

THE PRACTICE OF PURCHASING COMMISSIONS IN THE BRITISH ARMY:
ITS HISTORY AND ABOLITION

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by

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FOREWORD

After the final defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte, the Duke of Wellington is reported to have said: "The battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton." Only a true Englishman, in spirit if not in nationality, can fully comprehend the meaning of this remark. At first glance it appears to be just another variation of the theme that permeates English history and literature -- a reoccurring theme that is perhaps more familiarly expressed in the several lines from Rupert Brooke's poem, The Soldier:

If I should die, think only this of me;
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

This sincere but romantic glorification of England and its way of life has been a dominant feature of the English personality. And yet, deep-rooted in the endless chasms of this same personality, there seems to have been -- indeed, perhaps still is -- the ultimate awareness that great men are born and not made; and that by virtue of birth and social position, the British system is able to superimpose virtues and ideals upon its gentlemanly sons to a degree elsewhere unknown.

The army is one of the older institutions of Great Britain. For the major part of its existence, the British army was officered by members of the higher social classes. The practice of purchasing army commissions

had evolved during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and this tended to protect and insure the aristocratically-dominated officer corps. It was not until 1871 that this practice was legally abolished. This thesis attempts to explain the "system of purchase" by tracing its development from earlier times to its abolition in the nineteenth century.

A subject that is frequently alluded to but seldom explored in any appreciable length, the purchase system has become one of the great enigmas of English history. Few historical studies provide anything but a superficial treatment of the subject. Only in certain select sources, such as official government documents, contemporary periodicals and newspapers, personal correspondence, memoirs, diaries, and the like, can its nature and impact be truly verified. The following materials were especially helpful in the research for this thesis: The House of Commons Sessional Papers; Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (3rd series); and Statute Law Relating to the Army (selected and arranged by Charles M. Glode, London, 1877). Other works of special value were: Sir Robert Biddulph, Lord Cardwell at the War Office (London, 1904); Charles M. Glode, The Military Forces of the Crown: Their Administration and Government (London, 1869); and Arvel B. Erickson, "Edward T. Cardwell: Peelite," Transactions of the American Philosophical Society (Philadelphia, 1959).

The practice of purchasing commissions in the British army began in obscurity and ended in a political contest of much magnitude. This system of officer promotion existed for over two hundred years. Yet, before its abolition in 1871, the practice was rarely understood by those not

immersed in its intricacies; since its termination, the purchase system has been virtually forgotten. In an effort to rescue the purchase system from the threat of historical oblivion, this thesis has been written.

J.T.C.

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CHAPTER I

ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY OF THE PURCHASE SYSTEM

The practice of buying and selling commissions, as it once existed in the British regular army, was a complex and controversial institution. Its exact origin dwells somewhere in the historical obscurity of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. Its operation and administration were probably simple in the beginning, but before its termination in 1871, the purchase system had become complicated and riddled with professional abuse.

Under the system of purchase, a young man became a commissioned officer in the British regular army by paying a sum of money to a previous holder of the lowest commission. On his promotion to a higher rank, he then would pay an additional and larger sum to the officer whose rank he was buying. This expense was partly offset by the sale of his previous rank to someone else. Purchase was found throughout the officer ranks up to and including the position of lieutenant-colonel. Ranks above the position of lieutenant-colonelcy were never for sale.¹

To be eligible for a first commission, a candidate was required to prove that he had received the education of a gentleman, which included a knowledge of military drawing and the ability to speak a continental

¹Arvel B. Erickson, "Edward T. Cardwell: Peelite," Transactions of the American Philosophical Society (New Series; Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1959), II, Part 2, p. 93.

language. Succession by seniority was maintained whenever possible. Promotion went by seniority as long as the senior officer had the finances with which to purchase. If a major's commission, for example, was available, the senior captain in the particular regiment had the initial opportunity to buy it. If he could not, the next senior man was given the opportunity, and so on. If for some reason the officers immediately in line to purchase the commission were unable to do so, it was common to offer the commission to an interested officer in another regiment.¹ Another method of disposing of a commission was for the selling officer to exchange his position with an officer of equal rank in another regiment where sale was more likely. This was referred to as exchange.

The system of purchase was fundamentally an army practice. There is some evidence that it existed for a time in the marines,² but the royal navy was never exposed to it. And even in the British army not all promotions were by method of purchase. Purchase, for example, did not apply in the royal artillery, royal engineers, or other scientific departments where technical training was required. "Since purchase officers in other branches were aristocrats by birth and training, and tended to ignore things which were scientific and beneath the dignity of gentlemen, they did not desire service in the technical branches."³

¹Sir Robert Biddulph, Lord Cardwell at the War Office (London: John Murray, 1904), 78.

²Ive vs. Ash (1702). See Charles M. Clode's The Military Forces of the Crown: Their Administration and Government (London: John Murray, 1869), II, 77.

³Erickson, "Cardwell," Transactions, II, 77.

In purchase regiments, such as the royal infantry and royal cavalry units, promotion by merit was not unknown, though exceedingly rare. Men of exceptional ability were sometimes able to bypass the social and economic obstacles that existed. Furthermore, graduates of Sandhurst, of whom the majority were sons of officers, received their initial commissions directly without purchase. Promotions thereafter, however, normally went by purchase.

The origin of the practice of buying and selling army commissions is not clear. Some historians are inclined to date its beginnings prior to the Restoration period, although evidence is scant. The earliest possible time of origin seems to be during the reign of King Edward VI.¹ The date of 1627 is another suggested beginning point when it is suspected that military commissions were bought and sold with two different rates fixed -- one for outsiders and one for those officers already serving in the regiments.² Other evidence also tends to place its beginnings in the reign of King Charles I. At the time of the Civil War, the monarch is known to have awarded commissions by favor to volunteers or to gentlemen who would bring a body of recruits to his standard. In the subsequent New Model Army, however, the concept of purchase did not exist. Officers were selected "mainly and preferably on the strength of proved merit in the war."³

¹Colonel H. de Watteville, The British Soldier: His Daily Life from Tudor to Modern Times (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1955), 171.

²Erickson, "Cardwell," Transactions, II, 77.

³De Watteville, British Soldier, 171.

It is in the Restoration era, according to most authorities, that the visible roots of the purchase system as it came to be known are recognizable. With the Restoration of Charles II, a remnant of the New Model Army was saved from disbandment in order to maintain peace in turbulent London.¹ At this time it is known that the practice of buying both civil and military offices was common. There was a desire upon the part of Charles II and his immediate successor James II to enlarge the standing army. During the short reign of James II, for instance, the regulars were increased from 6,000 to nearly 30,000.

According to General Robert Biddulph,² the system of military purchase probably began in the following manner:

When a new regiment was required, it was raised by the person who was to be appointed Colonel, and upon him devolved the trouble and expense of recruiting the required number of men. In return he had the privilege of nominating some or all of the officers. In order to recoup himself of part of the expense he had been put to, the Colonel required the officers to contribute, in other words, he practically sold the commissions to them. These officers in their turn claimed to recoup themselves by selling their commissions to their successors.³

It is certain that the system of purchase existed in 1683, because a royal warrant of that year acknowledges it. By sanctioning the sale

¹The Coldstreams and part of the garrisons of Dunkirk and Tangier were the only elements of the Cromwellians not disbanded.

