

FIVE LETTERS

TO THE

EDITOR OF THE "DAILY NEWS,"

ON

INDIAN RE-ORGANISATION

BY C. D. L

LONDON:

PRINTED BY SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

1858.

ON INDIAN RE-ORGANISATION.

LETTER I.

THE QUESTION STATED.

SIR,—Whatever may be the future constitution of the Home Government of India, that Government cannot be established upon a sound and permanent basis, unless supported by a loyal and efficient army serving in India. It is manifest that a large proportion of that army as heretofore constituted is neither loyal nor efficient, and the question is therefore urgently pressed upon England, as to what measures shall be adopted in view to re-organising or replacing it.

I propose briefly to review some of the more evident causes which have contributed to the disloyalty and inefficiency of our present native army, and to summarise some of the reasons which should determine our proceedings when arranging for the re-organisation or replacement of the same.

As relates to the causes of the present disaffection, there may be and probably are many of a more or less remote character. We know for instance, that our Consuls have submitted, from many widely scattered points in the East, independent evidence of a vague feeling generally prevalent among Orientals of some impending revolution in the religious and political relations of society. We may assume again, from

facts which leaked out during the Russian and Persian campaigns, and from evidence more recently adduced during the King of Delhi's trial, that the agitation in British India was in greater or less degree encouraged from quarters to the westward of our Indian possessions. But with these remote causes it is not my intention to occupy your time—I come at once to those more proximate and more palpable.

In my opinion, the two great causes, to which all others are subordinate, are—first, a vicious system in the organisation of our native battalions; and, secondly, a vicious system of centralisation persistently maintained, and tending to aggravate the evils of an originally vicious organisation. Reverting to the first of these two main causes, we find from twenty to thirty English officers posted to every native battalion. These officers are in turn supported by an equal or larger number of native commissioned officers, so that with every battalion of native infantry there are about sixty commissioned officers, native and European. It is the professed duty of these sixty officers to remain during their long period of military service in command of some eight hundred sepoy, stationed in an enervating climate, remote from the praise and censure of public opinion, and frequently in almost absolute isolation. Now, I ask any man of common sense or energy moving in this capital, whether he conscientiously believes that, so situated, for some twenty years, he could maintain an interest in his profession, find stimulus to exertion, or refrain from seeking by one means or another to escape from an existence at once so monotonous, so isolated, and so useless? The conditions of life in the native armies of India, as above stated, are such that, I do not hesitate to affirm, they would, had they been really acted up to, have resulted, long ago, in the deterioration of the material composing its English element. It would, by degrees, have been discovered in England that the military service of the East India Company was that which, while it held out the greatest en-

couragements to listlessness and vice, withheld also every fair chance of distinction or even inducement to exertion. Happily, however, the condition of India generally was such that this principle of organisation was not fully carried into practice. For the entire administration, as well civil as military, of India, we had but a limited stock of English energy and mental power. When properly organised and applied, this total stock was inadequate to the requirements of the empire, and when province was added to province, and annexation followed annexation, there must have resulted a palpable failure in the civil portion of the administration, had there not been found lying idle an efficient but neglected body of Englishmen with the native battalions. The state accepted this available power; it would not, indeed, allow the monopoly of its civil arm to be infringed on, but it would support this monopoly with men who might be taken from and returned to their regiments at pleasure, and who, while acting as stop-gaps for their more fortunate fellow-servants, would find a temporary chance of employment and distinction at rates of pay which the State should never have offered, but which these officers thankfully preferred to the idleness and obscurity of an Indian military out-station.

Thus, on the whole, the organisation of the native army came to be this, that while on the one hand the State, by allotting a most unnecessary number of English officers to its native battalions, wasted an enormous proportion of the scanty governing power available, and by maintaining these officers in trivial employments tended to cripple their energies and to depreciate their positions in their own eyes, and in those of the natives of the country,—the State, on the other hand, by opening to them the door of industry and lucrative employment, tended to increase the dislike which these officers already entertained towards their original positions, and to render an appointment with a native regiment a position less sought for than any other employ.

It is true that the officers thus detached improved with exercise in aptitude for business, in decision of character, and in those qualities generally most essential in all departments of the public service. It is true that these officers so trained were found, whether in military or other power, to be more efficient than those whose abilities had remained uncalled forth during a long servitude with a native regiment. Still the vice, the original vice, of the organisation remained, viz., that the State wasted and depreciated a vast portion of its governing power upon trivial military employments, which could have been as well, and with better policy, conducted by natives of the country. And still the aggravation of this originally vicious position remained, namely, that having wasted and depreciated this power, the State then increased its causes of discontent, and placed it in a false position. For, as I shall hereafter show, the posting under a good organisation of such number of officers as may be *bonâ fide* requisite efficiently to command a native battalion, is a very different thing both in its own essence and in its results upon the minds and characters of those concerned, from the leaving of the same number of officers with a viciously organised battalion, while their more fortunate brethren have been selected, professedly on the score of superior merit, to more lucrative and more sought-for employ.

I revert now to the second main cause. It is manifest that during a long series of years there has been a perseverant tendency to centralise the details of military power at the head-quarters of our empire. It is manifest that exactly in proportion as this tendency has obtained, the loyalty and efficiency of our native army have given way. In the Presidency directly subordinate to the central authority almost the entire native army may be said to have ceased to exist. In the Bombay Presidency, where native troops have, since the commencement of the Afghan war, been frequently associated with the troops of the Bengal army, and gradually assimilated to the system

obtaining in Bengal, the service has become in part tainted with the spirit that pervaded its sister army. And if we may credit the highest authorities in the Bombay army itself, a perfect assimilation with the central system would have ultimately resulted in a complete dissolution of the Bombay army. In the Madras Presidency, whose troops have been less in contact with and less subordinated to the central system, and who may be, in other respects, less amenable to its evil tendencies, the native army has apparently remained sound. From these broad facts we may infer that the central system lies at the foundation of our disaster, and that exactly in proportion as this system has been enforced, these disasters have been accelerated and wide-spread.

