for the safety and honor of England elsewhere.

I confess I never had quite realized till the other night how strong among you is the feeling that, whether it be, or be not possible, to obtain from the electors or from any Government, power which will enable us to speak without fear when justice is outraged, that you at least are ready to do your utmost that England may trust her shores in safety for a time almost to your keeping alone, whilst the distant contest is carried on by nearly the whole force of the Army. Moreover, I think that you, at least would echo those words of our Literature's which, if not applicable for the moment to the condition of Europe, may in that ever sitting and soon become so again:—"No little German State are we; but the one voice in Europe we must speak." And I think that you do not intend, if you can help it, that the voice shall be always mere empty chatter.

Now, gentlemen, if that is so you must not mind being told of any difficulties which stand in the way of your realization of that grand scheme.

I am not come here to night to flatter you. I do not know at all enough of all your circumstances, and of many other things that I should want to know before I was able to judge, how far you can meet the conditions, which I must surely believe to be necessary if you would achieve your end. But speaking as a subaltern of the regular

Army, I want, if I can, to draw your attention to what every subaltern sees before him in his ordinary daily routine work, and I want to point out to you that much as our present daily routine needs to be improved, the evidence of war is absolute as to the advantage which regular Armies do gain by the meagrest, least intellectual, immediate duty which is done in peace time by an Army working together as an Army. I know well that the express words of one great man at all events may be quoted against me. I know well that Sir H. Lawrence said, "No, it is not elementary knowledge, such as barrack life or regimental prizes can give, that is most essential to a commander; it is a good sense, energy, thoughtfulness, and humility with independent action. It is not by three times a day seeing soldiers eat their rations . . . or by marching round barrack squares, that Officers learn to be soldiers, much less to be Generals." (a) I hope that by the time I have finished my lecture you will not suppose that Sir Henry Lawrence would differ very greatly from me. If I had, as it is just now not unfrequently my duty to do, to talk as Sir Henry was talking to those who may soon be engaged in that same ordinary routine, and apt to become sunk in its details, instead of appreciating the importance of its whole character, I might be disposed to call in his authority and to repeat those words as, what they are, the exact and absolute truth. But I cannot help believing that just at this moment there are several very important reasons why one should be more anxious to state to you the advantages which we have gained from our peace training of the past than to press upon you the necessities for improvement.

First, for your own sakes, I believe that that which I speak of is by far the most difficult part of your task, and it is always best to look straight at the most difficult thing we have to encounter.

Secondly, I do think that there is a false note in the response which comes from the public to the cry for military reform, which has been raised by some of our ablest men, and to you they must look as their best interpreters to correct it.

Thirdly, I cannot imagine anything more disastrous for the Army itself than a notion among the public, of which I confess I see not a few indications, that those who now enter the Army ought to be impregnated with the popular feeling that they must be such very superior persons that they cannot soil their hands with, or take any interest in, the inevitable daily routine of peace life, since they are to devote themselves to matters much too ethereal for anything of the kind. So far as I am able to judge, it does not seem to me likely, under these conditions, that, whilst passing by the simple duties with contempt, they will pay on that account much more attention to what smacks more of the direct study of war.

But let me tell you what the indications are which make me think that the matter I now bring before you is one, the exact nature of which it behoves you to study closely and thoroughly. I will venture to add, as I see some Officers of the Army have kindly honoured me with their presence, that I am very anxious, with all humility, to draw their attention to the same indications, in the hope that those who can do it so much better than I can, will really set forth the subject in all the fullness that it merits,

(a) Vito "Despatches," large edition, vol. viii, p. 315; "Selections," p. 419.

(b) At Captain Home's lecture on "The Recent War with reference to the Militia and Volunteers" since published.

(a) See Sir T. Acland's pamphlet on "Volunteer Discipline," p. xlv.

(a) Quoted from the motto adopted by Sir T. Acland for his pamphlet on "Volunteer Discipline."