²General Biddulph became military secretary to the secretary of state for war during William E. Gladstone's first ministry, 1868-1874, at which time the purchase system was finally abolished. He held the rank of major at that time.

³Biddulph, Lord Cardwell, 81.

of army commissions, Charles II acted entirely within the scope of royal authority. Moreover, the warrant does not appear to be in violation of an earlier statement (5 & 6 Edward VI, c. 16) which prohibited the sale of certain offices.¹ Prior to the 1683 royal warrant of Charles II, the practice of purchasing commissions had been legally upheld in the case of Berresford vs. Dove (1682). In this case, which took place before the Lord Chancellor Nottingham in the Court of Chancery in November, 1662, the purchase system received complete legal recognition.²

In subsequent years, efforts were made to limit and abolish the practice. The policy of William III was for a period of time directed against it. By a royal warrant in July, 1693, the monarch required an officer or soldier to swear that he had not been paid either by "present or gratuity" for the privilege of obtaining his position. Moreover, the officer or soldier was forced to agree, before his name was finally placed on the muster roll, that if it ever came to his attention that any friend or acquaintance had participated in such action he would report it immediately. Parliament assisted King William III in his efforts to quell the practice of army purchase by inserting a significant clause in the Mutiny Act of 1695. This clause sought "to prevent the great mischief of buying and selling military employment in His Majesty's Army."³ In 1701, however, this clause was omitted from the

¹Great Britain, The Statute Law Relating to the Army, Charles M. Clode (ed.) (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1877), 4-8.

²Clode, Military Forces, II, 76.

³Ibid.

Mutiny Act of that year. This withdrawal from the statute book enabled purchase again to be established. The following year the Ive vs. Ash (1702) decision supported purchase. The question centered over the particular sale of a commission in the royal marines when the enactment in the Mutiny Act was still in force. The lord keeper upheld the right of purchase and it is said that this decision was also affirmed by the House of Lords.¹

In the following decades the practice of purchase became regularized. In the reign of Queen Anne, certain regulations were promulgated in an effort to correct some irregularities and abuses with regard to the practice.² In May of 1711, a royal warrant was issued which, accepting the principle of purchase, concerned itself with the subject of selling. It prohibited officers from engaging in the sale of their commissions unless the transaction complied with specific regulations set down in the royal sign manual. In September, 1711, there was a marked relaxation of the May regulations. In this redefinition, it was declared that henceforth commissions under the rank of major were saleable without permission or reference to age, health, or service. The new regulation also called for regimental debts to be paid, the widows and families of deceased officers to be provided the opportunity to receive the purchase money for commissions in almost all instances, and promotion in regiments to be thereafter accelerated.

¹Ibid.

²The Annual Register: A Review of Public Events at Home and Abroad for the Year 1871 (New Series; London: various publishers, 1872) 69-70.

The reasons for the subsequent relaxation of the Queen Anne regulations were described in the September statement as thus:

1st. That it will be a very great hardship where subalterns by misfortunes in recruiting have misspent the levy money, and outrun themselves so as not to be able to continue in the service; and if they cannot dispose of their Commissions, the debt must fall on the regiment.

2ndly. In some cases, Officers die and leave great families in a starving condition, where it would be great charity to permit the Commission to be disposed of, so as that the successors may give some consideration or allowance for the support of the widow and children; and

3rdly. Where Colonels shall judge it for the good of the service to desire Officers from other Regiments, who are better qualified than those next in rank in their own, the matter might be easily compromised, and the said Officer satisfied with a small acknowledgment, as well as Our service better answered.¹

In the reign of George I the system of purchase was further rationalized. In 1719-1720 a tariff was fixed on all purchasable military commissions by the crown. Henceforth, it was declared, an officer desiring to sell his rank was required to charge only the authorized price. The appointment of the successor was not to be subject to the influence of the selling officer, the regulation further stipulated, but rather it was to be left up to the discretion of the crown; and succession of rank was to be maintained by making it mandatory for a commission to be purchased only by an officer of the next rank, i.e., a lieutenant-colonel's commission could only be purchased by a major, and so on. In an effort to prevent young and inexperienced officers from rising through the ranks too rapidly, the regulation also cited that no officer above the rank of lieutenant should be allowed to purchase any higher rank unless

¹From Glode's Military Forces, II, 77.

he had served ten years as a commissioned officer.

The most important factor of these 1719-1720 regulations, other than the creation of a scale of prices, was that future selling officers were prevented thereafter from choosing their successors. Technically, the crown was now given the right to choose the buyer, even though the war office would often respect a regimental commander's candidate. This transference of the right of selection from the individual selling officer to the army administration, however, is significant. In a real sense, it removed a problem from a local area and placed it on a higher level of army administration. Hence, it can be said that the "door was thus opened to all manner of abuses, and commissions became bribes for political subserviency or rewards for political services."¹

In a royal warrant of March, 1721, the regulation prices established in 1719-1720 received additional guarantees. The 1721 ruling states, in part, that the colonel of a regiment, in recommending an individual for a first commission or for promotion, should submit a certificate to the secretary of war "that the officer doth purchase according to the Regulation price, and no higher," and further, "that the person so purchasing, or promoted by purchase, should have no pretention or title thereby to sell again hereafter."² This latter point, in effect, declared to all who purchased that they had not set up a right against the crown to sell again. Eventually, however, a degree of crown

¹Erickson, "Cardwell," Transactions, II, 77.

²Clode, Military Forces, II, 78.

protection in this matter would be afforded to the purchasing officer.

The practice of attaching an extra fee to the authorized regulation price of a particular commission probably grew up along side of the tariff regulations of 1719-1720. This additional sum was known as overregulation payment.¹ It is known that a board of inquiry was appointed to investigate the problem as early as 1725.² Concerning the origins of overregulation payment, an 1870 royal commission reported:

We have been unable to ascertain by any direct proof when this practice began, but the language of the successive warrants, regulations and orders to which we have referred is sufficient to show that at all events in the year 1766, and from that period to the present, the practice has been known to exist, and we have no reason to doubt that it prevailed from the time when the prices of commissions were first fixed in the year 1719-20.³

In 1765, it appears that action was contemplated to halt the price increase. The question also rose as to whether or not the commissions in regiments serving in and out of Europe should be of the same value. A board of general officers was engaged to consider the issue, and after a period of study declared unanimously "that the price should be uniform, whether the Regiment was serving in or out of Europe; but that if any

¹Concerning "regulation prices" and "overregulation prices," Justin McCarthy said: "The regulation price was to the real [overregulation] price what the cost of a ticket bought at the door of an Italian theatre is to the sum which has to be paid inside for a seat from which to see the play." Justin McCarthy, A History of Our Own Times: From the Accession of Queen Victoria to the General Election of 1880 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1883), II, 486.

²Annual Register for 1871, pp. 69-70.

