

are told, "will be available for national and international congresses of science and art; for performances of music, both choral and instrumental, including performances on the organ similar to those now given in large provincial towns, such as Liverpool and Birmingham; for the distribution of prizes by public bodies and societies, conversaciones of scientific and artistic societies, agricultural and horticultural exhibitions, national and international exhibitions of works of art and industry, including industrial exhibitions by the working classes similar to those recently held with so much success in various parts of London; for exhibitions of pictures and sculpture, and for any other purposes of artistic and scientific interest."

Such is the formal catalogue of uses of the building, but practically it will chiefly be used during the London "season" for great musical performances, for flower shows, and for the evening dress conversaciones of the Society of Arts, and other corporate institutions. Subscribers of £1,000 may obtain a box to contain ten persons in the principal tier; £500 a box for five persons in the second tier; and so on, in proportion to site and accommodation, as in a theatre. The hall is designed to accommodate 8,000 persons at orchestral performances, besides the singers and musicians. Between 5,000 and 6,000 of the sittings will be available for revenue by occasional visitors, besides the permanent rents of subscribers to the boxes and stalls. The liability of subscribers is "limited," and their special places may be "conveyanced" to other occupants. The whole scheme is on a vast scale, but is of so miscellaneous a character, that some will almost regret the association with it of the name of Prince Albert, and the recollection of the Exhibition of 1851.

THE CORPS OF COMMISSIONAIRES.

In the "Leisure Hour" for June, 1866, we gave an account of the origin and early history of the Corps of Commissionaires. Established by a few benevolent individuals, with much labour and difficulty, the institution has gradually commended itself to public favour, and is now nearly self-supporting. From the last annual report of the executive committee we learn that there has been a steady increase in the number of members of the corps, as well as in the demand for their services. The report states that—

The motion submitted to the House of Commons by Sir Charles Russell, V.C., relative to the employment of soldiers and sailors in the public offices, the reception it received, and the general drift of the public feeling, are all tending to the more extensive employment of old soldiers and sailors in the public departments; and we feel satisfied that this institution may be expanded, if duly supported, so as to meet a largely increased demand with qualified and reliable men, discharged from the army and navy, to fulfil the duties that may be required from them.

With this end in view, we would most earnestly press for more extended pecuniary support from the public generally, and from both the army and navy, it being remembered that all the benefits of the institution are equally open to, and, indeed, are largely taken advantage of by, both services. It is hoped that both in her Majesty's ships and regiments general subscriptions will be entered into in support of the institution; a very small amount from individual officers will effect great results in benefiting the institution. A subscription of 5s. a year from each officer in a regiment will in two years entitle a corps to a perpetual governorship.

An opportunity having occurred of purchasing the barracks of the corps on advantageous terms, the commanding officer has acted with much promptness and decision in securing them. The advantage of this acquisition to the institution, in both a practical and financial point of view, cannot be doubted.

The purchase-money, however, has to be raised, and it is hoped that the efforts and contributions of all well-wishers to the corps will not be wanting to meet the emergency. We cannot believe that the public will allow the founder to suffer from having effected an arrangement of such manifest importance to its interests.*

We beg to call your attention to the inadequate stipend now provided for the Adjutant. If this officer does his duty by the corps, his post is a very arduous one. The present Adjutant is well qualified for the position, and zealous in the performance of his duties. It is very desirable that, if means can be provided, he should be rewarded more adequately and proportionately to the extent of his duty and his responsibilities.

With respect to the management of the corps, all persons subscribing £10 are life governors, and regiments whose united subscriptions among officers, past and present, amount to £25, are perpetual governors, having the right to nominate one of their body as a representative of their interests.

The veteran Sir John Burgoyne, one of the trustees of the Endowment Fund, has published in the "Times" the following appeal on behalf of what he terms "one of the most meritorious and practical measures for the benefit of the army and navy which has been set on foot in modern times."

No measure can be indifferent to the British public which tends to reward and add to the comforts of the retired soldier and sailor of her Majesty's service, and which, in addition, brings valuable qualities into the activity of social life instead of leaving them buried in idleness and penury.

There are many qualities peculiar to the soldier and sailor, and imbibed by him in the ordinary course of his service, which, added to good character and conduct, may render such men more eligible than others for various services in civil life. Among these may be reckoned the habit of implicit obedience to any order he receives, without reference to any especial inconvenience it may occasion him, or troubling himself by much consideration as to its import; and to this may be added a degree of fearless spirit in the performance of what is required of him, and in protecting whatever may be entrusted to his charge, which is inculcated by his profession.

There are many requirements in the business of life which render these qualifications of more value than the possession of particular ability, skill, or bodily power.

As a trustee of the institution, it has been my duty to examine the details of its administration, and I think every one conversant with the requirements of so large a body of men will admit the moderation of the expenses.

If the money required for the purchase of the existing barracks of the men—viz., £5,000—could be raised by subscription, the income of the corps would be augmented by £250 a year, and the expenses of the increased establishment would be brought within the annual interest of the investments, and thus stand upon a sound basis. For this comparatively small sum the public would be furnished with a never-failing supply of trustworthy men, to whom could be entrusted with confidence the care of valuable property, and upon whose exactitude and probity the most complete reliance could be placed. I have known cases where, during the prevalence of an epidemic, families have left premises which were infected in the sole care of one of these commissionaires, and there is not one who would hesitate to assume the charge under such circumstances. If old soldiers and sailors have their failings, they have also their virtues, and so long as such qualities as fidelity to a trust and contempt of danger are valuable to society, it is worth our while to make an effort to render permanent an institution which will place those qualities at our disposal in times of need.

The effective strength of the corps is at present about 380. It is estimated that there is permanent employment for at least 800 men in London alone.

* Subscriptions for the Endowment Fund are received by Messrs. Cocks and Co., Army Agents, Craig's Court, Charing Cross, S.W., and also by the Adjutant of the corps, Exchange Court, 419, Strand, W.C. Exclusive of the balance of the "Times" Crimean Fund, the interest of which is paid by the Charity Commissioners to the trustees of the institution, the total subscriptions of the public to the Endowment Fund of the corps from its foundation up to the present time are less than £1,800. This fund is intended for the payment of the Adjutant and requisite staff, the rent of the offices, and such other items as could not be fairly chargeable to the soldiers and sailors composing the corps.