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A Volunteer Force, British and Colonial, in the Event of War

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SPECIAL LECTURE.

Monday, May 28, 1877.

General Sir WILLIAM J. CODRINGTON, G.C.B., &c., &c., &c.,
Vice-President, in the Chair.

A VOLUNTEER FORCE, BRITISH AND COLONIAL, IN THE EVENT OF WAR.

By Colonel H. C. FLETCHER, C.M.G., Commanding 2nd Battalion
Scots Guards.

It has been somewhat difficult to find a heading for this paper that will explain the views that are intended to be set forth, and therefore I may as well say that the scheme which I propose to bring under your notice this afternoon, is one for subsidising an expeditionary force of regular troops (supposing such a force should ever be necessary) by representative bodies of our volunteers, drawn not only from the mother country, but from her great colonies. I do not venture to propound this plan otherwise than to provoke the criticism, and to draw forth the opinions of the experienced soldiers who would be called upon to command and to organise our forces in the event of war, as well as of those who, brought into contact with the class that compose the strength of our volunteers, will be able to speak authoritatively of its desirability and even of its possibility. The difficulties that may attend it are doubtless great, the objections to it are probably numerous, but if there be a germ of practicability about such a scheme the sooner this germ ripens into fruit by the assistance of friendly criticism, the better it will be, and if there be no reality about it, the quicker it is consigned to the limbo where ill-digested and useless plans lie, the better it will also be.

Before attempting to set forth any details, I must, in order to defend the position I intend to take up, endeavour to lay down a few general principles. Owing to facility of communication, denseness of population, and the power that mechanical skill has afforded of arming, supplying, and transporting vast numbers of men, and of providing unlimited quantities of material, the armies now placed in the field are far larger than any that have ever been organised in former

periods of European history; whilst in place of fighting their battles with troops removed for long periods of service from civil life, continental nations vie with each other in sweeping into the net of conscription the larger portion of their male population. Happily our insular position enables us to avoid (at all events for the present) this method of converting nations into armed camps, thereby sapping their energies and rendering war almost preferable to armed peace. We are content with a comparatively small army raised from what I must call—in fault of a better word—our poorer classes, and to supplement this army by a militia also formed from similar materials, and by our volunteers, who furnish an outlet for the military instincts of the middle strata of our society; whilst we leave our great colonies to manage their own affairs, without endeavouring to unite them in any imperial scheme of mutual defence—gradually, and by a method peculiarly our own—of improving, without revolutionising—we are bringing together a portion of these heterogeneous bodies into something like a cohesive force; but war may not wait for the perfecting of our plans, and we may be called upon to take the field before our organisation has advanced beyond its elementary processes. For merely defensive warfare, plans have doubtless been prepared, and the recent mobilisation scheme shows that the utility of what are called our auxiliary forces has been partially recognised. But when has England waited to be attacked? Has she not interests to guard beyond the four seas; outposts to garrison, on the defence of which the vitality of our Empire depends; and even a policy to support that may lead to our selecting for the seat of war, a foreign country rather than our own fields. For such a war, expeditionary forces proportionate to the strength of a mighty nation will be necessary, and every energy will be taxed to supply means for rendering them sufficiently powerful to meet the hordes that conscription has enabled our continental neighbours to place under arms. Our regular troops will be augmented, our militia mobilized and increased in numbers, and all the inducements that pay and bounty can afford will be tried, to swell the ranks and supply the needs of our army and of our navy. But how can we compete with the product of the wide net of conscription, through whose meshes so few fish can escape, unless we utilize our middle classes, and avail ourselves of at least a small portion of the vast organisation that has placed so many of them under arms? Why also should we not welcome among our first line, the sons of those enterprising men who have extended the influence and power of England through so many distant lands, and have inherited with the warlike instincts of their race, the loyalty that would impel them to great sacrifices, in the event of danger to the country that they still look on as home?

Since the last great wars of the French revolution, the total population of England has not only increased enormously in numbers, but the middle class which now forms the bulk of our volunteer forces has augmented in an even higher ratio. The threat of invasion in 1859 called forth its warlike instincts, and gradually but steadily, the organisation it adopted has risen in efficiency, and the force has shewn itself

more and more alive to the reality of the work that may possibly await it. There are doubtless great differences in the efficiency of regiments; but the majority of those Officers who have had opportunities of commanding brigades composed of volunteers will I feel sure bear evidence of their discipline, and aptitude to learn, and of the willingness with which they will make sacrifices for the sake of instruction in their military duties. The liking for display and for what may be called the showy externals of a military career, have in great measure given place to a sense of the reality of their work; and the more this reality is brought home to the members of the force, the greater will be their zeal, and the higher their standard of efficiency. It is well understood in all countries, that to keep a picked body of troops, such as those that do duty as guards to the sovereign, up to the proper mark, the feeling that in times of danger, they will be the first to be sent on service, is of the most vital importance, and on a somewhat similar principle the dangers of active service ought to be faced by the peculiarly constituted force represented by the English volunteers. War is a great leveller; distinction of class, advantages of social position, the possession of wealth, and of the capacity for enjoying it, all vanish before the exigencies of service, and the very fact that the volunteer regiments include among their rank and file, men of a higher social grade than the regulars and the militia, points to the desirability of giving them opportunities of facing danger, and of showing that they are worthy of the advantages that Providence has bestowed upon them. That this feeling exists among the members of the force is evidenced by the increased impetus that even a vague prospect of service gives to their recruiting, and by the additional and self-imposed work which many of the Officers and men undertake when war on the continent shows even a slight chance of military employment. What the French describe as the baptism of fire, applied even to a small portion of the force, would do more to increase the popularity and raise the standard of the volunteers, than years of drill and preparation. It would augment their prestige, would create traditions of danger faced and of glory won, and would stamp on them a reality which subsequent years of peace would fail to efface. I think that it is hardly necessary to pursue further this portion of the subject, the fact is so indubitable that few will be disposed to question it, and if I may be allowed, I will assume that solely with the object of elevating the *morale* of the volunteers, the advantage of employing a portion of the force on the first opportunity that war affords (putting aside for the present all difficulties in carrying out the plan) is indisputable, and may be taken for granted.

There are, however, other aspects of the question, which naturally occur to all who think it over. In the first place would a force composed of volunteers be able at the outbreak, or soon after the outbreak of hostilities, to take its place with regular troops? To this query I can well understand that many Officers who have experience of soldiers, will feel some difficulty in giving a favourable reply. They know how long it takes to make an effective soldier, and how gradually discipline becomes inculcated into his mind by the daily,

strict, routine of drill and duty. From much experience, they are aware of the constant attention and careful supervision which the raw recruit requires to convert him from the yokel to the smart soldier, and they view with suspicion the royal road to learning which they think the volunteer is aiming at. These objections are well worthy of consideration and afford much scope for thought; but on the other hand the end in view must not be forgotten in testing the means employed, and the lessons of history ought to be carefully criticised and then duly appreciated. The aim of all military training is to produce a body of men who will face hardship, danger and death without question and without flinching. The ordinary weaknesses of the flesh have to be subdued by other impulses; and as the body is strengthened by exercise, so must the moral qualities of the soldier be fortified by the stimulants comprised in the comprehensive term of discipline, whilst his own self-reliance must be augmented by the belief that he is supported by men actuated by similar motives.

But men are differently constituted, and although in peace-time, and having regard to the ordinary type of recruit, we grind all in the same mill, yet it does not follow that there may not be a shorter way of attaining a similar result. Among the numbers that compose the volunteer force, there must be many men who are imbued with a large share of (what may be termed military instincts, but who are debarred by their position in life from taking service either as private soldiers, or as Officers of the regular army. These men voluntarily attend many more than the prescribed number of drills, they also view their work in a more practical light than others who go through it in a perfunctory manner, consequently they are far in advance of their comrades, and are frequently on a par with men who have engaged exclusively, at all events for a few years, in a military career. To these men the prospect of active employment would serve as a powerful incentive for renewed exertions. Their education, the feeling of responsibility which their status in society gives, and the additional stake they possess in the country, would all act as stimulants to enterprise, and would more than counterbalance the absence of a portion of the professional training which an ordinary recruit receives. Surely a brigade of men such as these, chosen from among the best volunteer regiments, of high physical qualities, and brought together, say for a fortnight's training under some energetic regular Officer, would be welcomed by any general of division, and would be infinitely preferred to the foreign mercenary levies who augmented the numbers of the English Army at the close of the Crimean war; good as those troops doubtless were. And here I would observe that it appears to me unworthy of a great nation to fight its battles with troops that have nothing in common with it except the pay they receive, whilst it leaves untapped the mine of wealth that its middle classes present. Without doubt we have pursued this course in former wars, but it must be remembered that the principal recruiting grounds for mercenary troops is now more than occupied by a great military nation, that has too much employment for its own sons, to permit of their giving military service to other countries. Besides this, in the

Peninsular war, we fought the battle of oppressed Europe, and so drew into our army those, who, hating French rule, were consequently unable to remain in their own homes, and therefore took service in our army.