³Great Britain, House of Commons, Sessional Papers, "Report of Commissioners on Over-Regulation Payments," 1870, XII, 209.

deficiencies should arise on the sale of Commissions of Cornet, Ensign, or Second-Lieutenant, the loss should be borne by the selling officer."¹

King George III had become alarmed over the inflated prices and after receiving the report from the board of inquiry, the monarch took prompt action by issuing a royal warrant on 10 February, 1765, which ordered: "That in all cases where We shall permit any of the Commissions to be sold, the sum received shall not exceed the prices set down in the said Report."²

In effect, this royal statement attempted to place an absolute ceiling on commission prices. With some modification, this price ceiling remained unchanged throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Prices did vary with different military units, but according to General Biddulph, the following list for regiments of the foot illustrates the scale:³

Ensign	£ 400
Lieutenant	550
Captain-Lieutenant	800
Captain	1500
Major	2600
Lieutenant-Colonel	3500

Toward the end of the century the practice of buying or selling above the authorized regulation price was made a penal offense by a parliamentary act passed in 1798.⁴ Overregulation payments continued,

¹Clode, Military Forces, II, 79.

²Ibid.

³From Biddulph's Lord Cardwell, 85.

⁴Annual Register for 1871, pp. 69-70.

however. In 1809 the whole question of the buying and selling of both civil and military offices fell under royal scrutiny. The result was a series of inquiries that culminated in the passage of an act (49 Geo. III, c. 126) by Parliament in 1809.¹ This statute declared it a misdemeanor to buy or sell any office, save military commissions bought or sold at regulation prices. Furthermore, it was stated to be illegal to receive money or reward for the negotiation of such sales, or to open an office for such business.²

As a consequence, this statute of 1809 clearly fixed the legal status in which the purchase system was to operate during the remaining period of its existence. With respect to the military, the law legalized those sales that were made in strict accordance with the regulations; thereafter, any officer who bought or sold at a higher rate than authorized by the regulation listings, and all buyers and sellers of militia or volunteer commissions at any price, were guilty of a misdemeanor, subject to punishment by indictment in the Queen's Bench. The officer who did purchase under the regulation requirements had a recognizable claim upon the crown. This guaranteed him the right to resell his commission. He could legally receive, however, only the sum that he had originally paid for it. The selling officer, in order to dispose of his commission, did have to be in good health and not guilty of

¹It was known as the "Sale of Offices Prevention Bill." See Great Britain, Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates, 1809, XIV, 113, 268, 573, 1015.

²For a detailed description of the act, see Statute Law, 4-8.

misconduct.¹

The statute of 1809 also established a new legal juxtaposition between the purchasing class and the nonpurchasing class by permitting the latter to be compensated for their commission at retirement. The purchase system, as has been previously mentioned, was not an ubiquitous form of promotion in the British regular army, although it dominated the majority of regiments. The existence of nonpurchasing officers, especially in purchasing regiments, had created problems for army administration and served to expose the severe dichotomy that prevailed in the service.

It should be borne in mind that the system of purchase was not solely the result of economic and social judgments of the crown. A parsimonious Parliament throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries shared in the refinement of the system. To the British officer, purchase was more than a privilege afforded his class; it also meant financial protection upon his retirement. It brought to the retiring officer a lump sum that might be thought of as a severance payment without direct expense to the government. From the Restoration onward, no significant provision was sanctioned by the state for the maintenance of a retiring officer, save the sale of his commission. Unquestionably, the public reaped a certain advantage from this situation.

Through the evolution of the purchase system, the purchasing officer eventually obtained some reasonable assurances from the crown that he

¹Erickson, "Cardwell," Transactions, II, 78.

would adequately be able to dispose of his commission.¹ The nonpurchasing officer, on the other hand, had little assurance of any retirement payment and was, more often than not, forced for his own future security to enter the purchase system. The Queen Anne regulations of 1711 did permit the nonpurchasing officer to sell his commission provided he met certain qualifications.² He had to ask permission to sell and received only that part of the sale price the crown saw fit to allow him. The 1809 ruling, however, did provide more security for the nonpurchasing officer in that he could be reasonably certain of ending his career with some compensation.

The theory behind the nonpurchaser's right to sell his commission was that such a sale, in effect, was not the sale of the commission itself, but rather the sale of past services rendered. If the sale was permitted, therefore, the nonpurchasing officer could only receive such a sum as the crown saw fit to allow him for his past service; the residue or difference between what the purchase buyer paid and the nonpurchase seller sold was placed in a reserve fund, which was created in 1802.

¹In a royal commission report of 1870, however, one of the chief arguments against purchase was the financial risk to the officer. One section of the argument reads in part: "The circumstances which the sum [regulation price] so paid is irrecoverable are so various and uncertain that the payment of it, if regarded as an investment, is attended with great risk of loss." Sessional Papers, "Report of Commissioners on Over-Regulation Payments," 1870, XII, 218. It should be noted further that because of the fluctuation of overregulation payments which often were over half again as much as the regulation prices, such an "investment" could hardly be considered safe.

²See Clode's Military Forces, II, 83.

The reserve fund was founded originally by the purchasing officers for the benefit of the retirement of the nonpurchasing officers. Without becoming immersed in the operational complexities of this fund, it can be said that essentially it was financed by the purchasing class. From this fund the nonpurchasing officer received a bonus upon retirement. It is obvious that the purchasing class was not being completely altruistic in its concern for the nonpurchasing officer. Much of this interest for protection of the nonpurchasing element sprang from a fundamental concern for survival. To permit such an unequitable situation to endure would be inviting government action detrimental to the principle of purchase.

Another special fund was created with respect to the administration of the purchase system. It was known as the half-pay fund. Prior to 1783, the government had sanctioned only the sale of full-pay commissions. In a regulation dated 14 August, 1783, exchanges from full pay to half pay and visa versa were permitted.¹ A schedule was drawn up which outlined the value and the difference in value of each full- and half-pay commission. If an officer on full-pay status exchanged to a half-pay status, receiving the difference, he had a partial sale of his commission and could not subsequently return to full pay; if, however, he exchanged without receiving the difference, he was allowed to return to full-pay status at a later date.

¹Ibid., 80.

The half-pay fund was created in the early part of the nineteenth century when a reduction in the army was necessitated. The half-pay commissions gained value because the purchaser not only obtained the value of the rank itself, but the value of the half-pay status measured from the date of reduction. In times of national emergency, however, the army was forced to expand rapidly; full-pay commissions would be in high demand. As a consequence, half-pay commissions in these periods were almost unsaleable. Appealing to the commander-in-chief, the half-pay officers found relief. The government permitted these officers to receive the value of their vacant commissions on a computed basis from the half-pay fund. The fund itself was maintained by the crown, selling full-pay commissions which for various reasons had fallen vacant without being purchased.¹

Thus can be seen in this brief description of the development of the purchase system that the practice of buying, selling, and exchanging army commissions became an integral part of the British regular army. Admittedly, purchase did not affect staff appointments, scientific and technical regiments, or ranks above lieutenant-colonelcy in the horse and foot regiments;² it was, however, the dominant method of promotion in the regular army. And while it is true that regimental

¹For a complete list of commission reports, accounts and papers, and so on, pertaining to the half-pay status, see Great Britain, House of Commons Papers, General Index to the Accounts and Papers, Reports of Commissioners, Estimates, (1801-1852) (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1938), 28-29, 33-35.