Looking into the workings of this system, it is not difficult to state its principal evils. The first and foremost of all these is the transference of power from the hands of the commanding officer of a battalion into those of a central authority. In every army the battalion is the unit, and unless all the details of this unit centre in its head, its integrity is destroyed, and with it dissolves the organisation of the entire army in which it is an integral. If this be the case with any army, how much more is it the case with an army of mercenaries commanded by foreigners? Once teach the native soldier that his commanding officer is rather a transmitting post-office to higher authority than the last and complete judge of all his complaints, and you at the same time teach that native soldier to disregard, to disobey, and to ignore his commanding officer. In turn this relation reacts from the commanding officer down through the entire chain of all the European and native commissioned officers of the battalion, until it reaches the sepoy, who gradually discovers, without perhaps very clearly knowing why, that his officers have ceased to take an interest in him, and desire even to quit the battalion. Thus, on the whole, all proper confidence between the officers and their soldiers is destroyed.

A second evil, and one which indeed greatly contributes to the first, is the Mutiny Act. I do not here deal with the Mutiny Act as it is understood in England, but with a mutiny act modified in letter and applied to foreigners, to whose social and professional conditions it is wholly inapplicable. A sepoy enlists to obey his commanding officer; taken from the fields, he has no other thought, and no other wish: a central power is to his mind an incomprehensible abstraction. He joins his regiment, and, provided only there were no interference between him and his commanding officer, he would never look beyond the latter. He would entertain no wish so to look; and, implicitly trusting in the good faith of his English leader, he would remain, as in the old days thousands have remained—as in the present day, where commanding officers may be strong enough to hold their own, some do still remain—contented and obedient, in the knowledge that their promotion, their disgrace, their interests, and their complaints are all cognizable by and wholly in the hands of their commanding officer. But what is our system? No sooner does the sepoy join, than the interpreter of the regiment, in Moon-shee's dialect and in foreign accent, drills into his ears that there is such a thing as caste, that there is such a thing as law, that there is such a thing as unpunishable disobedience, and that there is such a thing as appeal. To whom this appeal may be the sepoy knows not; it is an abstraction—it never becomes more than a myth to him; he sees it, indeed, in part personified once a year in the form of an antique general officer, who moves silently, slowly, on a quiet horse, under a heap of ostrich feathers, down the line of review. So much seen, the myth retires into the vague inane, and is only still understood to exist from inapplicable replies to irrelevant petitions, resulting in no positive good and a great deal of very positive harm.

The third evil, and which also contributes to the first, lies in the substitution of innumerable precedents and

regulations, in lieu of trusting to the exercise of local discretion checked by thorough responsibility. To such a climax have these regulations and precedents brought us, that not only no commanding officer of a battalion, but no civic authority, of whatsoever rank or power, can act, or even write, on the simplest military detail without bringing down on his devoted head the objections, quotations, or positive refusals of every military department through which the reference has to pass. Should you wish to pass a trial bullet from one station to another, you will be informed by the commissariat that they have no instructions from the Quartermaster-General's department. The latter will inform you they await orders from head-quarters. Head-quarters will refer you to page blank of the code. In the meantime, in despair, you instruct a transit agent to transmit the bullet direct and without delay; he humbly submits that to do so were synonymous with his own dismissal. In the last resort you put the bullet in an official envelope, and forward it as an emergent document on the public service. In about two months the bullet comes back from the dead letter office, with an intimation from the Deputy-postmaster that the letter was too heavy for any but the parcel post, and that, for reasons which the central postal authorities deem sufficient, they had withdrawn the parcel runners pending a further intimation from Calcutta.

The tale of the bullet assumes a more serious aspect when we supply its place with the name of a battalion emergently required for active service. On such an occasion there is no alternative other than for the chief local authority to declare the code to be locally suspended, and his dictum to be enforced on his own responsibility. And to this point, in all difficulties, the discussion at length arrives.

I think I have now briefly summarised the main proximate causes to which our present military dissolution in India is attributable, and on which many

subordinate causes depend. I know that some portion of this summary has been gone over by others, but it was necessary for me to resume it in order to render my coming positions clearer. In my next letter I propose to discuss the means at our disposal for remedying our present disorganized condition.

I am, &c.

C. D. L.

March 30.

LETTER II.

THE REMEDY THAT MUST NOT BE APPLIED.

SIR,—The failure of our military system in India, and the causes of that failure, being those summarised in my former letter, the consideration is urgently pressed upon us of some reasonable remedy. I presume that no man in his senses would advocate the restoration of that system and that organisation which have combined to disgrace us. I presume, further, that it is out of the question to impose upon India an army of Africans, and thus, while humiliating and disgusting the empire, to place in the hands of some of the most untameable and treacherous beings upon earth those arms which we dare not trust in the hands of our own Asiatic subjects. It remains, then, for “England, if she still purpose to hold India, to do so by means either of undisguised English military occupation, or of a native army re-organised upon sound and lasting principles.” This is the question to be solved; and upon its solution depends the maintenance or destruction of our empire in the east.

I, for one, emphatically declare against the former alternative and in favour of the latter. I do so upon two main grounds, viz., that for England to attempt to subject India to pure military force, expressed in English soldiers, instead of endeavouring to rule by the will of the governed expressed in a native army, is, first, unjust, and, secondly, impracticable. I know it is contended that a military occupation would not necessarily imply the introduction of a rule based solely on brute force; but I ask in rejoinder, if our own country should be subjected to a military occupation by foreign troops while our own army was dis-

banded, what interpretation the English people would give to the principle of government which the commanders of those foreign troops proposed to introduce? If a government so supported be, as I assert, a government of brute force, then I ask further, what right England has to subject the peninsula of Hindustan to so humiliating, so retrogressive, and finally so intolerable a condition? Let us look to our title deeds. Upon what tenure have we from the first professed to exercise power in India? First, as merchants benefiting the country by trade—more recently, as leaders developing the country by superior energy, higher civilisation, and greater moral and mental power. Those qualities—that love of fair play common alike to the English peasant, the English gentry, the English noble—those sterling qualities which, even in the gristle, we derive from our mothers, those invaluable qualities which are prevalent in a state that has worked and grown into a freedom at once strong, bold, and generous—those are the qualities by which we govern India. In cunning, in mere intellect, the Asiatic is our equal, in physical power he is nearly so, but in moral power he is far below us. And if we proceed to base our empire on physical force, we at once, and by that very fact, forego all the power we derive from higher sources, and yet further weaken our position by introducing with this rule an irresistible sense among the governed of being subjected to an unjust yoke, which no people on God's earth will ever permanently endure. But the injustice of the position contemplated is so obvious and so odious, that I entertain but small apprehension of its being questioned by any dispassionate man.