It is a comparatively modern idea that battles are to be fought by men trained exclusively for war, and that the mass of the nation is to look on whilst its life and honour are defended by a portion only of its representatives. In the ancient republics of Greece and Italy, it was the duty, and even the exclusive privilege of the citizens to bear arms, and not until the decline of Roman liberties, did paid legionaries take the place of the levies of the free inhabitants of the great city. Conscription, properly enforced, compels all classes to bear their share of military duty, and those armies have been most formidable that have included in their ranks representatives from every portion of the nation. The troops of the French Republic which the Great Napoleon led into Italy, the German army that conquered at Sadowna and at Sedan, were types of the nations they fought for, being composed of every element of which they were formed. Excellent as the English regular army is, it yet lacks the elasticity which gives scope for all the warlike energy of the people; and when a serious war tries the nation, a loss of strength will ensue unless every class pays its share of the blood as well as of the money contributions.

I have now endeavoured to establish two theses: first, that a representative body of volunteers in a military expedition beyond the seas, would be of great service to the force itself; and secondly, that they would add to the strength of the army of which they would form a part, whilst, indirectly, both as benefiting the volunteer force, and as bringing prominently to the front the middle classes of the community, they would materially increase the fighting power of the nation. It now remains for me to endeavour to indicate how such a force might be raised, and here I must ask for the indulgence and forbearance of those who are so much better acquainted with the subject than I am, presuming on the fact that sometimes the ignorant, from a want of knowledge of difficulties, may strike out a line which those who are brought face to face with them, cannot venture to pursue. In a discussion on the recent mobilization scheme, and the place allotted to the volunteers in the defence of the country, I heard a distinguished colonel of one of the best metropolitan corps make the remark that he quite approved of the force being at first placed in fortresses or entrenched positions, as he felt sure that if they were subsequently found fit for the field, the generals in command would be too glad to have them. Mr. Hoste, in the able paper which he read at this Institution,¹ pointed out the desirability of dividing the force into a first line and a reserve; and this idea has been advocated by Lord Elexio, and I believe already partially carried out in so far that the force of some of the regiments is strengthened by a register of men who have passed through the ranks, and who are willing to serve again in the event of war. I would propose to enlarge on this scheme, and endeavour in peace time to provide for an organization that might be utilised in providing a force ready for immediate war. In every regiment of

¹ For lecture, see page 799.

volunteers a roll of men might be prepared who would be willing in case of hostilities to serve abroad, say for a limited time; these men should pledge themselves to attain to a higher pitch of efficiency than their comrades, by attending a larger number of drills; they should be passed as medically fit for service, and should be certified as being effective soldiers by the Inspecting Officers at the yearly inspections of the regiments. As there are about 165,000 enrolled and efficient infantry volunteers, two per cent. would give a force of upwards of 3,500, or very nearly a brigade; whilst if a really popular war should break out, and (with the present extension of the franchise) no war not popular could be undertaken, this number would be rapidly increased. It may be objected that under the most favourable aspect the force raised would be small; but as I have already endeavoured to point out, mere numbers do not measure its real value. The yeast that leavens the dough is insignificant in quantity, but its effects are unmistakeably great, and the first expeditionary force sent abroad would in all probability form the nucleus of considerable reinforcements as the nation warmed to its work, and as the strain of war closed many of the outlets for labour, which peaceful civilization opens for the middle classes of society. For it must not be forgotten that a serious conflict would necessitate great sacrifices and many economies, and that those who minister to the refinements of life would find less demand for their labour. There are, also, in all vigorous communities many young men whom the prospect of military service arouses from idleness and pleasure, and who would willingly engage in a force where they would find friends and companions of their own condition, although they might be unwilling to embrace a purely military career by enlisting into the regular army; for although it may be said, that if these young fellows are so fond of soldiering, they had better take service in the ordinary way, the fact remains that they will not do so. Even among the most military nations, where conscription is the law of the land, some escape is afforded to the sons of the gentry by means of a cadet service; and I think few will be prepared to say that, except under the pressure of the most imminent danger, the sons of our gentry, of our tradesmen, and of our farmers, will enlist in any large numbers into the regular army or the militia. We must deal with facts as we find them, and I am inclined to believe that this is a fact that few will be prepared to contest.

Supposing it were possible in peace time to form any approximate idea of the numbers of a force raised from the volunteers, companies might be organized on paper from regiments that have an affinity to each other, and the proper Officers nominated to command them. Certain regiments, either from social similitude or from local influences, establish ties which it might be well to recognise, and so whilst providing for uniformity in the total force raised, some consideration might be given to the inclinations of the volunteers in the divisions of the brigade into battalions and companies. To guard against the interference that the organization of such a force might cause to the recruiting for the army and the militia, and to the possibility of ambitious men raising companies and regiments to obtain commis-

sions, I would forbid any but efficient volunteers being enrolled in it; so that at the outset of hostilities the brigade for service would be selected solely from those who had made themselves efficient members of their corps during time of peace.

A notable instance of a large portion of an army being raised from a class similar to that which forms our volunteers, may be found in the troops of the Southern States of America that commenced the war with the victory of Bull Run. There, might be seen companies raised by wealthy men, who recognizing in themselves a want of military experience took service in the ranks, whilst the private soldiers came into camp attended by their slaves, who, exempt from military discipline, enjoyed more freedom than their masters. As the war developed into larger proportions, those who survived the first battles returned with the experience gained on service and raised fresh companies and regiments, which they were able to command as Officers and non-commissioned officers. And thus the country benefited not only by the example set by the upper classes, and by their actual fighting powers, but by the training afforded to men who in other respects were well qualified to serve as Officers. In a minor degree (as the war at its commencement was less national) the Northern States furnished regiments composed of men who could compare with those who fill the ranks of the best of our volunteer regiments. I have frequently seen a regiment from New York (recruited from what may be considered a wealthy class) engaged in some of the hardest work of a siege, and it certainly was not among such troops that breeches of discipline occurred. In neither of the instances quoted, had however the volunteer regiments the advantage of serving side by side with regulars, a defect in organization inseparable from the constitution of the American armies, but one which led to terrible disaster: for I would insist with great stress on the necessity for this description of force being limited to a small proportion only of the army. After months of drill and of discipline, the proportion might doubtless be increased, but nothing can compensate for any want of the elements of stability, which discipline, training, and, I may add, professional instincts, can alone insure.

For the regimental Officers of such a force, I would provide in the same way as for the men, only greater care should be taken in their selection. Not only should they be well instructed in drill, but they should be men known in their regiments, as possessing power of command and qualities that would bear the test of actual service. If they have had the advantage of training in the regular army, so much the better; but there are qualities which no training can give, but which seem to be born with men, and which are instinctively felt by those who are brought in contact with them. The field of selection would probably be large, as the number of Officers required would be but few, and in the event of active employment, no hesitation should be felt in summarily getting rid of any who might be incompetent. The less highly trained a force is, the better should be its Officers. There are many men who can command creditably a regiment in perfect order, and possessing all its proper links of responsibility: but there are but

few who can lead and impress a character on a force such as our Indian irregular regiments. I use this example as the nearest at hand, and as serving to describe the class of men to whom should be granted the privilege of officering a force such as it is proposed to organize. There would, I believe, be little difficulty in finding properly qualified men for this responsible position. In the volunteers are many ex-Officers of the regular army, who have seen service in the field and who are young and energetic; and although, as I have just said, this qualification should not be insisted upon, it should still carry considerable weight, and should constitute a claim for selection provided other requirements were fulfilled. Similar arguments would apply in a minor degree to the non-commissioned officers, but as in all probability several of the young men who would enrol themselves would already hold that grade, although prepared to resign it and to serve as privates, there would be a considerable scope for selection on the assembly of the force prior to embarkation.

It may, perhaps, be contended that the regiments would lack cohesion, that men would not know their Officers, and that it would take a considerable time before the units could be welded into a cohesive mass. But it must be remembered, that I am speaking of a time when a prospect of war would add an indescribable stimulant to exertion, and when, consequently, as much could be done in one day as in a week or month of ordinary life. I am also taking for granted that the ingredients of such a force, selected from so large a body as the volunteers now are, would be of no common order, and that each and all being actuated by similar motives, the fortnight or so in camp or in barracks previous to embarkation under an energetic staff, would be able to work wonders. The system of drilling regiments of volunteers in brigade, would give the opportunity to men of becoming acquainted with each other in peace time. The young fellows, whose names were enrolled as willing to serve in war, would soon be known throughout the brigade, they would probably be inspected together whenever it assembled for drill, and thus the men of the companies would not be strangers to each other. A few days in a transport, and a still fewer before an enemy would cement the union already formed, and would create ties that years of peaceful life would fail to form. A similar objection may also be found to apply to the regular army, when regiments for embarkation are often swamped by draughts of men totally unacquainted with each other or with their Officers. It can, therefore, be overcome, especially under the favourable conditions of a force composed as that we are dealing with, and I think the difficulty may be regarded as more ideal than real.

