

**OUR HOME ARMY: BEING A
REPRINT OF LETTERS PUBLISHED
IN "THE TIMES" IN NOVEMBER
AND DESEMBER, 1891**

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Our Home Army: Being a Reprint of Letters Published in "The Times" in November and
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H. O. ARNOLD-FORSTER

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OUR HOME ARMY.

BEING A REPRINT OF LETTERS PUBLISHED IN "THE TIMES"
IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER, 1891.

With a Preface and Notes.

TO WHICH ARE APPENDED SUGGESTIONS FOR REMEDYING
SOME OF THE EXISTING DEFECTS IN THE CON-
DITION OF THE BRITISH ARMY ON
THE HOME ESTABLISHMENT.

BY

H. O. ARNOLD-FORSTER.

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P R E F A C E.

At the request of several persons interested in the welfare of the Army, and with the permission of the *Times*, I have collected and arranged the following letters upon the State of our Home Army.

In order to make my case clear, and to explain the origin of the correspondence, I have included two short preliminary letters which appeared in the *Times* in September and October, 1891.

I have added notes and amplifications where required, and have replied to the very small number of contradictions and criticisms which my statements elicited. In order that the public may be in possession of the official case in favour of our existing system, I have added to this reprint a report of the speech made by the Secretary of State for War at Hammer-smith, on December 11th, 1891.

With considerable reluctance I have acceded to the wish of many friends, and have supplemented my original letters by a statement containing an outline of my own views as to some of the remedies which might possibly be adopted with advantage for the cure of our present ills.

I attach very little value to my own suggestions: the most that is claimed for them is that they are consistent with, and not contrary to, common-sense and human nature. There are many schemes of army

organisation which would fulfil these conditions, but the only successful one will be that which is consistently applied and rigorously enforced by some one person endowed with full authority, and absolutely responsible.

I must add that I attach no weight whatever to the cheap taunts of those who maintain that criticism not accompanied by constructive suggestions is an impertinence or an absurdity. A moment's reflection will show the unreasonableness of such a contention.

Throughout my letters I have criticised our military arrangements from the only standpoint open to me, namely, that of a taxpayer who is anxious in the first place that the country should be safe, and, in the second place, that he should get value for the taxes he pays.

As a taxpayer I am informed that for a certain sum we get a certain article. I make inquiry, and find that, as a matter of fact, we do not get the article. I have attempted to explain to my fellow-countrymen and fellow-taxpayers the extent to which they are being deceived. If my facts be true, beyond all doubt the deception has been great.

But because I, as a civilian and an outsider, have made these observations, I utterly fail to see that I am in any way bound, as a matter of duty, to suggest remedies.

A man employs a tailor to make a coat, and pays him five pounds for his work. He finds that the sleeves are turned inside out, the buttons are forgotten, the cloth rotten, and points out the deficiencies to the tailor. Whereupon the tailor turns round on his cus-

toyer, calls him a miserable grumbler, and tells him to do the job himself. I think it would be generally admitted that the request was unreasonable.

Or again, I pay an engineer to make a machine to do my work. He takes the order, takes the money, and produces an article which fails to perform every purpose for which it was designed. I expostulate, and my engineer replies, "You ignorant outsider, what do you know of mechanics? I can't make it work, can't I? then suppose you do it yourself." Again I say such a reply would not commend itself as reasonable in the commercial world, or, indeed, in any world in which common-sense prevailed.

And so it is in respect to the Army. We pay a Secretary of State, an Under-Secretary, and thousands of officials and officers of all grades and ranks, to do a certain thing, namely, to provide for the land defence of the Empire. We give them all the money they ask for, and we permit them to frame whatever organisation they think best calculated to produce good results. But when we come to inquire, we find that with all this money at command, with ample authority and full technical knowledge, the experts whom we pay and trust have not produced the article they were asked for. What business have they, or those who defend them, to turn round and say to me, or to anybody else, "You have no right to criticise us unless you are prepared to do better yourself"?

I wish to put this protest on record, for it is time that this slipshod method of getting rid of responsibilities should be put an end to, and that the public should be made to understand that at

present the responsibility for the condition of our Army rests wholly and solely with the War Office.

When Parliament or the public has refused to sanction any proposal whatever put forward by the War Minister as essential to the welfare of the country, it will be time to place the responsibility upon other shoulders than those upon which alone it now rests, and ought to rest.

One other remark remains to be made in this connection. It has been said by one or two of the rare defenders of our present system that my criticisms are of no value because they are not made by a person of authority and official distinction. If the points at issue were merely matters of opinion, I should readily endorse this proposition, but I cannot accede to it when, as in the present case, the issues are entirely issues of fact.

The Under-Secretary of State for War may say, and may even think, that I am "a young civilian who has picked up a number of cock-and-bull stories from the latest-joined subalterns." The statement is not very polite, and, in view of the real sources of my information, is exceedingly ridiculous. But Mr. Brodric evidently fails to understand that, even if true, his criticism is not to the point.

I may be young, I may be a civilian, I may have been informed by the last-joined subaltern from Sandhurst that the Militia is 100,000 short of its strength, or that our infantry cannot march; but the only thing that matters two straws to the public is whether the facts be as stated or not.

Now I have deliberately committed myself to many

pages of facts and figures. If those facts be true, and those figures correct, beyond all doubt my case is a most serious one, and one which, I submit, the public cannot afford to ignore.

I stand by my facts and figures. *They have not been impeached, they cannot be impeached.*

If any of my readers are under the impression that my facts and figures have been in any way contradicted or disposed of by Mr. Stanhope, I invite them to turn to the speech of that gentleman, which will be found on page 99 of this book. I make bold to say that the speech in question does not dispose of a single fact which I have alleged, or a single argument which I have used.

Mr. Stanhope takes credit for having done a certain amount of good work in connection with the arming of the forts, and the creation of stores. I have not the least desire to withhold whatever recognition be due to the War Minister on account of these not very startling performances, but I do wish to call attention to the theory which the demand for such a recognition seems to involve. That a War Minister should claim, and receive, credit for not having totally and absolutely neglected the performance of the most elementary duties of his office seems to me somewhat grotesque. Mr. Stanhope claims as a merit that he has supplied some of our fortresses with guns, and some of our guns with powder and shot. Of course he has. He might just as well take credit for supplying the men with muskets, or the cartridges with powder.

I have always recognised with pleasure the fact that some of the ordinary routine work of supplying the