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FORMATION OF A VOLUNTEER CORPS AT SIDMOUTH.

SIR J. KENNAWAY, M.P. ON THE NATIONAL EFFECT OF THE VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT.

The desire expressed some time since to establish a corps of Volunteer Riflemen at Sidmouth has taken a tangible form, and mainly by the exertion of Messrs. J. Perkins (who was formerly in the Hatherleigh Corps) and J. P. Mellin very nearly 100 residents of Sidmouth and the district have given in their names for enrolment.

Mr. Walter Thornton, the well-known cricketer, has consented to become captain of the Company, and Messrs. J. Tucker (brewer) and J. Orchard (solicitor) have been recommended as lieutenants. Colonel Troyte, commanding the 3rd Devon, had expressed the pleasure it will give him to attach the Company to his Battalion, provided the War Office, will consent to the necessary increase in the establishment of his regiment.

Yesterday afternoon a meeting was held at the Town Hall to put the matter formally before the public, and to take steps for raising the funds necessary to float the Company clear of debt. Major Sir J. H. Kennaway, Bart., M.P., presided; and amongst those also present were—Colonel Darnell, Colone. Chester, Colonel Hawker, Major Hicks. Captain Hine-Haycock, Lieutenants Whittaker and Hake, Rev. J. G. Clements, Dr. Pullin, Dr. Harding, Messrs. W. Thornton J. Orchard, Tucker, Scott, W. Hine-Haycock, J. G. G. Radford, Floyd, Gore, Hooke, Wilson, Weeks, Pidsley, Hayter, Evans, Hayes, Wheaton, Godfrey, J. Perkins, J. P. Miller, H. Newton, H. Taylor, C. Dare, W. Cook, W. Guppy, H. Hewes, A. Warren, J. Skinner, J. Russell, R. B. Tucker, G. Staddon, T. Stoneman, J. E. Wilson, W. Whitton, F. Farrant, H. Russell, G. Hucker, W. Kingdon, W. Snook, F. Farrant, H. McLeod, R. Dean, J. Clode, T. Mortimer, W. H. Podbury, G. Carter, E. Radford, T. Clarke, G. Bucknell, J. Selley, W. Holms, T. Steel, C. Muttters, F. Dorman, H. E. Pile, W. Hook. W. Hiscox, J. Hartnoll, G. Hooper, G. Churchill, J. Bartlett, F. C. Sanders, A. Mitchell, S. Daniel, W. Till, R. Soper, J. Calwell, W. Teed, T. Dimond, J. Teed, R. H. Medland, H. Bolt, J. Purchase. W. Pool, T. Clode, &c.

Sir J. Kennaway, M.P. In opening the proceedings, said—
I have been invited to come down here and take the chair on this occasion, at a meeting which I understand to be convened to consider whether or not a Volunteer Corps should be established in Sidmouth.

Volunteering is not new to Sidmouth, for when the movement first commenced a very efficient Battery was formed here under the command of Captain Lousada, and so long as it existed that Battery was a credit to itself and to the town and neighbourhood. It ultimately fell to pieces, not, as I understand, from any lack of zeal on the part of the men themselves, but from a want of officers to command them—(applause).

As a consequence Sidmouth has for some years remained unrepresented in the Volunteer movement, and she alone of the watering places of the West, although ranking high among them, contributes neither men nor money to this great movement, a movement which—speaking now after twenty years' experience—has become national and permanent—(hear, hear).

The great Volunteer movement of England has done much to raise this country in the eyes of Europe and the world (hear, hear).

It is a movement which has excited the admiration of foreigners, and it has proved that we as a race have not degenerated from the standard of our forefathers who at the beginning of the century turned out in such strong numbers to repel the invasion that was threatened— (cheers).

Indeed, I am not sure that posterity will not say that we have proved more worthy than did they, for the present movement has not passed away with the disappearance of danger but it has entwined itself in the hearts and affections of the people, and volunteering has become a pursuit and an institution of the country, of which Englishmen may well feel proud—(applause).