A place would, of course, be indicated for the brigade to assemble at when war appeared imminent, probably near London or Aldershot, where arms, clothing, and equipment would be served out, and where its organisation, previous to embarkation, might be completed. It would be desirable that the uniform should be assimilated in all essentials to that of the army, and that the men once assembled, should, in every respect, be dealt with as regular soldiers. There would be no difficulty in discipline if the reins were in proper hands, as

most of the ingredients that conduce to it would be present in full force. *Esprit de corps* would be very strong. Education and intelligence would enable men to comprehend the meaning and necessity of orders, and all would feel that not only was the honour of their regiment and brigade entrusted to them, but that they were the representatives of the 185,000 volunteers from whose ranks they had been picked, and who were themselves, in all probability, making ready to take their part in the defensive organisation of the country; and were, consequently, watching as soldiers the behaviour of their more fortunate comrades. I can conceive no more favourable conditions for inculcating discipline and for completing organisation. How such a force should be managed, trained, and brought into the field can be studied in the recently published and most interesting memoirs of the Count de Segur, where, as the close of the great struggle, that—following the retreat from Russia—culminated in the battles before Paris, that admirable Officer was ordered to raise, organise, and equip regiments of young men drawn from the royalist families of Normandy and Brittany. How he succeeded and how these regiments proved in action the value of their training will also best be learnt by a perusal of the same volumes.

It is scarcely necessary to say that the force proposed to be raised from the volunteers should be treated in every way whilst on service as regular troops, they would be under the Mutiny Act, and would receive the regulated pay and allowances. In fact, whilst serving they would be regarded as regular troops, only I would venture to suggest that if they proved fit for duties in the field they should be pushed well to the front and not left in garrison. This privilege, I think, they might venture to ask for, and I doubt whether any jealousy would be created by according it to them.

I have now briefly, and I fear incompletely, brought under your notice the first part of the scheme, which is comprised under the heading of this paper; but before discussing the second portion of the subject, I would desire to answer an objection that I foresee may be made. There are three great organisations that compose our army, the regulars, the militia, and the volunteers, and it may be said that I am unduly exalting the third at the expense of the second. But to this I would reply, that one of the bases of my argument lies in the assertion that the volunteers represent a class in the community, which—unless conscription be enforced—is not found in either the regulars or the militia, and that it is to utilise this force and to give it additional vitality, that I propose to place a small portion of it in the first line; whilst I would quote (to strengthen my arguments) the great benefit that accrued to the militia from the sending of several regiments to garrison our fortresses in the Mediterranean during the Crimean war. If that war had continued and expanded, doubtless these regiments (excellent in every way, and by the training and practice they had had, fit to take their place in the field) would have been pushed to the front. The same result would, I venture to say, occur in any future great war, and the militia regiments need not fear lest they should be ignored, if—and this admits of no doubt—they

attain to the standard of efficiency which their comrades of 1855 and 1856 reached. There is room for all in a serious war, and wealthy England need not be afraid that she will be called upon to equip more soldiers than she can afford to bring into the field. I contend that she has never tapped a most rich mine, and that in place of subsidizing other countries and engaging mercenaries, she ought to utilise to the utmost her own children, especially when so many of them will be only too eager to fight for her.

To turn to the second portion of the subject, namely, the employment of a Colonial force to act with our regular army.

The facilities of communication, and the increased intercourse between portions of the globe separated from each other by what were formerly considered as vast distances, have tended to bring our great colonies into far closer union with the mother country than in past days. Time, has, in fact, been completely annihilated, and the instantaneous transmission of intelligence augments the interest that those who look on, have for those who are engaged in war; whilst rapidity of communication affords means of giving practical expression to their feelings of sympathy. The connection between England and Canada has become very close, every event is telegraphed, and if the occurrence of a fog in London affords a paragraph in an Ottawa evening paper of the same day, much more will any circumstance that touches on the interests of England find an immediate echo throughout the colony. A war in which England were engaged, would stir to the depths the feeling of loyalty and the love of home that are such marked characteristics of Canadians, and there would be a universal desire to do more than merely look on as spectators of any struggle in which we might be involved. A few days ago a telegram from Canada announced that a field battery at Toronto had volunteered for service in the event of England going to war, and it is probable that many other portions of the Canadian Militia would, under such circumstances, be eager to cast in their lot with the British Army.

Owing partly to a general belief that in consequence of the good feeling existing between England and the United States, and the peaceful aspect of affairs throughout the great Republic, no need exists of military preparation, the Canadian Militia has gradually been reduced in number, and I must say in efficiency. The last report shows that they consist of not more than 23,000 actually exercised during the preceding year, and the period of training extends only to twelve days for artillery and eight days for the other branches of the service. When I add that there is no permanent and paid staff of any description below a brigade major, a notion may be arrived at of the general condition of the force if measured by a European standard. "At the same time" (to quote General Selby Smyth's report) "it must be borne in mind that the active militia is but the "advanced guard of the Army of Canada in case a general call to "arms should ever occur. The real force of the country would then "be represented by the reserve militia amounting by law to some "600,000 men." From this larger basis of supply, the troops who

might enrol themselves for foreign service could be drawn, and it must be remembered, that although no portion of the force might be highly trained, the Canadians possess, in a marked degree, qualities calculated to make excellent soldiers. They are hardy, industrious, accustomed to rough work, and handy in dealing with the many exigencies of colonial life. They are also easily subjected to discipline, and willing to submit to the authority which they recognise as necessary for military efficiency. The various descriptions of labour in which they are engaged, and their habit of adapting themselves to different conditions of life, make them peculiarly fitted for many of the requirements of soldiers on service. In the Red River Expedition, under a leader whom they respected and admired, they performed excellent service, and the manner in which they overcame the many difficulties that beset their path through the wilderness, showed that in a very high degree they possessed the qualifications of excellent troops. During the Fenian raid, I have been assured on the authority of the Officer who so ably commanded the Red River Expedition, that their cavalry, under Colonel Denison, of Toronto (well known as a writer of a treatise on that arm) performed most valuable service in watching a wide extent of country, whilst the manner in which their field batteries work and manœuvre, gives a proof that the habits of driving so universal in Canada and the States, can be turned to good account for military purposes. In fact, there is no better material for making soldiers than is to be found in Canada, and I may add—if the maritime population of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and the semi-maritime navigators of the inland seas be taken into consideration—there would be found ample materials for adding to our seamen. That there is a warlike spirit in the country is shown by the popularity of the militia and the willingness with which they turn out on the prospect of anything like service. But peace tends to rust their arms, and the absence of any regular troops to furnish a standard of excellence, leads to a gradual diminution of efficiency. If, however, England should be engaged in war, and if the services of a few regiments of Canadians were asked for, I feel sure that the call would be warmly answered, and that a body of troops, which, in a short time would reach a high state of efficiency, would be ready to embark for service wherever they might be required. In accepting their services, Canada should be treated as an equal, the force ought to be taken with its own Officers, and if sufficiently advanced, the New Military School at Kingston should be utilised, to furnish a portion at least of the necessary staff. Possibly some regular Officer, known in Canada, might be appointed to the command, but the Colony should be encouraged to organise, equip, and officer its own troops. When once on board ship they would come under the Mutiny Act, and be paid by England, possibly, also, it would be well that a portion of their equipments and arms should be furnished to them by the mother country, but the political as well as the material benefit accruing from such a force, would, in a great measure, depend on its organization being Colonial, i.e., that it should not consist merely of soldiers recruited and paid for by the mother country, but that it should be a

force placed at her disposal by a great colony, anxious to show that it recognised among the duties that a grown up child owes to its parent,—the noble one of contributing to its defence.

It is, of course, impossible to estimate what numbers could and would be sent, as they would partly depend on the popularity of the war, partly on the condition of affairs in the colony. It is also difficult to indicate the class of men who would volunteer for the service. The Canadian Militia have an affinity to our volunteers as well as to our militia and the regiments vary greatly in their composition. Some are induced to enlist into the active militia by the pay—a somewhat higher rate than is afforded directly to our troops—whilst others engage from the love of the service and from the incentives of duty. There is also a great difference between regiments raised in the several provinces of the Dominion; and in regard to present efficiency much depends on the opportunities that the propinquity of the villages from which the companies are enrolled, gives for drill. Probably a force for foreign service would comprise regiments representing the various elements from which the present militia is raised; and if, at the first start, two regiments of infantry could be equipped in Ontario, one in Quebec, and one in the maritime provinces, with perhaps a couple of batteries of artillery and three squadrons of cavalry mounted on Canadian horses, an excellent commencement might be made for future organization. If this force distinguished itself before the enemy, which it would be well nigh sure to do, the prestige that it would afford to the Canadian Army would be very great, whilst the additional and noble tie that community of danger and suffering would furnish, would do more to bind the colony to the mother country than years of negotiations and of mutual arrangements. I can imagine no finer troops than could be raised from the backwoodsmen and lumberers, who seek a livelihood in the Canadian forests during the winter months, and who, when the freshet or spring liberates the waters, are engaged in navigating the rafts down the rapids of the great tributaries of the St. Lawrence. Their life in the shanties accustoms them to discipline and to an organized system of working. Their gang-leaders have much of the training of non-commissioned officers, whilst the various descriptions of labour on which men are employed, call forth the energy, the intelligence, and the resource which are invaluable in soldiers. To build huts, to make roads, to bridge streams, to construct rafts, and to navigate them under difficulties, form their yearly work (which by the way they do entirely on tea); whilst the necessity of depending on each other for mutual support and assistance, gives a species of *camaraderie* much resembling that of men serving together in a regiment or a company.