The impracticability of subjecting India to an English military occupation, though not less certain than the injustice of the measure, is not perhaps, at a first glance, so strongly felt. I will, therefore, as briefly as possible, summarise some of the difficulties which occur to me as contributing towards this impracticability. First, then, the rule of English

muscular force once proclaimed, all trust in Asiatic military forces ceases for ever. You cannot half trust a sepoy any more than you can an English soldier; so long as he remains in your ranks he is one of two things—a faithful servant of the state, or a traitor deserving to be shot; there is no medium. To say that you will half trust him, that you will give him a Brown Bess but not an Enfield rifle, is unjust to the man himself, unjust to the officer whom you send into action under these conditions, and certain to result in your own stultification and disgrace; therefore, we must have either sepoys in whom we show implicit faith, or else no sepoys at all. If you choose the latter alternative your real position becomes more apparent. The position in fact is that of a limited number of English regiments attempting to hold a continent as large as Europe exclusive of Russia—a continent containing, moreover, nearly one quarter of the entire human race—a continent containing enormous regions, where during a long portion of the year no Englishman can expose himself and live—a continent containing many nations more or less civilized, warlike by nature, habituated to the construction of arms and to the use of arms; and lastly, a continent in which, as we have already learned, dwell a people so cunningly combining discretion with secrecy of plan, that a general revolt can be hatched and matured under our very noses, and our own prisoners in turn be concealed and saved, even in the camp of our enemy.

I suppose that we should not attempt to hold such a continent with less than 80,000 English soldiers. To maintain 80,000 English soldiers fit for duty in India would involve the presence of at least 120,000 soldiers, in depôt, in transit, or in camp. And the question naturally suggests itself, are our military resources adequate permanently to supply this demand? It is true that at the present moment recruits are enlisted in sufficient numbers; but have we not lowered our standard, and are we not antici-

pating the recruit market of future years? The case is analogous to that of Napoleon when he anticipated the conscriptions in the last years of the empire. As he was taught to his ruin, there is a point beyond which conscription cannot anticipate without losing by death what it gains in number—without deteriorating the present quality, and without exhausting the future sources of an army. Again, if our military resources be adequate to the required demand during years of peace, would they continue adequate in the event of an European war? In such contingency the strain would come on the cable at both ends at one and the same hour. There would be an enormous demand for the home service; there would be an extraordinary demand for the India service. Could we readily meet even the former demand? Could we have done so five years ago? If not, is it probable that we shall do so now that we have lowered our standard and fore-stalled our market? Before answering these questions, I would beg you to recollect the Foreign Legion, and remember the days of the Crimea.

But if the military resources of England cannot meet our demand, neither can the financial resources of India. If India cannot keep free of debt under a native army, what will be her condition under an European army, every soldier in which costs three times the amount of a sepoy? Nor is this all, for the sums which are disbursed to the sepoy in the form of pay and pension are by him re-disbursed in the country; the money in truth changes hands but only to circulate in the Indian Empire. Not so with an English army—its clothing, its pensions, its provisions, and its pay mainly find their way to Europe, and form an unproductive drain upon the financial resources of the empire. We already drain India of some four millions on account of our home government; this drain is declared to be compensated by the amount of English brains and honesty which we introduce into India. But what will be the extremity

of that unhappy country, if, having exported four million pounds annually for an import of English moral power, she be compelled to export twelve million pounds annually for an import of English brute force?

However, for the sake of argument, let us suppose our English army to be established in India—where would you propose to station it? Would you wish to mass or to scatter its forces? And how would you propose to maintain the peace in the intervening regions? Should you mass your troops, you would probably distribute them in divisions of not less than five thousand men each. So disposed of in some twenty stations, the rest of the continent has to be provided for. Should you scatter your forces in small detachments, the usual consequence, demoralization, would assuredly ensue. You could not collect your forces during a long portion of the year, and the probabilities are that in the event of a rising your detachments would be cut off almost before apprised of attack. In either event, the entire continent exterior to your camp limits must be left either wholly without any military or civil control, or else the peace must be maintained by some description of native force, call it police, burkundaze, or what you will. Now either this force must be armed or unarmed; if armed, it is simply a native army combining all its possible disadvantages, with scarcely any of its advantages; if unarmed, the force were useless and discreditable for our purposes, while in the event of revolt it could readily arm itself, unless, indeed, we intend to impose upon our English soldiers not only the duty of crushing the empire, but of precluding also the manufacture and the import of arms, an attempt which, to any person who like myself is thoroughly aware that even in the provinces which we have heretofore disarmed, there is scarcely a native of military habits who could not speedily arm himself in the villages, seems too absurd to argue against. While on the subject of this police, I would

remark that experience gained in the districts of India has convinced me that there is no point in the whole of our Indian administration where the good will of the administrator to carry justice into effect is in such imminent danger of being turned into tyranny as at that point where the detached policeman, armed not only with the sword, but with the law of the state, comes into personal contact with the peasant. The anomaly of our original position in India renders us in every branch of the administration ever liable to impose upon the governed a government which, well adapted to other conditions of society, is too strong for that to which it is transported and applied; and the extreme of this axiom obtains in the police.