²Sessional Papers, "Report of Rt. Hon. E. Ellice, Wynward, and Bentinck on the Present System of Purchase," 1857-1858, XIX, 239.

commanders were required to certify as to the ability and fitness of a candidate for promotion, he himself was a product of the purchase system, had a heavy investment in it, and consequently his certification, more likely than not, became a mere formality in most instances.

Hence, the British regular army became officered by men of high social position -- "the best Officers in the world," as the Duke of Wellington was to state with pride -- and assumed its aristocratic flavor. During the long peace that followed Waterloo, the purchase system continued to hold sway over the army. Sir Charles Trevelyan, a long-time advocate for abolition of the purchase system, was asked by a member of a board of inquiry in the mid-1850's if he thought the general opinion in the British army was for doing away with purchase. Trevelyan answered ruefully: "Habit is a very powerful element."¹

¹Ibid., "Report upon the Evidence given by Sir Charles Trevelyan before the Commission appointed to inquire into the Purchase and Sale of Commissions in the Army," XXXVII, 485.

CHAPTER II

PERIOD OF MILITARY PARALYSIS - 1815-1854

The purchase system had been subjected to periodic criticism almost from its inception. Critics attacked it from the point of view of principle as well as practice. With the exception of the brief interval under the reign of William III, however, the system had not been confronted with any serious threat of extinction. During the years of peace that extended from Waterloo to Crimea, the British army fell into a long, depressed sleep. The nation was tired of war and soldiers. The army became lethargic and sought to defend itself against change. "It glorified the traditions of the past to such an extent that these became the only foundation of every form of army activity in the future. The present was paralysed by the past."¹

As is so common in periods of long peace, the prospect of substantial military alterations was slight; whatever mood for reform that existed in the British army during the French wars appears to have been figuratively slain on the battlefield of Waterloo. During the forty years that followed the Napoleonic wars, the British military establishment lay transfixed under the dominating personality of the Duke of Wellington. To soldier and civilian alike, the "Iron Duke" became a symbol of Anglo-Saxon military genius. Veneration and a degree of

¹De Wetteville, British Soldier, 137.

untouchability clung to his person, and he wore it well as only old war heroes can.¹ His utterances with respect to military matters went virtually unchallenged. In short, his personality held sway over the British army, even after his death; and his influence on purchase was especially great, for Wellington enthusiastically supported it.

The act of George III in 1809 abolished the selling of offices in other departments, but gave to the crown the right of retaining the practice in the regular army. At that time, this action appeared to insure the system of purchase in the regular army; whereas, in retrospect, it more accurately planted the seeds of its abolition. Civilian inquiry had spoken out against the principle of purchasing civil and military offices other than those of the regular army; the principle of purchase had, in effect, received a severe blow.

Most officers who had purchased their commissions came to regard the army as their private and personal property. "Apart from the honourable few who repeatedly saved the situation during the years of peace, the majority of the wealthier officers treated their regiment as

¹William E. Gladstone penned a revealing account of his first meeting with the Duke of Wellington. After visiting Sir Robert Peel at Drayton Manor in January, 1836, Gladstone wrote: Wellington "entered the Library: at the sound of his name everybody rose: he is addressed by all with a respectful manner. . . . The Duke of Wellington appears to speak little and never for speaking's sake, but only to convey an idea commonly worth conveying. /He shows/ . . . a very remarkable evidence of self-command, and a mental power of singular utility." The Gladstone Papers (London: Cassell and Co., 1930), 22-23. For an elegant tribute to the duke by a great admirer, see J. W. Fortescue's A History of the British Army (London: Macmillan and Co., 1930) 1852-1870, XIII, 29.

'a lounge they had taken on lease.'"¹ During the extended peace after the Napoleonic wars, the British army came to resemble a sort of aristocratic sandbox where soldiering could be played until one grew weary of it. Under the system of purchase, for example, wealthy men could readily escape foreign duty in such pestilent areas of the globe as India or the West Indies; military commissions could always be exchanged if need be, or sold and repurchased.

Home service was rather a comfortable existence during the first half of the nineteenth century. Officers were known to stay away from their regiments for months at a time. Because of this, "unsoldierly habits crept into the Army, drills were ignored, officers spent more time at their clubs, and no inducements were held out for study of the theory and practice of military science."² From 1815 to 1854 there had been only one army maneuver, and target practice is reported to have been conducted only once every three years. The British military establishment fell victim to decay during the "long peace," as the events of the Crimean War were to testify.

The purchase system produced a myriad of incongruities and abuses during this era, and as a consequence the pre-Crimean period served as a storehouse for incredible examples of what could take place under such a practice; these examples were to become potent fuel in the burning issue of military reform that characterized the post-Crimean

¹De Watteville, British Soldier, 173.

²Erickson, "Cardwell," Transactions, II, 78.

period. Undoubtedly one of the classic examples is the famed letter of Major-General Craig, adjutant-general to the British forces under the Duke of York in the campaign of the Low Countries in 1794. This continental campaign proved to be one of the darker moments of British military history; and Craig's letter, addressed to Sir Hew Dalrymple, reflects the severe humiliation that permeated the continental force. It reads in part:

Nimeguem, 12th October, 1794

I will conceal none of our faults from you -- indeed they are too obvious, too glaring, to admit of the attempt. That we have plundered the whole country is unquestionable. That we are the most undisciplined, the most ignorant, the worst provided army that ever took the field is equally certain; but we are not to blame for it. If your Ministry at home in their great wisdom will totally destroy the chain of dependence by which alone discipline can be preserved in an army, the consequence is inevitable. There is not a young man in the army that cares one farthing whether his commanding officer, his Brigadier, or the Commander-in-Chief himself approves his conduct or not. His promotion depends not on their smiles or frowns --- his friends can give him a thousand pounds with which he goes to the auction room in Charles Street and in a fortnight he becomes a captain. Out of the fifteen regiments of cavalry and twenty-six of infantry which we have here, twenty-one are literally commanded by boys or idiots -- I have had the curiosity to count them over. To keep the latter in any sort of order during the best part of the campaign, we have had Major-General Stuart, and now he has but two colleagues. Consider all this, and you will hardly be surprised when I repeat that we have no discipline -- that we are naked and unprovided of everything that depends upon the regiments themselves -- that we do not know how to post a picquet or instruct a sentinel in his duty; and as to moving, God forbid we should attempt it within three miles of an enemy! This is no exaggerated picture. Judge, then, if I can be surprised at anything that can well be reported of us. I beg, however, to know what it is. As to plundering, it is beyond everything that I believe ever disgraced an army; and yet I think we do all we can to prevent it, that is, with the little assistance which the

ignorant boys or idiots above alluded to can give us. It is not in nature to prevent it but by the exertion of the officers, and every mode that we can devise has been tried to excite them to it, but without success.¹

This letter became a popular weapon with which to attack the system of purchase. Military reformers frequently cited it throughout the nineteenth century as clear proof of the evils inherent in purchase.