I feel, however, that I am going into details which are beyond the scope of this paper. What I desire to impress on you is, the mutual benefit that would result from a Colonial or Canadian force; for the great Australian colonists appear as yet to be too far removed by time and distance to enable them directly to subsidize our army for European war. They might possibly be able to furnish assistance in other ways, and an Australian fleet in the Pacific, or Australian troops in some

of our important garrisons, would relieve our ships and soldiers from a distant duty and permit of their utilization nearer home. But to revert to my subject. England would benefit directly by the addition of an excellent body of troops to her army, and Canada would derive an advantage similar to that which Sardinia gained by sending her small but well-equipped army to the Crimea, whilst both would profit by the mutual respect and affection which community of danger engenders. From what I know of Canada, and from what I hear from those who are well-informed as to the feelings of the colony, I do not think these views are Utopian, or that their realization would be impossible. That difficulties might arise, and that considerations of expense might have to be duly weighed, I have little doubt; but the end in view would justify some departure from ordinary usages, and would encourage those who might undertake the carrying out of the scheme to more than common exertion. The choice of proper agents is of the utmost importance, and would require some caution, as there are always to be found plenty of men, especially perhaps in the colonies, who are ready to propose and willing to promise anything, whilst the real thorough workers, and people of standing and influence keep in the background. But these are mere incidents common to any new and important enterprise. I have ventured merely to propound the scheme, and leave it to abler men to criticise, to alter, and, in fact, to lick it into shape. My object is to direct attention to the desirability of encouraging our almost grown-up children to assist the mother State, and to the necessity of taking the broader views of the imperial power of England, that our empire—vastly enlarged since the last great war—justifies us in adopting.

It may be objected that in this paper I have mixed up two subjects, and that the employment of a brigade of English volunteers is quite apart from the utilization of a Colonial force; but I would submit that the two schemes have their origin in a similar principle. A European war in which Great Britain might be engaged would probably not be on a small scale. It would be waged with powerful nations, organized so that every able-bodied man might be brought under arms. It would be fought under unknown conditions, as the weapons which science has introduced, especially in regard to naval warfare, make us appreciate David's remark when he gazed on the armour that Saul offered him. It would necessitate the strain of every nerve, the employment of every resource, and the utilization of every advantage.

It has consequently been my endeavour in this paper to indicate two latent forces that have hitherto been allowed to lie dormant. The first, a means of utilizing our middle classes, and of imbuing with an increased element of vitality, the army (for I can term it nothing else) that gives an outlet to their military enthusiasm; the second an idea of bringing into closer union for mutual protection and for mutual support, the great colonies and the mother country. I know that both these schemes have been but roughly sketched, and perhaps ignorantly dealt with; but if the paper I have just read, will lead to thought and criticism, it will not be worthless, neither will the time

you have so kindly accorded me have been thrown away. The subject is one of great importance, and in testing the value of the schemes put forward, no mere professional difficulties, nor desire of preserving intact old bottles at the expense of new wine should be allowed to cloud the broad views of imperial defence that alone can lead to a proper appreciation of all the resources that England possesses for a serious war.

The CHAIRMAN: I beg to invite a discussion on the subject that has been so well and kindly brought before us by Colonel Fletcher. Certainly he has brought forward the general principles in which we should probably all agree, namely, the assistance that England would wish to afford to its Colonies, and the assistance which the Colonies, we hope and believe, would wish to accord to England in any strait in which England might find herself. How to do that is a question of great detail, as Colonel Fletcher has observed; and I hope there are many here who may have thought of the subject, or, if they have not as yet thought of the subject, will think of it, so as to bring that detail into the shape which will make it an efficient plan, because we all agree as to the theory. We all know that military and naval matters are questions of such detail that even the minutest thing down to a cartridge and a soldier's shoe becomes of importance. I have no doubt there are many gentlemen here who will be kind enough to favour this meeting with their opinions. The more the question is discussed, the better will Colonel Fletcher, and the Institution, be pleased.

General McMURDO: I am sure, Sir, that I share the general feeling of all volunteer officers who have heard to-day the very able, interesting and eloquent paper read by Colonel Fletcher. I confess, personally, that I was drawn here to-day from a desire to see whether that which Colonel Fletcher would say in a lecture, would work out as well as the brigade movements which I had the pleasure of seeing him execute two Saturdays ago, when in command of the Grey Brigade in Hyde Park; movements which were unknown to himself until that morning, and utterly unknown to the volunteers. I allude to the new form of attack, and which he, with a boldness which showed that his heart was in his work and that he had confidence in the volunteers, commenced and executed with perfect quietness and ease on that occasion. I have listened to-day to what he has said in regard to the volunteer force, in the event of war, with a great deal of attention; and while I admit a great deal that he says as to the assistance the volunteers are capable of affording, still, when I come to think of what he proposes, that is, a volunteer brigade, consisting of the cream of the volunteers, going for service abroad, I must, as an old volunteer, fall back upon the first principles of the Force, which have always been defence of our homes and not defence. I would not have a volunteer force leave these shores under any circumstances whatever. We have a regular army which, if the country is true to itself, and if the country pleases, can be brought up to the proper war establishment. We have next the militia, which, if the country again is true to itself, can be brought up to its proper establishment, and which can supplement the army, not only at home but abroad; but for a system of land and home defence let us have the volunteers, as the landsturm of England; and not to leave its shores. If we desire to utilise those volunteers who, as Colonel Fletcher very truly points out, are far a-head of their fellows, who, year by year, attend a greater number of drills, who are born soldiers, in fact, and who are in a great measure dragged back by those who are slower than they are in efficiency; if we desire to utilise them, let us say at once, "Go on, keep up your knowledge; keep up your study of military matters, till the time when England shall require volunteers by the tens of thousands more than what she has got now; you must then be the officers and non-commissioned officers of such volunteers."

It is foreign, perhaps, to the discussion of to-day, and I may be out of order, but I can give it in two words. There is one more thing required for volunteers, and that is equipment. The volunteers are not properly equipped. There is nothing so easy, not for the volunteers alone but for those that support the various corps, as to form committees and take advice from such officers as Colonel Fletcher, who give their

whole heart and influence to the work to get the very best equipment designed to enable the force to take the field.

Commander CYPRIAN BRIDGE, R.N.: Mr. Chairman, I am much obliged to this meeting for enabling me to get up so early in the discussion and make the remarks I wish to make upon the very able and interesting lecture delivered by Colonel Fletcher. I feel it is due to the gentlemen present that I should explain why it is that I, a naval officer, when there are so many eminent military officers present, should attempt to offer any remarks upon a question which is treated from an exclusively military point of view. I do it in three capacities. I do it as a colonist; for I spent several years in a colony, independent of the fact that I have seen in the course of service, on duty, the Colonies from Vancouver's Island in the north-west to Australia in the south-east. I do it also in the capacity of a naval officer who has seen something of a battalion of British volunteers employed in what at least promised to be active service. More than ten years ago I was first lieutenant of a ship which conveyed a battalion of volunteers from St. John's, New Brunswick, where it proceeded to St. Andrew's, close to the American frontier, in order to be ready to repel the attack of a body of Fenians which was openly drilling on the other side of the river; and I was in the same ship when they were conveyed back again. A finer body of men I never saw. Their physique was simply splendid, and their discipline was in all essentials everything that could be desired; and I must say, to see that regiment on parade, clad in the honourable scarlet of the British Line, was a sight which would have done anybody good who cares for manly excellence in any form. This will tend to show that what Colonel Fletcher has proposed is, at all events, on the testimony of an eye-witness, feasible; but there was this peculiarity about the body of which I speak—there was a great distinction, even with colonial ideas of independence, between the social position of the men and the social position of the officers. The men, although physically very fine and well disciplined, and well educated, and of, comparatively speaking, high *morale*, came from a very low class of the population. They were highly paid, and the pay in itself was a sufficient inducement to make them, at a particular season of the year when they were called out, ready to serve. The officers, on the other hand, were men of a rather high social position. Some of them were men of what is not so common in the Colonies as in England—men of independent private means, not dependent upon any profession or pursuit for their livelihood; but many of them also were professional and commercial men. The campaign—if it can be called a campaign—lasted for only a few weeks; but before it had closed, many of the officers, though perhaps none of the men, expressed to me personally their anxiety to return to the places from which they had come, in order that they might be enabled to look after their own interests. That seems to be the great difficulty in employing volunteers from other Colonies, at all events except the great Colony of Canada. Although you might find a sufficient number of men to fill the ranks, it would be extremely difficult to find officers who could spare themselves from their avocations, and whom the country could spare for any length of time. I said just now that the lecturer had treated the subject from an exclusively military point of view. I ought to have modified that by saying that I observe towards the end of his lecture he made one remark which shows he is aware of the necessity of some way or other supplementing the service to which I belong in case of war. He makes use of this expression:—"They might possibly be able to furnish assistance in other ways, and an Australian fleet in the Pacific, or Australian troops in some of our important garrisons, would relieve our ships and soldiers from a distant duty, and permit of their utilisation nearer home." I wish—and I hope it will not appear to the gentlemen here present that I say so from any reason of mere professional jealousy—I wish that the lecturer, with his high name, not only in his own profession but in literature, a name which I have known for several years, would see fit, in such a lecture as he has read, in some way to allude to what he of course must be well aware of,—the vast nautical resources of this empire and the North-American Colonies in particular. There is Canada with her vast sea-board, and the lower maritime provinces with their vast sea-board, and their, comparatively speaking, immense maritime populations. The nautical habits of the inhabitants there, might supply us with what we most want, an available reserve. Members of this Institution who have been in England during the past year or two,