When we look across the country we see foreign nations obliged to resort to conscription to recruit their ranks and fill their battalions. But Englishmen have said very decidedly, and if needs be will say so again, that they will not have anything to do with conscription— (applause).

They prefer rather to give willing and voluntary service in the defence of the country, whether it be in the Regular or the Reserve Forces—(applause).

I had something to do with the formation of Volunteer Corps twenty years ago, when the work was of a very up-hill character, and my marvel is that we at that time got so many people to take the trouble and enter so heartily into an unknown pursuit with unknown responsibilities and unknown difficulties—(hear, hear).

At that time the Volunteers were exposed to very sharp criticism, and to taunts on the part of a large body of the public, who would not believe that the members would make the sacrifice then necessary. Many were inclined to regard the movement as a mere flash in the pan, and as a result large numbers of persons held aloof, thinking that it would not be worth while to bestow the necessary time upon it. But the value and stability of the force is now beyond question.

Men have steadily come forward, making great sacrifices with the view of meeting the responsibility they have undertaken, and the result is seen in the drill, inspections, and encampments held throughout the country, whilst on special occasions we have such great national demonstrations as the reviews which took place a year or two ago before the Queen in Windsor Park and at Edinburgh—(applause).

Many foreigners of distinction and experience witnessed those reviews, and went away with the very highest opinion of The Volunteer force of Great Britain—(applause).

I do not think it is easy to exaggerate the effect this movement has had on our national policy by the feeling of security given to everyone of this country by the fact that we have constantly in our midst 200,000 men who are making themselves acquainted with the pursuit of arms, submitting to training and discipline, and not only learning to drill but also acquiring the knowledge of how to handle the rifle with efficiency, and to become good marksmen—(applause).

Before the establishment of the Volunteer force we were subject to perpetual panics, but now these panics have almost entirely ceased, the country has greatly benefited by the sense of security, and our reputation has greatly advanced—(applause), from whatever

point of view you look at the Volunteer Force there, is no doubt that its establishment has been of very great value indeed.

Not only has it added to our sense of security and advanced our reputation, but it has had a very great effect upon the character of the nation.

Speaking from my own experience and observation I am sure it has been a very great benefit to the individual. It takes a young man from the farm, the workshop, or the counter, and gives him in his spare time a rational pursuit, it subjects him to discipline, it teaches him habits of self denial, obedience, self-restraint, habits of smartness and quickness, habits which I maintain are of essential value to him in whatever station of life he may be placed, and in the discharge of whatever duty he may be called upon to perform—(hear, hear).

I am satisfied that in making a man a Volunteer you are making him a better citizen than he would otherwise be—(hear, hear).

I am sure therefore that I need not argue at any length that it is desirable that Sidmouth should take her part in this great national movement. The meeting of today entirely confirms what I have heard before, it makes it clear that the feeling I have expressed is shared by many in this town, and I am sure that as soon as the opportunity presents itself we shall have a company here as strong and efficient as any in the West of England—(applause).

Devonshire has played a very prominent part in the Volunteer lists, and I am happy to say that at this moment her Volunteer force numbers 5,000 men, of whom 98 per cent, are efficient—(applause).

Here in Sidmouth you have now to face the practical question of how your company is to be formed. One great difficulty has been removed, for you have, as I understand it, secured the services of gentlemen of position in the town who are ready and willing to come forward as officers as soon as the corps is established.

I understand, too, that there is ground very suitable for a range, and it is confidently hoped that to the use of this ground the manor authorities will give their consent. You have close to your hand a battalion in praise of which I—as one of the field officers—ought not perhaps to say much, and therefore I will simply refer you to the Press for what has been said about it. But of our Commander (Colonel Troyte) I may say, behind his back, that he is one of the smartest officers we have in the Volunteer force—(applause).

He is very sorry indeed he cannot be with us at this meeting. He has been in Sidmouth today and made considerable sacrifices to be present, leaving home at a time when he was very busy to come and discuss the whole matter with me, and today he with some gentlemen connected with the movement inspected the suggested range, and was very pleased with what he saw and heard—(hear, hear). Unfortunately, however, an engagement at home to-night made it absolutely necessary that he should leave Sidmouth by the afternoon train, but he has asked me to say how pleased he shall be to have Sidmouth added to his battalion—(applause).