Concerning Craig's letter, General Biddulph explains:

There were greater faults than the purchase system which contributed to the disasters that overtook the British army in 1794, but General Craig's letter shows that the sale and purchase of commissions were wholly unrestricted, and that the colonels of regiments lacked either the power or the will to prevent men who were quite unfit for the position, from acquiring the superior ranks in the army.²

Under the practice of purchase, it was possible for a rich man to gain command of a regiment before the age of thirty. Attempts to prevent the advance of young and immature officers had not met with success. It was not uncommon for a regiment to be commanded by a relatively young officer while his captains and subalterns would be years his senior. Junior officers frequently passed over the heads of their senior officers. A royal commission report states that overregulation payments were responsible for this:

No officer who is prepared to pay the regulation price for a commission can be passed over by a junior officer, but if he is unable to pay the additional price usually paid in the regiment, he must either borrow the money at serious inconvenience to himself, and probably at a high rate of

¹From Biddulph's Lord Cardwell, 75-76.

²Ibid., 76.

interest, or withdraw his name from the list of purchasing officers, allowing a junior officer to pass over his head, or he must stop the promotion in the regiment.¹

In the same regiment might be seen lieutenants with double the service of some captains, and the length of service of the officers of the same rank was usually uneven. Just prior to the Crimean War, for instance, a regiment in India had a captain who had served forty-seven years and had fought at Waterloo. The lieutenant-colonel was the only other officer of that same regiment who had been alive in 1815, but he was only two years of age at that date.²

Although the evils of purchase existed and were recognized, for the most part, no serious movement to abolish the practice is evident during the pre-Crimean era. In the words of a commission report investigating the history of purchase, the long-established usage had "accustomed officers to the practice that few of our military witnesses have ever seriously contemplated any other system of entry or of promotion in the army."³

In a memorandum submitted to a select committee inquiring into

¹Sessional Papers, "Report of Commissioners on Over-Regulation Payments," 1870, XII, 213.

²Following the Crimean War it is reported that one regiment had three captains, each possessing no more than two years' experience. Another regiment had a captain whose military experience was the sum total of thirteen months. For further examples, see Biddulph's Lord Cardwell, 77-78, and de Watteville's British Soldier, 170-183.

³Sessional Papers, "Report of the Commissioners appointed to Inquire into the System of Purchase and Sale of Commissions in the Army," 1857, Session II, XVII, 1. Cited hereafter as "Report on System of Purchase and Sale of Commissions."

army and navy appointments in 1833, the Duke of Wellington extolled the virtues of the purchase system. The memorandum stated that the practice was "so general as to be almost universal. It extends to at least three-fourths of all the Officers appointed to fill Commissions."¹ According to Wellington, the purchase system could be justified from two points of view -- economic and social. With respect to the economic factor, Wellington reported: "In point of fact, the promotion of the Officers of the Army by purchase is a saving of expense to the Public, and highly beneficial to the Service, although," he added, "it falls severely upon individuals."²

Included in the memorandum was a statement of annual pay that does much to explain the relationship of purchase prices to officers' pay. In the following scale, the third column shows the interest, calculated at four per cent, upon the regulation price while the fourth column shows the net annual reward of service of each rank after deducting the interest of the purchase money.

¹Ibid., "Report from the Select Committee on Army and Navy Appointments," 1833, VII, 1.

²Ibid., 288.

STATEMENT OF ANNUAL PAY¹
In Even Pounds

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Annual Pay</u>	<u>Regulation Price</u>	<u>Interest</u>	<u>Net Reward</u>
<u>Cavalry</u>				
Lieutenant-Colonel	419	6,175	247	172
Major	354	4,575	183	171
Captain	266	3,225	129	137
Lieutenant	164	1,190	47	116
Cornet	146	840	33	102
<u>Infantry</u>				
Lieutenant-Colonel	310	4,500	108	130
Major	242	3,200	128	114
Captain	191	1,800	72	119
Lieutenant	115	700	28	87
Ensign	95	450	18	77

Wellington's social defense of purchase was virtually seconded by every influential officer of the period, and continued to be one of the major arguments for the pro-purchase forces throughout the remaining period of the practice. Wellington explained it thusly:

It is the promotion by purchase which brings into the Service men of fortune and education; men who have some connexion with the interests and fortunes of the Country, besides the Commissions which they hold from His Majesty. It is this circumstance which exempts the British Army from the character of being a "mercenary Army," and has rendered its employment for nearly a century and a half, not only not inconsistent with the constitutional privileges of the Country, but safe and beneficial.²

In 1841 before the Melbourne commission, the purchase system was praised as furthering the promotion and retirement of British officers;

¹Ibid., 289. The scale for the foot guards is not included.

²Ibid., 288.

and again in 1850 the aged Wellington, with two other officers who afterward became Lord Raglan and Lord Panmure, signed a report to the same effect. The British officer corps, a gentlemenly class, must be preserved at any cost -- this was the dominant note that continually resounded throughout the "long peace;" the attitude prevailed that "to compose the officers of a lower class would cause the Army to deteriorate."¹

One significant reform affecting purchase was initiated during this period. It centered around the question of officer education. In 1846 Lord Grey, secretary for war and the colonies, penned a memorandum that suggested the creation of a system of examinations to govern promotion.² Submitting the detailed plan, Grey stated it indispensable to improve the military education of the officers which, he declared, was far from what it should be. "Their promotion," he wrote, "depends exclusively upon seniority or upon interest, and their having money to purchase their successive steps. There is not even a pretence of making it depend upon their showing themselves to be fit for it." Then drawing a comparison between the standards governing promotion in the navy and the army, Lord Grey continued:

¹Clode, Military Forces, II, 87.

²The Whig government of Lord John Russell (1846-1852) produced two vocal critics of Wellington -- Lord Russell himself and Lord Grey. Concerning Russell and Grey, Sir John Fortescue wrote that "it was not for one of Wellington's stature to court rebuff from such comparative pigmies." Fortescue, British Army, XIII, 26-27.

In the navy, before an officer can obtain his commission as lieutenant, he is obliged to pass through a strict examination, and to show that he has acquired all the knowledge necessary for the effective performance of his duty. But in the army there is nothing of the kind. A young officer may get his company, and subsequently rise to the highest rank upon the mere statement of his commanding officer that he is acquainted with what may be termed the mechanical part of his professional duty; and even the assurance that he knows this is too often given as a mere matter of form, and without being at all deserved. Under such a system, can we be surprised that the regimental officers of our army should as a body be so inferior to those of the artillery and engineers, and of the navy.¹

The tactic of comparing the standards for naval promotion with that of the regular army was not new. Anti-purchase forces often spotlighted this dichotomy. Nevertheless, purchase sympathizers considered the analogy between the organization of a ship and the organization of a regiment a weak argument even though to the less sophisticated public the different systems of promotion continually appeared to be a glaring contradiction.²

With respect to Lord Grey's memorandum, the upshot was the recommendation of a three-point examination program for the governing of officer promotion. In essence, it first affirmed that no young man should be allowed to receive a commission without undergoing an examination to ascertain that he had received the "education of a gentleman," as well as a knowledge of military drawing and one continental language. Second, before being eligible to receive the rank of captain, an officer

¹From Biddulph's Lord Cardwell, 72-73.