and have heard papers read here, will be aware, although it is not generally known in the country, that we have practically used up, at this moment, the whole of our available mercantile reserve for the navy, in the 18,000 or 19,000 men who have been nominally enrolled in the Naval Reserve; and finer men no officer would wish to see. We have used up almost the whole of the seamen of the British mercantile marine. I myself read a paper in the Theatre of this Institution before the National Artillery Association on a kindred subject to that which we have listened to to-day. We might, I believe, raise a volunteer force—a commencement has already taken place in it—to supplement our naval reserve;—not to make men play at sailors; but to raise a force in different parts of the empire, not in Great Britain alone, but in the Colonies, and especially in the maritime colonies, who might take the place on the coast and in the harbours, of those seamen, whose seamanlike knowledge would be better employed and be of more use and advantage to the country on the high seas. In reference to the proposal which has been made by Colonel Fletcher to-day, of sending a corps of volunteers abroad,—a proposal which the gallant general who has just spoken traversed,—if it were carried out, I am afraid that Colonel Fletcher would be giving the authority of his high name to what would lead to raising up, in the class from whom the volunteers are drawn, a spirit which would tend to foreign, if not to aggressive, war. It may not be so, but it is a dangerous thing to evoke such a spirit; and I quite agree with the gallant officer who spoke first, that the proper place for the volunteers is to fight for the protection of their homes. Let us carry that one step further, and have a force of naval volunteers who, as I said before, without attempting to play at sailors, will prevent the necessity of volunteers fighting for their homes by keeping the enemy outside the coast line, whether it be in Great Britain or the Colonies. If such a force as that for our first line of defence was strengthened, I believe the empire will then be able to assume that position which certainly is its proudest one,—to assume an attitude of watchful observation and reserved strength,—that position which I believe it is assuming now; ready to strike when required, but reserving its force until the necessity arises.

Major-General Sir JAMES E. ALEXANDER: I wish to say a very few words relating to the Canadians. I was fourteen years in America altogether, and was a good deal in the woods there, and became acquainted with the valuable qualities of the timbermen or woodsmen. I entirely agree with what Colonel Fletcher says, that there is an excellent mine from which to derive valuable assistance in Canada. During the Crimean war, when I was about to go to the Crimea, two thousand timbermen volunteered to go with me—men of the most valuable description. They were very healthy and sober, as the Colonel said. What they took was tea, not grog, and they were able for anything. They were skilled in the use of the axe and the rifle, and were exceedingly anxious to serve. I asked them on what conditions they were all willing to serve, and they said, "We want the pay of the British Guards,"—a little more than that of the regular "army"—and we are willing to engage first for two years." Very unfortunately these men were not encouraged to go. The proposition was laid before the Secretary of State for War at the time, and he thought he could do without them, so that their services were not required. Then in America, on the Ottawa, and also in New Brunswick (where I was), there is a large number of young men, the sons of old soldiers. These are full of military ardour, and they were most anxious to serve and to smell powder. They are the sons of old men who had talked to them of old battles, and some of them were most anxious to fight; so that from these people and these young men, there was a large number I am convinced, especially Highlanders, who, if they were encouraged at all by the music of the bagpipes, would be wild to fight. These are the only remarks I wish to make; but, as I have said, we have the means of recruiting valuable men from our Canadian Colonies.

Colonel T. ALCOCK: Mr. Chairman, You were kind enough to call our attention to general principles, and invited any one to say what he could upon the subject. I do not know whether I shall be able to make myself very clear in trying to express the impression which the excellent lecturer made upon myself, and which I think is different from that which is made upon the distinguished General who alluded principally to the case of volunteer forces for foreign service—offensive instead of defensive employment. The

impression which Colonel Fletcher's lecture made upon myself was one which not only laid down a general principle, but it laid down a general principle which is exceedingly required, and which has never been touched upon before in this hall. On Friday last we had a most animated and interesting debate upon a subject which really was the absolute force of the empire.¹ The absolute force of the empire is of course the armies and the navies always ready for action. To-day we have had a most interesting lecture never before touched upon—the relative power of the people in the empire, which, whether at Home or in the Colonies, consists of the natural means of defence, and of the physical, social and political condition of the people by which the armies and the fleets are manned, the militia and volunteers are the outward expression of that relative power—the sample by which to judge of the material, of which there is an ample abundance in reserve.

As I understand the object of the lecturer, it is to introduce some general principle throughout this great empire, by which that relative power should be organised and instructed throughout, upon the same plan, and to define (by the help of those who are superior to myself in knowledge upon the subject), the manner in which to get it done—to obtain a central and scientific source of information, with a local liberty of action. The progress of science has been referred to. It is self-evident that in these days, when so much depends upon the progress of science, the militia and the rifle volunteers in the Colonies should be kept up by imperial information exactly to the mark at which they are at Home, that the same system should exist throughout. The facility that is now afforded of communication by the electric telegraph makes it evident, of course, that many things are much more easy to be obtained now than they formerly were. Last year, if my memory does not fail me, we heard it said, and we saw it in print, that the militia and the volunteers were not to be depended upon for the defence of their country. That is exactly the reverse of what the real fact is. The whole system throughout the Continent is militia in point of principle. The object being that every man fit for military service should be trained to serve; and the only difference between the Continental system and our own is that theirs is compulsory, and that ours is a voluntary service. The difference between compulsory and voluntary is this, that the compulsory is for aggression or attack, and the voluntary is for defence. That the compulsory drags the unfortunate men from their homes, and sends them forward like animals to the slaughter, whether they have an interest in the cause for which they are compelled to fight or not; but the voluntary principle is for a cause which is well understood—the prosperity of the people and the safety of their homes. And I say that in this great empire that will be the case, and that the principle which Colonel Fletcher has introduced, as I understand it, is one which ought to be taken up, and to which should be given the importance it really deserves, as it affects the direction and organisation and instruction of the relative power of the whole empire upon the same uniform system, and its application and its use throughout upon the same system. We have enormous interests at stake. There are the interests of 220,000,000 people to protect, and we are all in the same interest. It is very true there are people of different tongues and different tribes, but they acknowledge the justice of our rule, and have learned to honour the Queen for the protection they enjoy; but if we are coming to times of trouble, times of trial, and times of danger, we must trust to our confederate strength for the defence of the honour of our empire and the influence of our race. Men of the same speech and of the same spirit will say, "Long may true Anglo-Saxon liberty endure! Long live the Queen of Great Britain and the Isles, Queen of the Dominion and of the Colonial States!" and the princes, chiefs and people of India will be ready to defend against all intruders, the interests of their Empress or Padishah.

The CHAIRMAN: Although it may have been mentioned that the volunteers and militia were not to be trusted with the defence of the country, it was only a slight opinion that was given, and not approved, I think.

Captain J. C. H. COLOMB, R.M.A.: I think we must all feel indebted that this question has been brought before us in the way it has been by the lecturer,

¹ "Russian Development, and our Naval and Military Position in the North Pacific." By Captain J. C. Colomb, R.M.A. For lecture, see page 659, *et seq.*

