

Harris, like most young men at the time, imbibed the military spirit, and was led to join what was called the "supplemental militia." This force was stationed at different places along the south coast, to be ready in case of need to aid in repelling the threatened invasion.

After having been with his regiment in the south of England, Mr. Harris obtained a furlough of some weeks and returned to his native town. During this visit the foundation of his religious life was laid. The place of worship which his pious mother attended was that in which, afterwards, the great and gifted Robert Hall officiated. A funeral sermon was announced for the evening, and the anxious mother persuaded the sceptical son to go and hear it. He consented, and took his seat with her in the chapel. The preacher selected for his text, "A great man has fallen this day in Israel!" The announcement excited the half-suppressed laughter of the young man; for this "great man" that had fallen was a poor scissors-grinder, who by his cheerfulness and uprightness in the midst of deep poverty had won the respect of all who knew him. Quieted by the gentle rebuke of his mother, who sat by his side, he listened attentively to the preacher, who proceeded to explain the nature of true greatness, and to show how religion made men truly great, both in this world and in the next, however insignificant they might seem, when judged by the world's conventional standard of greatness. While thus listening, his levity gave way to serious reflection. He had known the poor scissors-grinder, and esteemed him for his goodness and his invariable cheerfulness under all circumstances. There must be a power and reality in religion to raise such a man in character and in happiness above all the trials of his lot; at least there *might* be, and he resolved at once to reconsider the question of the truth of Christianity. He did so, and after much reading and prayerful investigation, he renounced for ever his infidelity, and as a man would destroy the phial which contained the poison he had taken in mistake, so he burnt the books which had for a time led him astray. He became an earnest Christian, and united himself with the congregation over which Robert Hall presided, and enjoyed the ministry and the intimate friendship of that distinguished preacher until his removal from Leicester to Bristol in the year 1826.

Not long after this, apparently at the time of the peace of Amiens, Mr. Harris quitted the ranks of the militia, and retiring to his native town commenced that business career in which he eventually became so successful. When he commenced his career, the stocking-frame machine, after being long neglected and then violently opposed, had become a recognised and lawful engine of labour, but was in a rude and simple state, and his ingenious mind soon perceived that it was capable of great improvement, and of being adapted not only to the manufacture of every kind of hosiery, but of an endless variety of other articles of apparel. To the development of its capabilities he devoted his life and energies. His mind was fertile in new design, and ingenious in the alteration and adaptation of machinery to their production. His business at first was small, but year by year it increased and extended, until at the time of his death, as the result of years of skill and untiring industry, it had reached colossal proportions.

"Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men." Success in life, earned by honourable industry, integrity, and skill, soon brings along with it office and honours. Richard Harris acquired the confidence and esteem of his fellow-citizens, and was called upon to fill

the various municipal offices. While holding that of chief magistrate, in the year 1843, he was honoured with an invitation to Belvoir Castle, where the Queen was then staying, and a distinguished party of guests. Among these was the "Iron Duke," who seemed to court the company of Mr. Harris. Both were early risers, and long before the other guests had awoke from their slumbers they might have been seen walking in the beautiful grounds of the castle, and conversing earnestly together.

There remained yet another honour to be conferred on him, the highest in the power of his native town to bestow. During a period of nearly forty years he had taken an active though not a noisy part in the politics of the times. The passing of the Registration Act, which has proved so useful to society at large, offending no man's conscience, and leaving no man's property insecure, was in a great measure due to the external pressure which he created, and the information which he supplied to Lord Nugent and other advocates of the measure in Parliament. In the year 1848 the representation of the town of Leicester became vacant, and the electors at once turned their thoughts to Mr. Harris and his friend Mr. John Ellis. They consented to become candidates, and were elected without opposition.

An election in Leicester in the year 1826 cost one candidate £60,000. The whole cost of the election of Mr. Harris and his friend, including everything, did not exceed £200.

For four years Mr. Harris discharged the duties of his responsible position in a manner satisfactory to his constituents. He retired from public life in the year 1853, and for a time enjoyed the "otium cum dignitate," moving quietly about in his native town, unostentatiously and in various ways doing good, respected and honoured by all who knew him. "When the eye saw him it blessed him." He passed into rest February 2nd, 1854, amidst every demonstration of respect by his fellow-citizens.

#### ROYAL ALBERT HALL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES.

AFTER the close of the Exhibition of 1851, many claims were urged on her Majesty's Commissioners for the disposable estate at Kensington Gore. The South Kensington Museum came in for the larger share, but a successful application was also made for ground upon which to build a great central institution for promotion of scientific and artistic knowledge as applicable to productive industry. Under this plea a site was granted, on a nominal rental of a shilling a year, for 999 years, which is estimated as a donation of £60,000. The site is on the south side of the high road to Kensington, opposite the Albert Monument. The foundation-stone was laid by her Majesty, and the hall has the prestige of being associated with the memory of the good deeds of the Prince Consort, as patron of art and industry.

The plan of the building, first designed by the late Capt. Fowke, R.E., was on his death carried out by Lieut.-Colonel Scott, R.E., and the construction is hastening toward completion, under the charge of Messrs. Lucas.

As the scheme advanced, a larger scope was announced in describing the possible uses of the edifice. To the advancement of industrial art were added various projects, combining commercial with scientific advantages, as in the case of the Crystal Palace. The estimated cost being about £200,000 rendered every extension of the original project advisable. "The hall," we



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.