²For an example of how purchase sympathizers reconciled the two forms of promotion, see Sessional Papers, "Report of Rt. Hon. B. Milnes, Wynward, and Bentinck on the Present System of Purchase," 1857-1858, XIX, 238.

should pass a second examination to prove that he had at least a moderate knowledge of the theory and the science of his profession as well as knowledge of the practical duties. And third, a specific number of promotions were to be given every year to officers who had distinguished themselves in their examinations. The ensuing years afforded the opportunity to implement both the first and second recommendations into the army establishment. In 1849, the practice of requiring educational qualifying examinations for prospective officer candidates was accepted; in 1857, the council of military education was created. This council apparently took its obligations seriously and did much to elevate the educational level of the officers.¹ Regarding the third recommendation, no attempt was made to carry it out until just prior to the Franco-Prussian War.

The whole problem of education was closely connected to the purchase issue, and it is significant that instrumental gains in education preceded the crescendo of purchase controversy in the 1870's. Fear of revolutionary propaganda spreading through the ranks apparently had been the prime factor in preventing educational advancement of both trooper and officer. The Duke of Wellington displayed definite reluctance toward educational programs and qualifying examinations. Speaking to a confidante, he is reported as saying: "By Jove, if ever there is

¹See *ibid.*, "First Report of Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the Present State of Military Education," 1868-1869, XLII, 1; and "Third General Report by the Council of Military Education," 241.

a mutiny in the army -- and in all probability we shall have one -- you'll see that these new-fangled schoolmasters will be at the bottom of it."¹

By 1871, the educational pendulum had swung a considerable distance from where Wellington had last viewed it. Just prior to the Franco-Prussian War, the following methods for obtaining first commissions were employed. Commissions were granted without purchase, first, to the Queen's and Indian cadets educated at Sandhurst; then to stimulate other candidates to a career of military study, a specific number of commissions were made available for competitive examinations, without recourse to the purchase system and supervised by the council of military education. The remainder of vacant commissions was distributed by means of the purchase system, but only after the candidate had received a passing mark in a qualifying examination.

Once a candidate had secured his initial commission by means of one of the above methods, upon each successive step up to and including the rank of captain, according to Charles M. Clode, a qualifying examination awaited the candidate.² If an officer wished to obtain a staff appointment, it was necessary to pass through the staff college or schools of musketry or gunnery and receive a certificate of

¹De Watteville, British Soldier, 147.

²Clode, Military Forces, II, 91.

proficiency.¹

Furthermore, Clode stated that there was one other way of obtaining military advancement, other than those previously mentioned -- parliamentary influence.² A major argument of those who favored purchase was that the best way to avoid political favoritism was to retain purchase. According to them, the only logical alternative for officer advancement other than purchase was promotion by selection and that method, they assured, would fall prey to political manipulation more so than purchase. A strict system of seniority, still another possible method of promotion, could not insure that the most capable officer would be advanced and was generally believed unsuitable. In 1857, it was the opinion of a royal commission that if the abolition of purchase occurred, promotion should come by means of selection.³

The decade preceding the Crimean War offers an illustrative example of the purchase system in free operation. The total sum of purchase money spent at regulation price in the years 1844, 1845, 1853, and 1854

¹The general reluctance on the part of the British officer class to enthusiastically support educational reforms continued up to the 1880's. The Duke of Cambridge, nephew of Queen Victoria, was commander-in-chief from 1856 to 1895. Once overheard addressing a distinguished general on the subject of officer education, the Duke declared emphatically: "I don't like staff college officers. My experience of staff college officers is they are conceited, and that they are dirty! Brains! I don't believe in brains. You haven't any I know, Sir!" See de Wetteville's British Soldier, 182-183. For other facts on officer education, see Fortescue's Military History, 144-145.

²Clode, Military Forces, II, 92.

³Sessional Papers, "Report on System of Purchase and Sale of Commissions," 1857, Session II, XVII, xxxv.

indicates the financial investment that the British regular army was placing in the system of purchase during this time. With respect to the following military units -- life guards, horse guards, cavalry of the line, and infantry of the line -- the amount in pounds is recorded at: 1844, £ 443,900; 1845, £ 536,735; 1853, £ 630,840; and 1854, £ 610,010. Below is a compilation of the number of commissions sold, purchased, and granted for the ranks of lieutenant-colonel and ensign, the highest and lowest ranks saleable, during the same years.¹

	<u>Lieutenant-Colonel</u>	<u>Ensign</u>
1844:	5 sold 6 purchased 11 granted	18 sold 198 purchased 184 granted
1845:	17 sold 17 purchased 13 granted	32 sold 249 purchased 119 granted
1853:	18 sold 13 purchased 16 granted	38 sold 296 purchased 51 granted
1854:	13 sold 13 purchased 72 granted	26 sold 360 purchased 739 granted

In 1854, without considering the guards and colonial units, the purchase corps comprised 23 cavalry regiments and 103 infantry battalions. Two infantry battalions were added to the purchase units during the Crimean War, and at the time of the Indian mutiny, two cavalry regiments

¹The marked increase of commissions granted in 1854 is undoubtedly the result of the Crimean War. See *ibid.*, "A Return of the Number of Army Commissions Sold and Purchased in each of the years, 1844, 1845, 1853, 1854," 1856, XL, 135.

and twenty-seven infantry battalions were included. Moreover, the transport corps, which had been originally formed as a nonpurchase corps during Crimea, was converted to purchase after the war. Its strength equaled two battalions. Therefore, the 126 purchase units of 1854 had been increased to 159 units in the five-year period that followed.

The practice of selling and purchasing army commissions had not been seriously threatened during the pre-Crimean period. A protective sentinel guarded the system of purchase: military tradition. It successfully resisted efforts to reform the basic tenets of purchase. The statute of 1809 did undermine the principle of purchase, however, and the educational reforms initiated in the 1840's did attempt to administer a partial remedy in the practice of purchase. In retrospect, both of these enactments are significant in the history of purchase; and if they can be likened to a wedge, poised over the purchase system, it shall be seen that the Crimean War was the hammer that solidly drove it home.

CHAPTER III

AGITATION FOR REFORM - 1854-1868

The Crimean War (1854-1856) placed a new perspective on the purchase issue. It served as a springboard from which was launched the issue of army reform; and like a stone plunging into a still pond, it disturbed more than the mere surface of British society. To depict the issue of army reform as completely capturing the attention of Victorian England during this era would be far from accurate. Admittedly, it did not. But in the span of time between the Crimean War and the Franco-Prussian War, the question of army reform could no longer be contained in the austere chambers of army administration.

Crimea confirmed the suspicion that the military establishment had deteriorated since Waterloo. To the nation, the Crimean War came as "a sharp and salutary disclosure that it had sadly neglected all things that mattered in war, while to the army it proved a bitter lesson."¹ To the eye of the concerned, the army organization appeared obsolete and to some, the center of the problem lay with the purchase system and the officers it produced. In the words of Sir Winston Churchill, the Balaclava incident "was due, like much else in this war, to the blunders of commanders."²

¹De Watteville, British Soldier, 154.

²Winston S. Churchill, The Great Democracies, Vol. IV of A History of the English Speaking Peoples (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1958), 76.