and I confess to feeling some hesitation in attempting to criticise any paper by the distinguished Historian of the American War; but as he has invited discussion, it may be as well that the discussion should not flag, and therefore, I wish to make one or two observations. Now the lecturer has recognised the fact, that defence must be an imperial thing; but the drift of the paper, as I understand it, is to show the feasibility and the desirability of utilising some portion of our volunteer force as a power of imperial attack. It appears to me that, before we talk of expeditionary forces, we are bound to consider our state of defence; when it becomes necessary for us to send expeditionary forces, the English Empire will be at war. That empire is found in every quarter of the globe, and on every sea. You cannot localise that war. You may be putting your military foot down in one part of the world, while other powers are putting, perhaps, a naval or military foot in other parts of your own dominions; and therefore, before proceeding to enquire into any system with regard to our power of attack, I think, as the volunteer-service and the militia force is purely a defensive force, we should examine it by the requirements of our defence. Now the very first thing we shall have to do, is to scatter garrisons over the world. ("No, no.") "No"? I am glad for the correction, I should be delighted if it is not proved to be so. I do not mean to say we must scatter garrisons over the world *indiscriminately*, but there are positions which we must lay hold of and make provision for holding with military force before we can let our only moveable force leave this country for expeditionary service. Your first duty is to see that the vital points of your imperial position are garrisoned. Now, at present, we have only one moveable force. We have three military forces, so to speak, the Regular Army, the Militia, and the Volunteers; every one of these forces has a different orbit of motion. The limits of service of your Army are prescribed only by necessity; the limits of service of your Militia are prescribed by Act of Parliament, within the area of the space enclosed by the waters of the United Kingdom; your Volunteer force is enclosed by St. George's Channel, the German Ocean, and the English Channel. Therefore, when we talk of an expeditionary force, it is evident we have only a very small moveable force to put into the garrisons. Now I will just name some of the garrisons, as it has been disputed. I am only taking an illustration, and I hope it will not be imagined that I am entering into any political question; but I say, supposing we were at war with Russia to-morrow, you could not leave four points on the Pacific Ocean without military force, and, above all things, you could not leave that neglected place, Vancouver's Island, without force. It is a doubtful thing if you could leave such places as St. Helena and Singapore without force; and when you deduct the military force necessary for such places, in order to release your fleet, you have not got much military force left for your expeditionary service. But you have still these two great forces; you have the militia, and you have your volunteers. Now I should rather venture, if I might venture, to differ from some of the views expressed. I think your militia is the first force to consider from which to make additions to your regular army, not the volunteers. I believe, that without any trouble and with very little expense, you can release that militia from its being rooted to the United Kingdom, and so make it available for the garrisons of your fleet bases, and in that way you could release your regular army for expeditionary service of attack. You release your fleets, because they would not have to watch their own arsenals, and you still have your volunteers in their proper place, at home. But now, when you come to enlarge the sphere of the action of your militia, it appears to me you should not only look to your home militia. The sea is the link that binds us together, I will not say the one link, but, practically, the sea is that which, for the sake of the Colonies and the Mother Country, we must guard; and, therefore, I think, in a scheme of imperial defence, the Colonies should certainly assist to maintain the garrisons of those places on which the sea communications depend; and I have some reason for thinking that there should be and can be (not as a theory, but as a matter of fact), a reciprocity system between the obligations of service of your home militia and your colonial militias. I have some reasons for thinking so, judging by the press of Canada, and of many other Colonies; they all complain that we have been so busy about our schemes at home that we have excluded them from all consideration. I have not a doubt that the Englishmen in the Colonies are the same as the Englishmen at home, and that they will shed their

blood, and throw their money broadcast for the defence of that which concerns every Englishman—the defence of the British Empire. Therefore, what I believe is, in dealing with an expeditionary force, the first thing you have to consider is to release your army, to leave it free; not to have it hampered by having to send it as a defensive force to Vancouver's Island, St. Helena, Antigua, or anywhere else; and your proper line of imperial military defence is your militia. There is a clause in the militia engagement, of which everybody is aware, that binds a man to serve "in the United Kingdom, so long as Her Majesty should require his services;" and I believe if you substituted "British Empire" for "United Kingdom" you would not reduce your militia force one man. I am satisfied that if the mother country sets this example, as she should to her younger children, you will not find colonial militias hesitating to reciprocate that obligation by rendering themselves liable for services according to the necessities of imperial defence. Then you have still your line of home defence, the volunteers, and I think, considering the class from which it is drawn, considering the many occupations, and the many ties of those who compose that force, although I quite agree with Colonel Fletcher that if you look at it, not as a matter of imperial necessities, nor of imperial defence, but as a simple process for improving the volunteers; I go so far, but no farther. I do not think it is a plan that would much add to your power of imperial defence, but I think it would be of inestimable value to the volunteers themselves. I would just like to read two extracts from the press of different parts of the world. Here is one from Canada, from the *Volunteer Gazette*, of 2nd February, 1875: "In the event of a great European war, it will be absolutely necessary for Great Britain to set her house in order. There can be no new trials. Our position, geographically and strategically, is such that we can, to a very great extent, compel our neighbours to look to their home concerns, and to make it their direct interest to take the part of Great Britain in the quarrel, others keeping open a vital source of supply—food—for her people."

"If this is to be done effectually, British statesmen must be up and about their business. * * * Our defensive movements must no longer be confined to 'the hedge rows of England.'"

The next is from New Zealand, 1874. The whole tendency of the article is in favour of what I say. "The defence of the empire may possibly become a popular cry when it is too late to save many of its most valuable outlying possessions." I hope it will not be too late; and I think Colonel Fletcher has done good service in bringing forward this subject, carrying our minds, as it were, away beyond the shores of England to the homes beyond the seas. He has done a great deal, and I trust will yet do more to make Englishmen, no matter what service they belong to, remember this, that our English homes are not only in these two small islands, but they are scattered over the world.

Colonel LORD ELCHO, M.P.: I would say one or two words on the excellent lecture which has been given by Colonel Fletcher. As a volunteer I should say, first, that I think it a very high compliment paid to the force, of which I have the honour to be a member, that a distinguished officer like Colonel Fletcher should have made it and its capabilities the subject of so admirable a lecture, and that it should have been delivered in this hall to such an audience. Now, the volunteers have gone through many phases of public opinion and public feeling. There was a time when they were over-praised, in the early days of the movement, simply because in, as we thought, a case of national need, a number of public-spirited Englishmen came forward and took upon themselves what, by law, is everybody's duty, namely, military service for home defence. Then, later on, we got the cold shoulder; and one of those who wrote articles against us, told me himself, that the reason he did so was not that he saw a want of discipline and defects which were shown up in these articles and letters; but that he was afraid we were getting too popular, and might be an injury to the army. Well, that phase also passed over; and we have come now to another stage, which is a stage of returning popularity, and which, I think, was greatly increased by the review last year in Hyde Park, of as fine a body of volunteers as, I think any soldier will admit, could be seen; and, I am sure, many of the soldiers now present would wish they had such a body of men under their command, instead of boys from 16 to 20, such as they have now. When they passed before Her Majesty, I think it struck the public as being a very remark-

able and effective display on the part of the volunteer force. But through all this, through good repute and through bad repute, believing that it was desirable in the interests of the country that this force should continue to exist, the volunteers have held together, and are more numerous now, I believe, than they have been at any time since they were established. Not only that; but although we have been told by those who criticise us, that when a pressing time came, and there was a danger of war, the men would not be forthcoming; yet every volunteer will tell you that we have never had so many recruits coming forward to join our regiments as we have at the present time, when there is, it is thought, a chance of their services being required, at any rate for home defence. The spirit, moreover, of the volunteers here present has been shown by the way in which Colonel Fletcher's paper has been received; for, I am bound to say, listening impartially to this discussion, that the objections that have been raised to Colonel Fletcher's proposal have not been received as heartily as were his proposal that the volunteers should be used for foreign service. That is simply a fact, of which any one who has ears can judge for himself. The volunteers, then, may now be well satisfied with their position. We know that we are necessary for home defence; and we have the great fact that Colonel Fletcher, as I have said, has thought us worthy to be the subject of a lecture. I now come to the lecture itself. I am glad to see on my right hand a gallant general, whom I may call the foster-father of the force. I mean General McMurdo. And I can only say that those who had the pleasure of being under his orders—I am almost afraid to say how many years ago—in the year 1859—will say that his popularity is as strong with the old hands at the present time as ever it was; while his popularity has been handed down by tradition to those who since his time have joined the force. General McMurdo is opposed to the proposal of Colonel Fletcher, on the ground that it is contrary to the original constitution and intention of the force. Captain Colomb also takes the same view. Now, I agree with Captain Colomb, and my foster-father here, to a certain, but not to the full extent. I think that before the volunteers go on foreign service, the right thing, as Captain Colomb has pointed out, is to thoroughly organise your military system as it is. Now, I venture to maintain that our military system exists on paper, and on paper only. That system is, 1st, an army for general service everywhere, voluntarily recruited. 2nd. A militia force, compulsorily recruited by law, though the law is always suspended, for home defence; but which has the power, under Acts of Parliament, of volunteering for foreign garrison duty, and which might, if necessary, volunteer also for active service in the field. I know that many militia colonels say that they feel confident that their whole regiment, if invited, would willingly be put on a roster for foreign service if required. Lastly, you have the volunteer force for home defence only; service in which constitutes an exemption from compulsory service in the militia. Well, then, you have thus your militia raised by conscription or the ballot for home defence, and with the power of volunteering, after being so raised, for other purposes. But, as I have said, this law is not enforced; it is annually suspended; and you recruit your army and your regular militia by the same means, viz., voluntary enlistment, by giving every inducement you can to get the men to join. I say, then, this is not putting in force your legal system and power of military organisation, and for the present it is only on paper. So also is your mobilisation scheme. We have heard a good deal about mobilisation. It is on paper, and on paper only. You have formed a certain number of army corps on paper, and the nation is, no doubt, greatly indebted to those officers who have done this, because they have thus prevented that state of chaos which would be otherwise lamentable, if you had not something of the kind even on paper. They have taken a certain number of men, and divided them into corps d'armée and brigades; but these are incomplete; and besides, materiel, transport, and various other things are required, which are in a great measure wanting. Take the militia and volunteers. Not only is the militia greatly below its establishment, but there is not a field gun for the militia, yeomanry, or volunteers, except the few batteries of position which Colonel Darby has organised; and the artillery officers who rule such matters at the War Office, have, with this exception, taken from the yeomanry and volunteers what little field artillery they had. I venture, therefore, to say, that the proposition I have laid down is a true one, namely, that our military organisation at present is on paper, and on paper only. The only force

that is always full is the volunteers. As to the militia; how is it being dealt with? There was a committee appointed at the War Office last year, because the militia were always below their numbers. Their strength ought to be 130,000; but they are always greatly below their establishment; and how has this committee dealt with the difficulty? Why by reporting that the militia should be reduced to 75,000! I venture to think that, instead of that, the militia ought to be kept to its full strength, for it is the backbone of our military system, the army. And then this committee has further reported that the militia should be used, not as an integral force in itself, but mainly as a means of passing men through the militia into the army, irrespective of the militia reserve. I submit that that is a departure from the intention of those who originally established the militia; who intended it to be a strong integral force in itself for the defence of these islands.