He is going to London next week, and he told me that one of his first duties would be to go to the War Office, represent that there are 80 to 100 men ready to be enrolled here, and to at once form an eighth company under his Battalion. To the establishment of this company, however, the consent of the War Office is necessary, as rifles, capitation grant,

and so on have to be obtained, but as this company would only raise the Battalion to its old strength he hopes to receive the necessary authority—(hear, hear).

I understand that the particular purpose of this meeting is to consider ways and means which are as necessary in connection with the Volunteer as in common with any other body. With this of course, Colonel Troyte has nothing whatever to do except that it will be necessary for him to state that there are sufficient funds paid or promised in Sidmouth to clothe the company.

Supposing a hundred men are ready to come forward Colonel Troyte considers that £250 would be necessary at the start The men can be well clothed for something under £2 a head—that would absorb £200 ; their butts and targets would cost £25 to £30, and this would leave £20 for incidental expenses which it is necessary to reckon upon. But that I hope would be the whole sum which it would be necessary to ask the inhabitants of Sidmouth to contribute, because there is a liberal Capitation Grant, and there is a travelling allowance sufficient to meet our annual expenses.

We are now, in this respect, much better off than when we first started Volunteer Corps at Ottery and other places, because then we had not only to ask our friends to help us at starting, but we also had to do that which people are less inclined to do—ask them to put down their names for a subscription annually. This is not necessary now. If we get £250 at starting the annual expenses of efficiency will be met by the Capitation Grant.

It has given me great pleasure as a neighbour and an old Volunteer to come here and to do anything I can to spread the extension of the Volunteer movement. I have seen the advantages resulting from the existence of the Volunteer force in other places and as one who is interested in Sidmouth and having an affection for it, I am anxious that an efficient Volunteer Corps should be established here without delay—(applause).

Rev. J. G. Clements, the Vicar, in moving a resolution that it was desirable to form a company of Volunteers in connection with the 3rd D R V., remarked that 23 years ago he presided at a meeting at which the Sidmouth Battery of Artillery Volunteers was formed, and that Battery went on very well indeed until ten years ago, when it collapsed for want of officers. He rejoiced that a company of Riflemen was now to be formed under much more promising auspices. He was sure that the existence of a company of Volunteers in a town like Sidmouth would have a very wholesome influence, and he moved the resolution with the utmost pleasure.

Colonel Darnell, in seconding the motion (which was carried with applause), had no doubt that ere long they would have a company of Volunteers fit to take its place in any battalion in the county. One very promising feature in the present movement was the comparative youth of the officers—a fact that led them to hope that many years would elapse before the Riflemen would meet with any difficulty similar to that which caused the collapse of the Artillery—(hear, hear).

Mr. HINE-HAYCOCK, in moving the opening of a subscription list for the purpose of raising £250 for the equipment of the company, did not anticipate any difficulty in getting the necessary funds. He expressed his congratulation with regard to the choice of officers, wished the company all success, and subscribed £10.

Colonel CHESTER seconded the motion (which was agreed to), and trusted to soon see the company in uniform and at work.

Mr. Scott, in moving the appointment of Mr. Thornton as Hon. Secretary and Mr. Orchard as Treasurer of the fund, reminded those present that volunteering was not now a matter of mere play, but it involved hard work, so that they might be qualified to efficiently take a share in the defence of the country in time of need.

Mr. Floyd seconded the motion, which was agreed to, and the meeting terminated with a vote of thanks to the Chairman.

At the close the following subscriptions were received ; Mr. Thornton, £10; Mr. Haycock, £10; Sir J. Kennaway, £6; Mr. G. Bedford, £5 ; Rev. H. G. J. Clements, £5; Mr. G. Scott, £5 ; Mr. W. M. Floyd, £5 ; Colonel Darnell, £5—total, £50.