Several factors account for the issue of army reform receiving such wide public interest. The Crimean war had the distinction of being the first war in which the British people had the opportunity of closely following each campaign. For the first time in English history, newspaper correspondents personally travelled with the troops and informed their readers of the battle in lurid details, sparing no length of facts.¹ The high command at this time had not yet discovered the advantages of tight, restrictive censorship. Also, improvements in the army postal system during the 1850's gave the soldiers the somewhat unique opportunity of providing first-hand knowledge of the campaigns to their families. This afforded a novel means to criticize the military administration. Moreover, a series of civilian inquiries into the prosecution of the war and the condition of the army before Crimea tended to alarm and arouse public opinion.²

The British people became generally more aware of the horrors and blunders of the Crimean War than of any previous conflict of the same magnitude. The loud clamor and popular agitation of those at home

¹In February, 1854, the first British detachment sailed from Malta and with them went a correspondent of The Times. G. M. Trevelyan related that William Russell, The Times correspondent, "exposed the state of things he saw . . . with a freedom which would not have been permitted either in earlier or later wars, and which in fact revealed much to the enemy." George Macaulay Trevelyan, British History in the Nineteenth Century, 1782-1901 (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1922, 306.

²There were a series of five reports on the army before Sebastapol, conducted in 1854 and 1855. See Sessional Papers, "Index to Reports from the Select Committee on the Army before Sebastapol," 1854-1855, IX, Part III, 431.

reflected the harsh conditions and needless sufferings of those in Crimea. Government became sensitive to the public outcry; it displayed a panic fear of the press. Public opinion was an instrumental factor in the fall of the Aberdeen government in 1855. On 23 January of that year, Parliament met and a motion for a committee of the House of Commons to inquire into the condition of the army and the conduct of the war was carried by a sizeable majority. Thereupon, the government resigned.

In the twelve-year period after the Crimean War and the Indian mutiny, the British army lay suspect. Throughout these years the army was subjected to intense inspection. The government appointed a total of seventeen royal commissions and eighteen select committees to probe the inner depths of the army, while approximately fifty-four military committees of inquiry were established. The entire military establishment was examined, not the least of which was the system of purchase.

In the course of the war, two royal commissions were appointed to investigate the purchase system. The commissions of 1854 and 1856 explored the practice with the latter report recommending that the rank of lieutenant-colonel not be subject to sale. Lord Palmerston's government had appointed the 1856 commission, and this investigation, especially, is said to have placed the purchase system "prominently before the public mind."¹ But no steps were taken to carry out the committee's recommendations.

¹Biddulph, Lord Cardwell, 94.

Another commission reporting in 1857 stated that in a country where enlistment is voluntary "it should be the policy of the state to encourage men to join the army by rewarding the most deserving with commissions." But under the present system of purchase the report stated that "a soldier who has been promoted from the ranks cannot hope to gain further steps without money, whilst even the honourable position he has gained, by bringing him into the society of richer men, often renders his promotion a doubtful advantage."¹

This commission report of 1857 exposed the practice of purchasing army commissions as had never been done before. Lord Panmure, secretary of state for war, had selected the individual commissioners, however, with the hope that they would not be overly critical of the purchase system. Queen Victoria questioned some of his selections, and in a letter dated 20 April, 1856, Lord Panmure answered the sovereign. Of the royal commission, Panmure wrote that "its composition be such as to secure the safety of the system of purchase and to give no excuse to the House of Commons to cavil at its members."² Yet, the report implied that if the purchase system was so injurious to commands of regiments, it must also indirectly affect the higher ranks as well as staff appointments.

Many people remembered the name of Lord Cardigan, who justly or unjustly, became the symbol of the British purchase officer in the late

¹Sessional Papers, "Report on System of Purchase and Sale of Commissions," 1857, XVII, Session II, xxiii.

²Sir George Douglas, Bart., M.A., and Sir George Dalhousie Ramsey, (eds.), The Panmure Papers (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908), II, 200.

1850's and 1860's.¹ In the words of the 1857 commission, the evil of purchase "is said to restrict the number of those from whom officers can in the first instance be obtained; it deadens the feelings of emulation and the eagerness to acquire military knowledge, and it renders men eligible for the highest command without taking any security that they are fitted for such a position."²

Few of the investigation committees during the post-war period submitted recommendations for substantial changes in the promotion system. Throughout the pages of the various reports, a dominant tone of caution prevailed. Most of the reports were quick to admit some of the failings of the purchase system but there was interjected just as quickly the firm belief that to tamper with the system -- thereby destroying the traditional social balance of the officer class -- would be folly. "In this free country," stated one report, "it is essential to the maintenance and popularity of a permanent military force, that the independence of

¹Anti-purchase forces cited the career of Lord Cardigan as an example of the evils of purchase. James, the seventh Earl of Cardigan (1797-1868), had entered the British army in the year 1824, and almost immediately purchased his way into the command of the 15th Hussars. In 1853 he had to leave it, owing to the acquittal of an officer whom he had put under arrest illegally. Three years later he purchased the command of the 11th Hussars. This cost him many tens of thousand pounds, but he was a rich peer. During the Crimean War, he led the charge of the Light Brigade, a heroic deed occasioned by blunders. Only one-third of the men in the charge were able to answer the first muster after the charge. Lord Cardigan after the attack returned to his yacht on which he lived, took a bath, dined, drank a bottle of champagne, and retired.

²Sessional Papers, "Report on System of Purchase and Sale of Commissions," 1857, Session II, XVII, xxiv.

our Officers should be upheld and respected."¹ It was the opinion of this committee that an officer entered the service, whether by purchase or not, on the condition and with full knowledge of the regulations concerning promotion. Therefore, according to the commissioners' opinion, there was "no cause of complaint if the Officer prepared to purchase, and considered qualified by the authorities at the Horse Guards, succeeds to his promotion, according to these regulations."²

This report failed to recommend even a partial change in regimental promotion with specific reference to the rank of lieutenant-colonel which an earlier commission report suggested should be filled by selection. The three-man committee instead concluded the summary of their investigations by stating that "we fear [any changes in the purchase system] might only produce discontent throughout the Army, lead to uncertainty and hesitation in existing arrangements, and produce no adequate benefit to Your Majesty's Service."³

In the dozen years that followed the Crimean struggle, the military establishment, though interested in a degree of reform, resented and resisted attempts to alter fundamental institutions such as purchase. Colonel Wolseley, an officer who actively supported the Cardwell reforms of the 1870's, claimed that the army was "divided -- but by no means in equal numbers -- into two great sections, the old school and the new.

¹Ibid., "Report of Rt. Hon. E. Ellice, Wynward, and Bentinck on the Present System of Purchase," 1857-1858, XIX, 238.

²Ibid., 236.

³Ibid., 239.