There is another contingency—remote, I hope, but still possible, and not wholly without precedent. It is this—that in imposing upon our Indian subjects a military despotism, we may teach that despotism to impose its yoke upon ourselves. Rome was—God forbid that England should be—undermined by the misgovernment of her dependencies. I repeat, this contingency is remote; but I cannot at the same time forget that it is possible; neither can I forget there was a time when a Governor-General ruled supreme at Calcutta, and a great General commanded on the frontier, to whom, had they desired, it might not have seemed quite impracticable to declare the independence of British India.

I am, &c.,

C. D. L.

March 31.

LETTER III.

THE REMEDY THAT MUST BE APPLIED.

SIR,—If the reasoning in my two former letters be sound, we arrive at the following conclusions:—

1st. That the failure of our military system in British India is mainly attributable to a constitution essentially false, and to a practice inevitably destructive;

2nd. That to restore this system would be to ensure a second failure—so long as the same causes produce the same effects;

3rd. That, rejecting this restoration, it remains for us to elect between yielding up India; introducing there a military despotism; or, re-organising a native army, which, while like its predecessor it shall express the principle that England rules India by the will of the governed, shall yet be so organised and administered as that theory may argue and practice prove it to be suitable to our requirements;

And 4th. That while withdrawal from the East is at this date out of the question, to introduce there a military despotism would be to ignore the pretext upon which we entered, and to subvert the ground on which we profess to hold India, and would be otherwise unjust and impracticable.

I am reduced, then, to the extremity of endeavouring to re-organise our native army. I accept the position with pleasure; and relying on truth, evidenced by a respectable array of facts, I shall use no manœuvres, but move straight to the point. We want a model on which to re-organise, and we want a man able for this task. My model is the Sind Irregular Horse; my modeller, General John Jacob, Commandant of that corps.

In publishing this opinion, I deliberately put forth a conviction slowly arrived at in spite of early prejudice. Myself, an officer of the Indian regular army, I was at first as little disposed as others, to admit that any good thing could come out of the Galilee of an irregular corps; but the chances of the public service having placed me in positions where I could not avoid witnessing the successful results of General Jacob's practice, I was compelled to admit that issues so successful must be the gods' decisions; and although by no means inclined to accept their godships' decisions for gospel, I yet considered it reasonable to inquire into the causes of the issues themselves. I found them to lie in the perseverant endeavour, through a long term of years, of an able and firm man (in some respects favourably circumstanced) to perform successfully a specified duty; always keeping his aim in view—always adapting his means to his end—regardless of personal considerations, and ready to risk all sooner than fail, he dared to make regulation succumb to common sense, and precedent yield to practice. No opposition, no obloquy, no threats could move or turn him aside. Possessing full faith in that law of nature which allows every leaf to vary and yet secures to the whole tree the highest possible degree of harmony and strength, he dared to apply this law in the development of his solders. He would render them, not like a Dutch garden, where all growths are trimmed into dull uniformity, but like an English garden, where every individual nature is recognised and made the most of. I apologise for appealing to nature in these artificial times; but, after all, does she not still underlie us? and, strange as it may appear, she did not in the instance before us, discredit the trust reposed in her. For, like Cromwell, acting under similar conditions, General Jacob succeeded in forming, first one, then a second regiment of cavalry, exactly adapted to our native requirements in India. I have seen these regiments on parade and on the march, in camp and on service; and so naturally

do all their arms, equipments, carriage and supply arrangements seem adapted to rendering the entire body thoroughly loyal and in all respects thoroughly efficient—that, like the boy at the play, I have more than once been tempted to exclaim, “The whole business is very easy, and I should do much the same myself if similarly circumstanced.”

Going a little more into detail, I find the history of this corps to be the simplest explanation of its success. Nearly twenty years ago its present commandant assumed command of it. He was selected to the command by a General who understood how to confide tools to the right workman, and allow him to use them after his own fashion. This fulcrum secured that exercise of power without which no officer commanding a native regiment ever can succeed. It had to be exercised on a then thoroughly irregular regiment, so illiterate that no man could call, and so wild that it was more than doubtful if any man would attend the roll. Discipline had therefore to be instituted from its very elements. Power in his hands, and so rude a material to work on, all depended on the wisdom and firm tact of the commander. Had he wished to imitate, there was before him on the one hand the system obtaining in our regular army; and on the other hand the proceedings of the irregular bodies. He accepted neither; but himself elaborated a system based on common sense, and rectified by experience. He considered in the first place that the relation of the soldier with his officer should be that of commanded to commander; and he therefore ignored all religious and other prejudices, and enlisted his men to obey. He required that they should be physically suitable. But he knew also that something more than mere muscular strength was required, and he therefore required every recruit to find two securities for good conduct from men already in the regiment. But it had been in vain thus to render enlistment more difficult, unless the regiment were sought after; and to this end it was requisite that

the regiment itself should be of high repute, and all its grades be paid fair wages. The rates of pay were fixed accordingly; the reputation of the regiment was maintained by the exercise on the part of the commandant of his power of dismissing worthless men; and dismissal was on every account considered by the men to be a severe punishment.

It may, perhaps, be imagined that these fair wages upon which the success of every organised body of workmen so much depends would result, if applied to the entire native army, in a greatly increased military outlay. Far from this, however, I find that the "cost of each trooper in the Regular (Native) Cavalry is about 83 rs. a month," while "the cost of each man of the Sind Irregular Horse, as it now stands, is about 36 rs;" the explanation being that in the former case the cost and maintenance of the man's horse and arms devolve on the State, and are provided for by Government agency; while in the latter case the State pays the soldier a lump sum to render and maintain himself thoroughly equipped, in carriage, supplies, arms, horse, and clothing, without any interference whatsoever, further than may be implied in the command exercised by the commanding officer. In other words, it is private enterprise competing with Government agency.

