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from the Author
A. H. Hall

THE
SANITARY CONDITION
OF
THE ARMY.

BY
THE RIGHT HON. SIDNEY HERBERT, M.P.

REPRINTED FROM THE "WESTMINSTER REVIEW" FOR
JANUARY, 1859.

LONDON :
JOHN CHAPMAN,
11, KING WILLIAM STREET, STRAND.

1859.

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FOR THE PROMOTION

Founded 1876

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THE SANITARY CONDITION OF THE ARMY.*

ENGLAND has always been jealous of standing armies. In their long struggles for freedom, the people have found how important it is that they, as well as the Sovereign, should have a hand on the hilt of the sword of state. Even when the relations of the governor and the governed have been at the best, the latter seem never to have lost sight of possible contingencies, and took care that, in case of recourse to the *ultima ratio*, no danger should arise from any incautious confidence in quiet times. A large home military force, maintained irrespective of foreign enemies or foreign apprehensions, imbued with a thoroughly military spirit, and animated by a devotion to their colours, in which the sense of citizenship is altogether lost, is what we never have seen in this country, and probably never shall. We have maintained large armies abroad, in foreign wars—large armies at home, to resist apprehended invasion—but the former were not standing armies, for they ceased to stand from the moment that peace was attained; and the latter were composed chiefly of militia, who have always claimed to be the parliamentary, or people's army. It is true that this distinction is a good deal lost, simply because the Queen's army—voted by parliament, paid by parliament, disciplined, distributed, and governed by ministers responsible to parliament—has lost its character as the personal instrument of the Crown, and has accordingly ceased to give ground for jealousy or apprehension on the part of the people. We still object to large armies, but on other grounds. Of our two great services, the navy is the popular one. As islanders, our first and best defence must always be on the water. It is not till that line is broken through (and woe betide the day!) that our safety can depend on trained battalions. Again, it is by sea only

* *A Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Regulations affecting the Sanitary Condition of the Army, the Organization of Military Hospitals, and the Treatment of the Sick and Wounded, with Evidence and Appendix.* (Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty.) London. 1858.

cavil, assume that a good sanitary system based on the reforms specified in this article, reduces the sickness and mortality by no more than one-fifth; and assume that the loss of a trained and efficient soldier can be made good for 50*l.*, which is just half the amount of estimate of the cost of a recruit, enlisted, fed, clothed, drilled, in short, converted into a trained soldier, and transported to the regiment to which he belongs, and the country at once gains an annual saving of a quarter of a million, and this is a very low estimate of the ultimate saving when the measures shall have come into full operation.

But there are other and higher motives for immediate and energetic action. Every month that is allowed to pass while nothing is done, brings into the service fresh batches of young men to whom are entrusted duties for which they have received no previous preparation. They are sent out to be taught in their turn by disaster what they have learned from no teacher at home. Their experience will again be acquired at the expense of the soldier, whose life and health are in their hands. If there be war, fresh sufferings and fresh disasters will again lower our reputation as a military nation, and *pro tanto* deprive us of the security which rests on military reputation. Every day's delay, therefore, is a loss. While these plans, matured by practised and experienced hands, are being bandied from branch to branch in the cumbrous consolidation of the War Office, not only are the evils complained of unarrested, but the seeds are being sown for their long continuance. Delay then is not only a loss but a sin, and one which we trust that the country will not long allow our rulers to commit. The army of England deserves better treatment at our hands. Its officers and its men are of the finest material which the world can show. They have undergone much unnecessary suffering, and been exposed to much unnecessary difficulty; but they have endured those sufferings, and overcome those difficulties, with a patience and a courage which have never failed. It remains for us to give them the organization and the skill which shall utilize those great qualities to the utmost, and constitute our army a machine perfect for its purpose. Then we may rest assured, that while so defended, neither envy of our prosperity, nor hatred of our freedom, will induce any nation to risk aggression or court a contest with us.

