

**THE THE BRITISH ARMY IN  
1875, WITH SUGGESTIONS  
ON ITS ADMINISTRATION  
AND ORGANISATION**

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The British Army in 1875, with Suggestions on Its Administration and Organisation by John Holms

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IN 1875.

WITH  
SUGGESTIONS  
ON ITS  
*ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION.*

BY  
JOHN HOLMS, M.P.



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1875

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## PREFACE.

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**A**S I cannot lay claim to the experience of a Military Authority, it is naturally with much diffidence that I venture to offer the following pages to the public, as my humble contribution towards the solution of a great and important question, and in the hope that business men, by the light of plain facts and the application of some sound principles, may think for themselves, and be induced to take an interest in the question of Army Reform. They will see clearly that it is neither more men nor more money that we want, but simply common sense management and sound organization.

I should greatly rejoice if I could conscientiously advocate our having no standing army at all, and agree that we should trust only to our fleet. But when we see the huge armaments of Europe, and observe the efforts Russia, France, and Germany are making to increase their fleets, and look to the work our navy might be called upon to do in connection with our possessions all over the world, which we are bound to protect, peacefully inclined as we may be, I feel that, as guardians of our own honour and safety, we cannot rely upon one line of defence only. We must therefore have our army in the very best condition possible for its size, and capable of easy expansion.

The present mal-administration of our Army is felt as keenly by most military men as it is by civilians; indeed, they are

most generous and frank in giving civilians who choose to interest themselves in the subject all the assistance in their power. I have to thank, and have great pleasure in taking this opportunity of thanking, military men of all ranks for their great courtesy and kindness in giving me most freely information and assistance at all times.

In a country like this, where nothing but voluntary service is needed or would be endured, nothing but good can come from coöperation between military men and civilians, especially large employers of labour.

No jealousy should exist, for coöperation cannot but be beneficial to both.

Much as civilians may now watch our War Department and wish to see it reformed I am sure it is as much the desire and



interest of military men to obtain sound reform in that Department, for they feel the discredit which now rests upon our Army Administration, and the danger of allowing the evils complained of to continue.

Bad as the condition of our Army now is, it would not be so alarming if it were not for exaggerated statements put forth recently, and apparently with authority, of such a character as indicate that the War Department is still blind to the real position in which our Army is.

This is no party question; it rises high above party feeling, and in a spirit above party feeling I earnestly hope that it may be treated, and that soon the condition of the British Army may be made worthy of its ancient renown.

## I.

DISAPPOINTING RESULTS OF THE ARMY RE-ORGANIZATION SCHEME OF 1871-72.—THE CONDITION OF THE ARMY OF 1875 WORSE THAN THAT OF 1870.—IMPORTANT THAT THE PUBLIC SHOULD TAKE AN INTEREST IN THIS QUESTION.—ACCUMULATING EVIDENCE, SHOWING THAT OUR MILITARY SYSTEM IS UNSOUND.—OBJECT OF THE PRESENT PAMPHLET.—NEITHER MORE MONEY NOR MORE MEN WANTED.—A MORE PRACTICAL SYSTEM OF ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION NECESSARY.—POWER AND CAPACITY OF THE NATION GENERALLY IN THIS RESPECT.—DIFFICULTY IN INDUCING THE HOUSE OF COMMONS TO TAKE AN INTEREST IN THE QUESTION.—THE PUBLIC MISLED BY MEANINGLESS PHRASES ON MILITARY ADMINISTRATION.

**I**F, after all the grand promises made and great expenditure incurred in 1871-72 in what was fondly called "the reorganization of the British Army," the whole scheme should prove to be a sham and a delusion, the feeling of the nation would surely be one of bitter disappointment.

Now, when the country might reasonably have expected to see the blemishes of the old system

gently passing away, and to experience some of the promised advantages of the new system, what do they find to be the result? Why this, that the Army of 1875 is worse in nearly every respect than was the Army of 1870. Nay, more: they also see that the scheme of reorganization having been founded upon utterly unsound principles, we have (as I earnestly declared at the time we should) wasted three or four precious years and incurred an expenditure of thirteen millions of pounds sterling—eight and a half of it very wisely in the abolition of purchase, but four and a half of it very foolishly—£3,500,000 for Brigade Depôts, with an annual charge of £100,000 to £120,000, more than equal to another £1,000,000 of capital.

And who is now accountable to the nation? Not one of the authors of the scheme is now in the House of Commons, nor, indeed, can the present House of Commons be called to account. It was the work of a Parliament now dissolved.

Surely it is time that the public was prepared to take an active interest in this subject. It is in every respect one of the most momentous that