Now, I say, when you have got your organisation complete, your army thoroughly manned, and your reserves all in good working order; when you have got your paper constitution and your military system and administration put in active operation, and in all things complete; when you have got your volunteers also fully organised and properly trained, it might be a consideration whether they should not be invited to volunteer for foreign service. But, depend upon it, there will be no good done; this nation will never attain its proper strength and position until you make your military foundations secure. What Colonel Fletcher proposes is something which General McMurdo and others would deem, and so far I agree with them, an excellent thing for the force, as showing what the true spirit of the volunteers and the nation is. But you must not look to this as a material element of national strength for aggressive purposes. You must find that elsewhere, and I should be sorry that Colonel Fletcher's lecture should act as a herring across the path of real army administration and proper organisation, which I hold to be in another direction. As regards the Colonies, anybody who looks at that map on the wall will see on the left hand corner two little red spots, which you almost require a glass to find out, those spots represent Great Britain and Ireland; and if you cast your eyes to the right, you will see a red line which contains what they call the Great Powers—France, Germany, Austria, plus Italy, Spain, and Turkey, although I do not call Turkey a great power; but which last is said to have been received into the family of nations, whether she has been kindly treated by the family or not I will not enter into here. Well, you will observe how small a comparative space on the map all these powers occupy. On the other hand, all beyond this, on the other side of the green line, represent the Russian Empire, which has one arm outstretched, and all beyond there is a green line which rests on the Baltic Sea on the right, while its left arm touches the Pacific. While one foot of the Colossus is on the plains of Asia, at the base of the Himalayas, the other, at the present moment, on the Danube. How soon it will be on the Dardanelles or Mediterranean no one can foretell. Looking, then, at the balance of power, which is merely the police of nations, so that one nation should never be allowed to be so strong as to over-ride, and bully, and tyrannise over other nations, what I feel about my nation is that our little island, and the rest of Europe may some day be swamped and overhauled by Russia; but if you look further, on a still larger map, you will see enormous red blotches in the South Pacific—New Zealand and Australia, the Cape—and if those blotches were to be made confluent, as it were, by some such plan as Colonel Fletcher has proposed, you would add immensely to the strength of the whole empire. I think one great value of Colonel Fletcher's lecture is, that it will make Englishmen think, as we have seen by the quotations from Captain Colomb's book, that the Colonies are already thinking and writing in favour of establishing that inter-communication and that solidarity in military matters between England and our Colonies, which, I maintain, are not only necessary and desirable for the endurance and safety of our country, but likewise desirable in the interests of the world.

MR. STRANGEWAYS, Ex-Premier, New South Wales: I have had some experience in connection with volunteer matters in South Australia, and I desire to call attention to one or two points in connection with this question, which, I think, are not sufficiently considered by officers whose experience has been chiefly in this country. The first point is, in the Australian Colonies every man is busily engaged from morning to night. You have not in the Australian Colonies, as in England, a large class of wealthy persons

who are not engaged in business of any kind whatever; and I think I am not going too far when I say that a great deal of the success of the volunteer movement in this country has been owing to the great interest that has been taken in it by the wealthy portion of the community, and the munificent manner in which a very large number of them have contributed to the cost of it. Now in the Colonies you have not that class, and one of the great difficulties in connection with the volunteer movement in the Australian Colonies has been to obtain a sufficient number of men who were in a position to give up their time—and giving up their time means giving up their money—to learn the necessary amount of drill. As to the individual men themselves, they are just as good as Englishmen in any other part of the world. The men themselves are perfectly good; but you have not, in the Australian Colonies and in most of the other Colonies, those class distinctions which have tended in this country to make the volunteer force as successful as it has been. Captain Colomb suggested that England should set a good example to the Colonies in respect to the question of defence. That merely brings up a great imperial question which we must not discuss at this time, or in this place, and therefore I will not allude to it.

The CHAIRMAN: There is no harm in alluding to an imperial question that I am aware of. At least, if I remember rightly, there were some questions in the Friday's discussion that came a little bordering on politics; but certainly an imperial question can be discussed here with freedom.

Mr. STRANGWAYS: I did not wish in any way to trespass on the rules of this Institution, and I adopt the advice given by the Chairman. I will mention an important point which must be considered, and it follows upon the remark of Captain Colomb that England should set a good example to her Colonies. I say that England must do more than that, and that England must follow the example that every wise father adopts when he asks his grown up sons to join in business and work with him; that is, take them into his councils and let them all work and co-operate with him. That is the only imperial point I wish to allude to; and I am sure if I went further I should trespass upon the rules. I say it is extremely gratifying to find, not only one gentleman on one subject, but another gentleman on another subject, all coming back to that same question, combined action between England and the other portions of her Empire, and, I believe, if that question is discussed and considered as fully as it can be, that a satisfactory arrangement can be arrived at. Again, returning to the volunteer force, I do not venture to express an opinion as to whether the volunteer force of this country can readily be made available for warlike purposes; but I would remind this meeting that when the Americans commenced their civil war some 16 years ago they had scarcely any soldiers at all. They had a few militia, and but little more; yet, in a comparatively short space of time, out of some of the rawest and roughest materials it was possible for any people to operate upon, they managed to make—I believe I am correct in saying—one of the finest armies in the world: and surely, if the Americans can do it, we can do it in this country just as well. I believe, further, in respect to the Colonial part of the question, the utmost that can be expected from the Colonies is that they will provide, if not entirely, at all events to a considerable extent, for their own local defence. When you remember that some of the Australian Colonies at the present time are spending (taken together) about a quarter of a million a-year in order to bring Englishmen out into the country, it is hardly to be expected that as soon as they get them out there they would ship them back again. The Australian Colonies are carrying on emigration from this country largely at the present time. I have had the idea that a great deal might be done, and done usefully, if the system of the local defence of the Colonies was worked in connection with emigration, and that if such preliminary matters could be got over as I alluded to just now, and the Colonies could be induced to co-operate with England; then a portion of the Imperial army might be sent out every year and stationed in the Colonies, and knowing they would receive their discharge there, they would become useful emigrants, having drill and discipline they would become good Colonists, and you would have in process of time a very large number of well trained men who would be readily available for any defensive purposes. I merely throw that out as a suggestion. I superintended the emigration department of South Australia for some years, and I know what can be done in that as well as other things. "Where there's a will there's

a way." I desire to express my gratification in finding that so many gentlemen, not only those who have read the papers but so many others, who have introduced the subject to the Institution, do see the real importance of the great question of the Unity of the British Empire, and that they are (though from various points of view) directing so much public attention to it.

Mr. FREDERICK YOUNG, Hon. Secretary Royal Colonial Institute: I should like to be permitted to make one or two remarks before the discussion closes. I have listened, as well as I am sure every one here present must have done, with the greatest possible interest to the very able paper that Colonel Fletcher has read to us to-day. I can only corroborate what Mr. Strangways has said, that I think it is of great importance that questions such as these have been brought forward at this Institution, having for their object the unity of this great empire. It seems to me that the paper has somewhat delicately touched upon a very large question indeed, and that we might follow it up with some benefit, to see whether we ought not to extend our imperial army and our imperial navy to the Colonial portion of the empire. For my own part, I cannot conceive any reason why, considering the number of people that are continually going from this country to the Colonies, we should not feel that we may recruit both our army and our navy, provided they are to be imperial ones, from the outlying portions of the empire, which are just as much interested, as we are at home, in having their homes protected, in the same way that we are ourselves. There is one particular point with which I was very much struck in Colonel Fletcher's paper, namely, the allusion to Canada, and the possibility, in case of war, of any Canadian force being used and incorporated in this country, that it should be organised entirely in the Colony, and under native officers. I know very well, and I have heard some distinguished officers connected with the Canadian volunteer force complain very much indeed, that under the present system their claims are neglected in that respect. I do think that it would be of the very greatest importance for us to recollect that there ought to be but one army and one navy, and that there should be no distinction whatever—provided men are qualified to take high commands—between a Colonial military man and an English military man. I beg to apologise for making these few crude remarks at this late period of the discussion. I am not a naval nor a military man, but I take a deep interest—as every Englishman should do—in these great services; and I hope and trust, from such discussions as we are having to-day, that we may all feel the importance of having, whether it is by volunteers or by some other mode, one great imperial army and one great imperial navy for the whole empire.