But the advantages of this self-provision by the soldier are not limited to the question of finance. They stretch out on all hands, and, while tending to make the soldier exercise his own energies and faculties, teach him self-reliance; and teach him, above all, that when on service, or on the march, grain is cheap, and provisions abundant precisely in proportion as he encourages a free market and maintains friendly relations with the neighbouring peasantry. So complete are the carriage arrangements, and so certain the laws of supply and demand, that I have known the regiment ordered at a moment's warning to march through a country almost a desert, and yet the supplies be up and all things in trim even

from the very first day; while regular regiments, ordered on the same expedition, and with all the means and appliances of a commissariat to boot, could not move under from fifteen to twenty days.

The same principle of common sense applied to practical details I find at work in every portion of the constitution of this corps. The best curtailment of unnecessary baggage is found to be the soldier's own purse: this principle is admitted accordingly. Compensation for losses is found to engender carelessness; it is rejected by the State accordingly. It is found that a regiment with fixed head-quarters moves more readily, and leaves its followers in greater comfort and security, than a regiment which has, as it were, no central home; fixed head-quarters are established accordingly. It is found that the best check to all ill-feeling and smothered grievances, in every rank, lies in the possibility of openly stating the same without demur; daily orderly room is held accordingly. It is found that the native soldier does not really become more efficient from induement in an English soldier's coat, a stock, shoes in which he never walks if he can escape them, pipe-clay, and what not; and the soldiers of the Sind Horse are therefore dressed as natives would wish to be dressed when sent upon hard work in hot climates. It is found that horses have various descriptions of mouths; so the bits are modified to suit them. The saddle is fitted to the horse's back at the soldier's discretion; but if the animal's back become sore, its allowance from the State is stopped and its owner is compelled to walk: the result is that sore backs are almost unknown. It is known, again, that in sword exercise Orientals are habituated to the cut instead of the point; and the swords are formed to meet this requirement. But why multiply details? Those who feel interested in the discussion may gather them from a very useful collection recently published. And from that work it is apparent that not only is the system obtaining in the Sind Horse applicable to all

arms in the native army, but that while pointing out the defects and impending failure of the regular system, General Jacob has reiteratedly made practical suggestions for extending his system, under specified circumstances, to both native infantry and artillery.

But, if thoroughly efficient, is this corps also thoroughly loyal; I appeal to the past twelve months for an answer to this question. Its own men, mainly drawn—as being the best available material—from the agricultural districts around Delhi, Goorgaam, and Furruckabad, its home may be said to be the heart of the revolted country. Yet every man has stood, and stands staunch, though subjected to the severest temptations, and scattered, during the period of the mutiny, under its native officers, at stations where mutiny was being plotted or enacted by regular troops. To my certain knowledge, the regiment of Sind Horse which remained on the frontier during the past autumn, was the obstacle to a general rising on that border, and to a massacre of our Europeans in Upper Sind. And why is it that amid the general corruption these men remain thus loyal? There is no mesmerism in the matter. It is due simply to the exercise of common sense and honesty in the organisation of a military body composed of natives of India. And it is no more to be wondered at that this corps has succeeded while the regular corps have failed, than it would in this capital be wondered at that one manufacturer who proceeded in the usual course of trade should succeed, while another who sought for labour below its price, crippled it by injudicious rules, and supplied it with bad tools, should fail.

Before leaving this question of loyalty, I would beg permission to quote some of General Jacob's own words upon this subject, and indeed upon the Silidar system in general, as exemplified in the Sind Horse :

“For I maintain that the silidar cavalry on the proposed scale would be superior in every way to the native cavalry now existing. The best among the

native gentry, who now have no connection with the army, would be proud and delighted to enter such a service, where the native officers have real command and authority, and where much of that harassing stable duty, &c., which is so disagreeable to them, does not exist. Not only would the service be composed of a class of men very superior as soldiers to any now entering the native army, but the political effects of such a service would be immense: the most influential native sirdars, men of landed property, and so forth, throughout India, would have a distinct interest in this part of the British army, which would be filled with their brothers and sons. Neither could their connection with the army in this manner ever be attended with danger to the State, for to their position in the British army would they feel that they owed greatly-increased respectability and honour; they would be grateful to the British Government, and be proud to serve, instead of only fearing it. The effect of such a state of things, in securing the fidelity and attachment of the people in general, must be very great. At the same time, not only is the cost of such a service much less than that of the present native cavalry, which has no connection at all with the most influential and best families of India, but the sildar corps is, from its construction, at all times much more ready and much more easily moved than any other troops whatever; and by its movement the State is put to no extra expense, save in the extreme case of a march through a desert country for more than a few days successively. There is but one thing required to ensure the perfect success of the proposed scheme, viz., a proper choice of officers to command, and the entrusting them with full and sufficient powers. The subordinate grades of European officers would then form an excellent school for future commandants, and the supply would never fail. The commandants should always be allowed to choose their own European officers. The service should always be one of careful selection; and if the

commandants be really and honestly chosen by merit and fitness alone, Government need never find difficulty in appointing properly-qualified individuals." *

Sir, those words in the above quotation, which relate to the native gentry, seem to me to have very broad bearings. I cannot but feel that not only in the military but in all branches of our administration, the absence of a middle and higher class, having real interests in the maintenance of order and the existing form of Government, is increasingly dangerous.

To return, however, it is sometimes contended that the system of the Sind Horse, although excellent when applied by an able man, would fail under the direction of the average material we could place in command. To this I reply—as when I hear it contended that the system though good in theory would fail in practice, I ever shall reply—that it is long practice on a sufficiently large and increasing scale which has evolved the theory, and that among the axioms thus established by practical results is this: that in regard of all ranks, the school forms the men. I am personally acquainted with nearly all the officers of the Sind Irregular Horse, and I am confident there is none among them who would not instantly acknowledge that he was so formed; and, moreover, that once trained in this school, retirement from the service would be to him preferable to a return to the old system. To enforce a bad principle, thereby to cripple your material, and then to assert that this material would not be adequate, under other conditions, to the development of a better principle, does truly appear to me like tying up a man's arm in a sling until the sinews are all relaxed and wasted, and then to point to the skeleton in proof of the non-competency of the original arm for the healthy work. But the fact is that the past twelve months (without

* "Views and Opinions of Brigadier-General John Jacob, C.B., &c., Collected and Edited by Captain Lewis Pelly, author of 'Our North-West Frontier.'"

going any further back) have amply proved that lieutenants trained in the new school are thoroughly competent to perpetuate, under adverse circumstances and on active service, all that is required by the school.