Lieutenant-Colonel CHILDEES, R.A.: It would seem to have been forgotten in the course of this argument that the lecturer said the use of volunteers out of England would give a great opening for the employment in war of the middle classes of English society. I think there can be no doubt that every soldier in this room must feel it most important that the military feeling which is inherent in the middle classes of Englishmen should be given an opening of this description. We know very well that our regular army and our militia are enlisted from what we may call the lower classes; and I do not think there is the slightest fear that if the middle classes are employed in this way on foreign service they will in any way, as suggested by one speaker, imbibe a desire for aggression and for the conquering of other nations. I suppose there is no nation in the world which has carried on so many aggressive wars as England has, and all those wars were just wars and wars of which we are proud. Our foreign empire in India and other parts of the world shows that those wars were carried on with a right principle, and from a military feeling, not of unjust aggression but of our determination to assert our rights and to hold what we had got. I am very sorry no better qualified artillery officer has spoken, and the only reason why I have stood up was to say this, that volunteers are most admirably fitted for garrison artillery, but the very great difficulties which interfere with the organisation and maintenance of a volunteer force of field artillery are patent to everybody; and if it be true that any artillery officers in an official position have thrown cold water upon the proposals for the formation of volunteer field batteries, they have done so, we may be sure, on purely professional grounds, and not from any reasons suggested by an unworthy jealousy of a sister service.

Captain A. ABERCROMBIE JOFF, R.E. I rise with great hesitation to follow up to a certain extent the unpopular side of the question, and to support in some degree what Mr. Strangways has said with reference to the practical difficulty of the Australian Colonies (to which so small allusion was made in the paper) of entering into the scheme of joint imperial defence in the form thrown out by Colonel Fletcher. There can be no doubt, taking the question as an imperial one, that the Australian Colonies, in point of imperial defence, must hold a very high share. Regarding the matter from a naval point of view, the port of Sydney, in the South Pacific, is perhaps the most important point we can name; and to defend that port and the neighbouring ports and shores, the great practical difficulty which must be met by the Government, is the question of the proportion of population available for the points to be defended. There is first of all the difficulty pointed out by Mr. Strangways of finding volunteers in a country where every man is a busy man, and where there is so small a proportion of men of independent means and idle time. But in addition to that there is another point, I think, not always considered in regard to the Australian Colonies. We are apt to estimate them by the accounts we see in the papers regarding them respecting their revenue, and we forget the small number of men per area of population who contribute to that revenue. Now, in the Colony of New South Wales (which, although an imperial officer, I happen to be serving at the present time),—and I think I may fairly say that the analogy which I wish to draw applies also to the other Australian Colonies,—the area is 300,000 square miles, about equal to the area of this country and France, or to the area of Germany and Italy, and it is occupied by a population of 600,000—a population equal to about that of Liverpool or Glasgow. The coast line is 800 miles; and if you can imagine the whole of the population of Liverpool or Glasgow first of all distributed over an area equal to the United Kingdom and France, and then called upon to form some organisation capable of defending a coast line of 800 miles, I think you will find that their work is pretty well cut out for them, without their being asked in any way to relieve our troops elsewhere, as was, I think, suggested by Colonel Fletcher, although not in a definite form. The Australian Colonies would, I perfectly believe, accept the imperial principle that a share of colonial defences is to be undertaken by the Colonies; but I think we ought not to ask them to do more than their fair share. We have, out of the population of 600,000 in New South Wales, 5,000 well-equipped volunteers: they have small bore rifles, which is more than we can say for all our volunteers elsewhere; and as far as equipment is concerned, I can assure General McMurdo that, considering they are on the other side of the world and the difficulties which equipment naturally presents, they may favourably compare in that respect with our friends nearer home. But they cannot be expected to go beyond a certain point. If you have 5,000 men, out of a population of 600,000, acting as volunteers, you will admit that, if that population is widely distributed, 5,000 is a fair, although perhaps not a sufficient proportion.¹ You must remember also, that these volunteers are the whole body, except one permanent battery of artillery raised in the Colony, and that they are not auxiliary in the sense in which our volunteers are auxiliary; and in that respect you ask a great deal more from them than you do in this country, because in Australia they are not, under existing arrangements, an auxiliary force, but they are the only force available for land defence. They are willing to do their share; but I venture humbly to protest against their being asked to do more.

The CHAIRMAN. I wish to remark for myself, with regard to the system of volunteers, that I hope we of the army shall always consider them as brethren in arms who are united with us for the defence, not only of this country but of the empire, if necessary. Whether they will be enabled by an organisation that the

¹ The population is not equally distributed over the large area quoted, but predominates in or near Sydney and the larger towns; and the vital points on the coast line are not numerous. On this account the analogy must be admitted to be imperfect; but the argument is submitted as fairly illustrating the difficulties to be met in organising a volunteer force in a small and scattered population.—A. A. J.

army has not fairly yet, namely, the organisation of the civil departments of the army which are so necessary, and which must be extended to the volunteers and to the militia in case of war whether they would be able to take their part abroad, or not, is a question which we hope may be put off for some time; but we may also feel this, that we may depend upon the militia and the volunteers for taking their full share when called upon; and if ever they are called upon I hope it will be by regiments instead of by giving recruits to the army, for I think it maintains the strong regimental and local feeling that they should volunteer *en masse*, as a battalion or a regiment, to assist, as they did assist during the Crimean war, either in garrison, or, if necessary, in the more active service in the field. They would feel that *camaraderie*, which is so valuable, and go back to their county or town with the same sort of regimental feeling which, I hope, will always be kept up in the army itself.

Colonel FLETCHER. I find it somewhat difficult to arrange my notes so as to reply in detail to the many valuable remarks that have been made, and I think it may be the best plan to take them *seriatim*, as although, possibly, I may mix up the subjects, I shall yet be more distinct in meeting the objections or criticisms of particular individuals. In the first place, I thank General McMurdo very much for his kind observations in respect to the practical as well as the theoretical part I have taken with regard to volunteers, and at the same time say that I quite agree with him that the motto of the volunteers should be, "Defence, not Defiance"; but I submit that England has never yet waged a purely defensive war. We cannot afford to let the enemy land in England: we must fight abroad. If we want to defend London, we should probably fight in Belgium: if we require to defend India, we should probably have to fight to maintain the communications with India. I do not in the least wish to advocate defiance, because, happily, we are not an aggressive nation; but I want to point out that, in the event of war being necessary, we ought to give an outlet to the military enthusiasm of the middle classes at the commencement of that war. I may at the same time say that Colonel Alcock, as far as I gather from him, quite agrees with me, and I would sum up my argument by urging that if we do not use the whole of our population for war, and for war beyond the seas (as we must not wait until it actually touches England), we shall fight with one of our hands tied. That is the line I have taken.

With regard to what Lord Elcho said, I fully and entirely agree with him. My plan is merely a small one compared with what he advocates; and I should be sorry if any petty scheme of mine should divert people's minds from the great importance of organising the whole of our forces.

In reply to Captain Colomb, if I have proposed nothing in regard to adding to the defensive strength of the empire, except to improve the volunteers by raising their morale I submit that I shall have added greatly to its armed strength.

With regard to the observations of Captain Bridge, I would say that the reason I did not allude to naval matters is because I understand so little about them. I should like very much to see the whole naval subject taken up by somebody, and a lecture given here on the maritime resources of our Colonies, to show what New Brunswick and the inland lakes of Canada could do to contribute to our naval strength, and I throw out this hint in the hopes that somebody may act upon it.

With regard to the difficulty of procuring officers: having lately come from Canada, I know there are a great many Canadians anxious and willing to serve, who have devoted their time exclusively to military matters. There are two Schools of Gunnery, one at Kingston and the other at Quebec, also a force embodied at the Red River, where the officers are simply military officers in every sense of the word.

In answer to Captain Abercrombie Jopp, I alluded but shortly to the Australian Colonies, because I do not know much about them, and for another reason, which he answered himself, namely, the small proportion of the population to the extent of the area they cover, and to the consequent inability to provide for any force beyond their own shores. With regard to one of his objections, that they could not do anything but defend these shores, I must quote from Captain Colomb, who, in an able lecture delivered at the Colonial Institute, showed that the protection of Australia and of some of the Colonies of the Pacific, was not actually in those Colonies, but at certain well-known strategic points, which would require garrisons to be furnished by these Colonies. With regard to what fell from Mr. Strangways, the

ex-premier for New South Wales, I can only say that I am very glad he made the remarks he did. I did not allude to the political question excepting indirectly in pointing out that we should not deal with Canada merely as a recruiting ground, but should take the force it is proposed to raise, with its officers and with its organisation, and so treat Canada as an equal. In this way we would raise the spirit of the colonies, whilst we should show them that we are prepared to deal with them in a broad and proper manner in other matters besides purely military ones. Of course, to return to the first portion of my paper, if we cannot get men, *cadet questio*, the whole plan falls to the ground; but I have been assured by a great many officers, who know the volunteers well, that if you only held up your finger you would get a large number of good men to volunteer for service abroad, and that you really might raise an excellent force, valuable not only for actual numbers, but as the yeast which would leaven the whole lump. I will conclude by thanking General Alexander for his remarks about the 2,000 lumbermen who volunteered to accompany him to the Crimea; and I hope the next time they offer to do so, they will be encouraged, and not discouraged. I think these are the only remarks I have to make, and I can only thank you for your kindness in listening to my lecture.