To sum up, then: It seems to me that in the sildar principle, as exemplified in the constitution of the Sind Irregular Horse, we possess a model for native re-organisation whose soundness and applicability are warranted by the facts; that its theory was elaborated from practice under circumstances similar with those to be encountered by any future native force; that while elaborating this system its founder exposed the vices of the regular system, and predicted its present failure; that the testimony of every officer who has served in the Sind Horse is strongly in favour of its soundness and efficiency; that upon the strain bearing on our entire military system in India, this corps remained staunch under very trying conditions; that, looking into the works of statesmen who have formerly addressed themselves to the question of army reform in India, we find men like Sir John Malcolm, Sir Thomas Munro, and Lord Metcalfe, all giving independent (and until recently unpublished) evidence in favour of views very similar to those practised by General Jacob; lastly, that, looking ourselves into the details of the system, we find them to be adapted to the requirements of the service, and to be in accordance with those broad principles of common sense which, in every trade not interfered with by the State, are found to be essential to success.

From these facts, from a careful study of General Jacob's works, from a long and watchful observation of his daily proceedings, and from personal contact with his men and officers, I have arrived at the deliberate and unalterable conclusion that, partly owing to circumstances and partly owing to original character, he has succeeded in forming a model upon which, in our present crisis, we may permanently mould our native armies in India.

That these armies should always be supported by European troops I readily concede; but this support, in the event of foreign invasion, combined with mutual trust during time of peace, is diametrically opposed to the principle and practice involved in the establishment of an English army of occupation, to the exclusion, half trust, or subordination, of a native army.

I hope in my next letter to state the manner in which I would apply the proposed system to the actual state of things in India, bearing always in mind that gradual growth is preferable to sudden convulsion.

I am, &c.,

C. D. L.

April 2.

LETTER IV.

THE REMEDY APPLIED TO THE ACTUAL CONDITION
OF THE PATIENT.

SIR,—Having shown that we possess a model upon which to re-organise the native army of India, and having pointed out, without any reserve or circumlocution whatsoever, that there dwells at least one man in our empire who can discern the material for such a force, and who has proved himself able to organise it into loyalty and efficiency, I proceed now to render my argument yet more practical, by indicating the manner in which the proposed re-organisation may be carried into effect with the greatest eventual completeness, and with the least possible present convulsion.

To this end, I must take a rapid survey of the governmental distribution and military condition of the Indian empire. At present, there are in British India three presidencies* subordinated to a Governor-General, and the only change I would propose in this constitution is the creation of a fourth presidency, accompanied with some convenient modifications in the boundaries of its fellows. The four presidencies should be, severally, the Presidency of the Ganges Valley, the Presidency of the Territories of the Indus, the Presidency of the Western Coast, and the Presidency of the Eastern Coast. The presidential towns might be, for the first, Agra; for the second, Kurrachee; for the third, Bombay; and for the fourth, Madras. Supreme over all, the Governor-General would, as at present, have his capital in

* In enumerating three presidencies I include, of course, the North-West Provinces in the Presidency of Bengal.

Calcutta. Among the advantages of this re-distribution would be the greatest practicable compactness; a less marked difference among the societies of men contained within their several limits; and, in the instances of the Presidencies of the Indus and the Ganges, a greater unity of authority along their lines of trade, their lines of water carriage, their external political relations, and their military frontiers. Subordinate to these Governorships should be Commissioners of Provinces, whose jurisdictions might be defined, as nearly as practicable, upon a consideration of the revenue and judicial systems already obtaining within the same. It is not, however, my intention to enter into the details of this question of civil administration. It has been adverted to only to render clearer my military proposition, and to those I now return.

We may consider that the Bengal Native Army has almost wholly ceased to exist; that the army of Bombay contains two or three regiments who have shown themselves more or less disaffected; and that the Madras army still continues loyal. We may further assume that the regiments which have mutinied will not be recruited; and that neither reason nor prudence will permit us to restore arms to those regiments which in times of danger we have deemed it necessary to disarm. This actual state of circumstances, then, I would accept; and while holding in view the re-organisation, as opportunity or occasion should permit, of all the native armies of India, I would, in the first instance, limit its introduction to that sphere which is open for its operation. Thus doubt and distrust would be precluded among our still loyal sepoys; thus experience would find time to modify details as we proceeded; and yet, whether by transference of individuals to the new regiments, or by casualties and retirements, no long period would elapse ere our object should be thoroughly attained.

The fields then open for the introduction of our

system would, under the proposed distribution of presidencies, be those of the valleys of the Indus and the Ganges. So much determined, I would, in the first instance, select the points at which the European portion of my forces should be stationed. These points should be selected in healthy localities; in the vicinity of inland water-carriage and military roads; should be, if possible, on the seaboard; should be connected by telegraphic wires; and should be maintained thoroughly complete in all the details of carriage, supplies, &c., requisite for an immediate march on active service. These European troops should be massed in divisions as large as possible, so that the men might be accustomed to work together; and, when sent on active service, might understand combined as well as independent movement; and not, as is too frequently the case, find themselves, when in the presence of an enemy, in a position somewhat similar to that in which a body of workmen for the first time collected and thrown into a manufactory would feel themselves, when directed to turn out their first piece of goods. These troops, thus massed, would form the support of the native army in the event of foreign aggression; and while preserved from constant personal contact with the natives, and from consequent perpetuation of the race-hatred which has now unhappily been generated, they would still be in hand, and in all respects be ready to pounce upon and extinguish any spark of rebellion ere it should find time to spread. I am careful, however, to repeat that this European force should be considered, and should be treated, not as the controllers, but as the support, of the native army. Upon the principle involved in this distinction depends, as I said before, the maintenance or otherwise of our rule in India.

We cannot, I think, too soon set to work upon this task of re-organisation. Once earnestly taken in hand, a sense of returning confidence would spread among the native military population. As the new regiments

were enlisted, some of the English regiments might be withdrawn, and thus one great source of race-hatred be removed. With regard to the Indus Presidency, the work should, in my opinion, be commenced at once. Along the westward of that territory lies our most vulnerable and most disturbed frontier; a frontier which, although nobody will at present attend to it, will one day startle England with intelligence as terrible, and not less dangerous, than that which has startled her during the past year. That line is not only vulnerable, but is of so deadly a climate, that European soldiers could neither work nor even exist there; so that under any circumstances it must be held by native troops. At the centre of the line you have, moreover, the regiments upon which I propose to reorganise the army, and the general to whom I look for the successful conduct of the task. And, therefore, without any ambiguity, I say, direct General Jacob to take in hand the organisation of a native force, complete in all arms, and organised on the Silidar principle, as exemplified in the Sind Irregular Horse, to be called "the Frontier Field Force," to range to the westward of the Indus from Kurrachee to Peshawur, and to be supported at these two extremities by divisions of European troops. In so directing, you would, I consider, secure every element both of person and principle, towards a successful issue of the experiment. If the experiment fail, the failure will be but local, and the divisions at Kurrachee and Peshawur could at once crumple up the intervening light troops. But screw your courage to the sticking place, and we'll not fail.

Before quitting this portion of my subject, let me again urge that we are even now at the turning point of our career in India. If we use our brains and proceed wisely, we shall establish our rule more firmly than ever; if we trust to our muscles, we are lost. Whatever we may think of the natives, they do not look on themselves as vile, or upon the atrocities committed by the sepoy as other than the venge-

ful but natural and inevitable consequences of causes emanating from ourselves. I hope there is no man living who abhors more than I do the atrocities committed under the authority of Nana Sahib, but I cannot at the same time conceal from myself that he is not abhorred by his own caste, nor by the people. I well know upon what tender ground I am touching. I well know that had we not shown ourselves unequal to the great task of an Indian empire, I had never touched upon this controversy at all; but injured and angry as we are, let us endeavour still to look truth steadily and dispassionately in the face, and rising superior to all personal feelings, re-establish our power in India upon sound and lasting principles. Your English bulldog has excellent pluck, but his weight is not quite up to holding down the Indian elephant; and the sooner you now draw him off the better. Be sure, if you do not, the day is coming when Nana will be regarded by the natives as an exemplar, and his dead followers as martyrs.

It remains now to review the means at our disposal for recruiting that portion of the proposed force which must be derived from England. I allude, of course, to the European officers. These, for the native army, whatever they may be for any other army in the world, must be obtained, not by purchase, not by patronage, not by seniority, but by selection; selection, pure and simple. I know the objections urged against this principle. I have seen those objections disproved over and over and over again; but so far as my limits may admit, I will now recur to them. To do so, however, I must again advert to the civil department of our administration; and I premise by asserting that all the English youth sent out from this country for the government, whether civil or military, of India should be collected in one general list for general duty. It should receive in England that education which may adapt it to the work of general administration; but the particular sphere of each individual should be determined in India after

trial, and, if possible, in accordance with the inclinations of the individual himself. There is ample room and verge enough for all. I know that in populous and highly organised societies the division of labour is inevitably carried out to an extreme degree—the competition of numberless highly accomplished aspirants compels this. But this condition is not arrived at in India. What you want there is not genius but common sense, not special excellence but general capacity, aptitude, and diligence. The soldier statesman, as he has been called, or what I shall call a man taken from the middle classes of English life, who understands how to govern a larger or smaller society in India—this is the man we want there. Place him, if you can, in the position for which he shows most aptitude and inclination; but let him be prepared also for emergencies which may and probably will befall him in all departments of public business. This end is best secured by casting all, in the first instance, into one general list, and thence selecting them as their characters develop and the requirements of the service demand. But if the strength and durability of the entire fabric of your power in India depend upon this careful and wise selection of material, surely, when selecting for the native army, which is in truth the corner-stone of that fabric, it were wise to select a good bit of stuff and carefully shape it to its place.

The main objections urged against the principle of selection are two—first, that you cannot find men to select; and second, you cannot find men to be selected.

Let us look a little into it, and see how it dovetails in with the system. The centre round which the entire system of selection revolves lies in the endowment of your local administrators with full powers, and demanding from them commensurate responsibility. In India these heads should be, for the civil department, the rulers of provinces; and for the army, the commandants of regiments. The centering

of all power in these commanders is, it is manifest, widely different from a system of centralisation at a capital. These governors have all the local and personal knowledge requisite for success, and all the responsibility of failure. Allow them the selection of their materials, and every motive, as well self-interested as public, will conduce to make them select the best men available. More than this you cannot expect; so long as humanity remains imperfect. Again, in regard of the men to be selected, the question is not as to whether by a system of selecting you will secure perfection, but whether the original material remaining the same, you will not more nearly approach that unattainable point than by any other system you ever have tried or can adopt. Coming into India on the general list, your young men would gradually be known, and know themselves. If an individual showed an aptitude for an appointment to a native regiment, he would be appointed accordingly. If he proved incompetent, he would be returned by the commanding officer to the general list; if he proved competent, he would find himself respectable and respected, with sufficient employment, and with duties which formed his pleasure. I repeat, the tendency of the selection system is in the right direction; it will never be immaculate, but it will always progress. What, on the other hand, is the tendency of any other system you have ever seen in operation?—towards stagnation, towards death. This general argument would, in my opinion, apply even in a free country, whose press, whose religious institutions, and whose government, more or less accurately express the general sense of the people; but with what thousand-fold power does it apply in India! Here the Government is as it were the growth, the skin of the nation; there, it is like an adult's coat thrown on the body of a child. We are ever in danger of encumbering India with our civilisation; we are applying the England of Queen Victoria to the time of Herodotus in Assyria.

Here, public measures may, I believe, be generally traced to the people—public opinion ticks on to the hour for a necessary change; the press proclaims the time; and the hand of government points accordingly. There, the agents of government are *bonâ fide* the mainspring of the machine. They may under govern or over govern, or not govern at all, and be assailed by no more than a petition in the vernacular. There is no expression of public opinion, no revulsion against aught, save violent innovation. All centres in the administrator; and that is best which is best administered. One district may become desolate, not through the ill will, but through the ignorance of an unselected administrator; while the neighbouring waste becomes populous and cultivated, because blest by a man who, having once defined and recorded rights, knows how to stand by and keep the peace, and let the people grow.

Whatever you strong free people may be able to do here in England, there, in God's name, govern India by selected administrators, subjected to full responsibility. If your administrator fail, remove, disgrace him, but do not trammel his successors with rigid precedents, for which no perfectly analogous point may ever recur.

I am, &c.,

C. D. L.

April 3.

LETTER V.

THE INDIA BILLS.

“ Governments grow; they cannot be made.”

SIR,—I am astonished that a nation so jealous of innovation, and so conservative in reform, as the English have ever shown themselves to be in England, should prove themselves to be so reckless of established institutions and so radical in revolution as the English are now showing themselves to be with regard to India. Is it possible that the people who owe all that distinguishes this country to the gradual growth of its constitution, have actually within a period of three months allowed their representatives to manufacture two successive bran-new constitutions for their greatest dependency? Is this the lesson our own history of the past eight hundred years teaches us? Is this the fruit of all the warnings we have received from the constitution-mongering of Europe? Why, you could not make two watches to order in the same time; and do you think the machinery of an Anglo-Indian government is less delicate to handle, less intricate to put together, and less difficult to regulate than that of a watch? Why, your spring crops were sown ere the first bill was hatched, and your crops will not ripen till autumn. What! do you suppose constitutions grow more quickly than corn?

But not content with one constitution a season, the first bill was no sooner taking root than, like impatient children, you must needs pull it up to see how

it is getting on; and, not being quite satisfied with its progress, you cut out its only vital eye, and then popped the dead carcase in again. Truly, if you continue to sow thus, you will reap the hurricane with a vengeance. Was it thus you proceeded in your own Revolution? was it thus the great Lord Somers drafted the change in the succession? was it thus you arrived at the Reform Bill? Is it thus you would wish to see a handful of Frenchmen disposing of your island Government in the Chambers of Paris? Or do you suppose, because a hundred and twenty millions of human beings, native to the other side of the globe, are weak enough to submit to your guidance, that they will assent also to become the shuttlecock of your factions, and the mere instruments of party? Incredible folly of so really wise a nation as this is! Yet, I do not attribute this madness to the nation. I accuse, rather, its Government. Sir, there was a time when I was innocent enough to believe that the English Government represented the English people. This illusion is now gone for ever. Like brilliant foam on the great ocean of British thought, Ministry follows Ministry—now blue, now orange—each dazzling, each claiming to reflect the hues of heavenly light; each hollow, each destined to be blown to atoms by a blast, and to sink again into the general mass. Lord Derby at the Mansion-house, Lord Palmerston jeering the India question out of Parliament: it is all one. Each cares for nothing but party, and each loves nothing but power.

I entreat the English nation to step in, before it is too late, between these ready-made constitutions and that ancient empire in the East. Can you see in the first anything but a great “perhaps”—a vapoury ghost, not yet gathered into shape? Can you see in the second anything save the workings of prejudice, despotism, and eager revenge, disguised in the least practicable quantity of gammon required to wash the mixture down? Have you considered that the day after the passing of the latter measure the

Minister for India will be absolute despot over one quarter of the human race ; and that ere Parliament re-assemble the enforcement of one arbitrary principle may result in the destruction of your empire ? Again—and it is a question of comparatively trivial moment—you possess a few thousands of English gentlemen administering your affairs in India, whose prospects, whose fortunes, whose honour, whose lives, and whose families' lives and honour, are involved in these India bills, and it might not, perhaps, be altogether unreasonable to bestow some little consideration on them. I am bold to say that they expect from you a grand united effort to restore the health of your Indian empire ; and that while they think very little of which side may be in, and which side out, they think a great deal about a reasonable re-organisation of the Indian government in India, and about the evils of a protracted intermediate condition of incertitude.

Sir, I am more and more in favour of continuative growth. I deprecate sudden convulsion or change anywhere. I especially deprecate it in the instance of our Indian "empire." If the Members of Parliament in general evinced that knowledge of the measures to be discussed, without which legislation becomes mere chance-work, I should trust to a rejection of both Bills as they at present stand, and to the settlement, point after point, of some moderate reform by a Committee of the whole House. But it is impossible not to perceive that Parliament is quite uninformed of the details upon which the Government of India rests. Parliament knows little more about our Indian empire than the Ministry do. And I am compelled to admit therefore, that Parliament is incompetent to pass any Bill involving a radical change in the constitution of the Indian Government. On the whole, then, let as little be done as possible, and let that little be done without further delay. So shall your Indian government the longer endure, and the suspense and danger of India be curtailed and lessened. Deal with this India question as you would deal with a similar question

affecting your own government. Bear in mind that in every quarter of the globe human nature is in its essentials one, and government at bottom one. Act, then, towards the natives of India, and towards your servants of India, as you would wish to see a foreign dominant power—had you the misfortune to be subjected to one—act by you and your representatives. Place the government of the empire directly under the Crown; but administer it through the Board of Directors with the President of the Control-office sitting as chairman; so shall you superadd to the authority of the Company that of the Crown; so shall you avoid suddenly discountenancing and abolishing constituted authority in a critical juncture; so shall you combine into one a double and often divided Home Government of India; so shall you prefer continuative growth to ill-considered revolution; and so shall you leave yourselves at liberty to reform gradually hereafter, in conformity with those wise principles which have preserved your own country inviolate, progressive, and still to progress, amid the general anarchy and ruin of continental States.

I am, &c.,

C. D. L.

April 10.