In the former," Wolseley related, ". . . was nearly every general officer and all the thoughtless in the Army."¹

Although the Duke of Wellington had died in 1852, his shadow fell across the Crimean conflict and darkened the post-war years. It was known, for example, that Lord Palmerston was reluctant to the idea of abolishing the system of purchase. He had been an admirer of Wellington, as were most men of that day. They, remarked Wolseley, "honestly and firmly believed that what had been created by such a master of war, must be the best for all time."² Of course Wellington had not "created" the purchase system, but he had endorsed it. Perhaps Palmerston expressed the typical view that prevailed among those who saw purchase as an important cornerstone of the British standing army when he once paraphrased Wellington's thoughts on the subject:

He [Wellington] thought it was desirable to connect the higher classes of society with the Army; and he did not know any more effective method of connecting them than by allowing members of high families who held commissions to get on with greater rapidity than they would by mere seniority. Unless the vacant Commissions were given to new Officers, the connection between the Army and the Upper Class of society would be dissolved, and then the Army would assume a very dangerous and unconstitutional appearance. It was only when the Army was unconnected with those whose property gave them an interest in the welfare of the country, and was commanded by unprincipled military adventurers, that it would ever become formidable to the liberties of the nation.³

It is interesting to note that Sir Charles Trevelyan, a government

¹Field-Marshal Viscount Wolseley, The Story of a Soldier's Life (Westminster: Archibald Constable & Co., 1903), II, 234.

²Ibid.

³From Clode's Military Forces, II, 85.

official, a former governor of Madras, and a man active in both military and civil service reforms,¹ countered the above position in a statement presented to a royal commission investigating purchase in 1859. In a letter dated 1 February, 1859, Trevelyan penned the following:

The upper, the middle, and the lower classes in this country cordially cooperate for the public good in other fields of action; and if the army were properly constituted, it would not form an exception. The English army would be brought into harmony with the rest of the English political and social system; and as our military arrangement would be based upon moral and intellectual qualifications, instead of money, every rank of the army would be elevated in character and position.²

One of the chief factors that the issue of purchase pivoted upon during the post-Crimean era was the general question of retirement. In the year 1840, the commission on naval and military promotion, of which the Duke of Wellington and other high military authorities of that day were participants, reported strongly in favor of purchase and declared that the practical advantages of the system had been proven by its effects on the military during the then twenty-four years of peace. In this report,³ the purchase and nonpurchase regiments were compared. The

¹He was father of historian Sir George Otto Trevelyan and grandfather of historian George Macaulay Trevelyan.

²Sessional Papers, "Copy of Statement by Sir Charles Trevelyan to General Peel of Reasons for differing from the Report of the Committee appointed by Lord Panmure to examine the Proposals submitted by him to the Royal Commission on the Purchase and Sale of Commissions in the Army," 1859, XV, 36. Cited hereafter as "Copy of Statement by Sir Charles Trevelyan to General Peel."

³For a summation of the 1840 report, see ibid., "Report on System of Purchase and Sale of Commissions," 1857, Session II, XVII, xxv.

condition of the ordnance corps, where the purchase system was never introduced but where the system of seniority prevailed exclusively, was contrasted with purchase units. The results tended to show that the officers of the ordnance corps had no real inducement to retire and, hence, remained in the service far beyond the age that was desirable for the efficiency of the corps. In purchase corps, however, it was believed that the prospect of money from the sale of commissions was a strong inducement to retire, thereby accelerating promotions and removing those who had passed the period of their usefulness.

Lord Melbourne's commission of 1840, although recognizing the evils emanating from the purchase system, was unwilling apparently to propose any change until the pressure of war should make such change absolutely necessary. In their report the commissioners stated that "no change would be required in the present regulations during peace, as the ordinary course of promotion will probably supply a sufficient number of competent Generals for all the duties of command at home and abroad."¹ It was with reference to this preponderant attitude that Erickson wrote: "The inevitable consequence was that in peace time there could be no promotion except by purchase; no Army reform without its abolition."²

The commission of 1854 examined the question of retirement under the purchase system and reflected on Lord Melbourne's committee and the views of the Wellingtonians. The 1854 committee under Lord Palmerston

¹Italics are mine. Quote taken from ibid., "Report on Promotion in the Army," 1854, XIX, 843.

²Erickson, "Cardwell," Transactions, II, 77.

stated that it "thought it expedient" to inquire into the several modes of promotion and retirement in practice because of "the advanced age of a great majority of the officers now in the upper ranks of our army."¹ This investigation, however, produced no significant recommendations.

Before a board of inquiry in 1857, Major-General Sir Charles Yorke, military secretary to the commander-in-chief, was asked to explain the retirement program as it then existed. In his statement he said:

After 22 years' service an officer is entitled to retire on the full pay of the rank which he has then obtained, whatever that rank may be. Then to provide for officers who have been unfortunate in their promotion [i.e., not progressing into the higher ranks], the system has been established of giving them pensions according to the length of service; after 20 years' service the full pay of a captain, after 24 years' the full pay of a major, after 28 years' the full pay of a lieutenant-colonel, and after 32 years' the full pay of a colonel, so that however unfortunate an officer may be in his regimental promotion, he is certain of having a pension of the rank that he might have attained under more fortunate circumstances.²

Funds for retirement on full pay, declared Yorke, could be averaged at approximately £ 200,000 per year. Half-pay retirement was figured at not more than £ 45,000 per year. Only about fifty per cent of the officers, it was estimated, actually were able to attain the period of service that allowed them to retire with a pension; and at the time (1857), Yorke disclosed, only 685 officers were in retirement on a full-pay status. Yorke provided the commission with a financial statement that, in part, listed the following ranks and their corresponding

¹Sessional Papers, "Report on Promotion in the Army," 1854, XIX, 835.

²Ibid., 30. The author assumes that these pensions were paid out of the reserve fund for the most part.

retirement sums at full pay:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Retirement Pay</u> ¹
Colonel	£ 436
Lieutenant-Colonel	365
Major	292
Captain	191

Sir Charles Trevelyan submitted a detailed scheme for the abolition of purchase and the substitution of another system of army promotion and retirement to the royal commission in 1857. The committee studied the proposal that was based partially on the French military system and on the regulations that had been recently introduced into the British civil service, but offered no formal recommendation. The committee contended that the purchase system, whatever the evils, did encourage promotion and retirement. A scheme of retirement, the report of 1857 stated, "which induces old officers to withdraw from the army, and which replaces them by younger men, must . . . be beneficial to the country; and this benefit is still greater, if it be effected without any cost to the country."² The phrase "without any cost to the country" was, indeed, a direct reference to purchase.

Inasmuch as two basic retirement programs existed in the regular army, it was generally accepted as fact that there could be no real solution to the problem of nonpurchase retirement as long as the purchase

¹Listed in even pounds. Ibid.

²Ibid., xxv.

system dominated the army. In a select committee on the army system of retirement, conducted in 1867, it was affirmed that under the existing program "the system, or rather the combination of contrivances, under which officers are retired from the Artillery and Engineers, is unsatisfactory."¹

With a warrant of 3 November, 1854, and with slight subsequent modifications, the select committee of 1867 announced that only £ 32,000 per year had been available for the retirement of artillery officers, while in the engineers only £ 16,000 was allotted. This select committee report concluded by recommending a three-point program to be applied to the scientific branches of the army. First, an age limit for compulsory retirement from active service would be instituted; second, there would be devised a graduated rate of retirement pay and every officer would be able to claim after a given number of years' service; and third, certain facilities for compounding the retired pay of officers would be implemented.²

Retirement continued to remain a vexing problem during the period. "I had long been of the opinion," wrote Sir Charles Trevelyan in 1859, "that the key to the problem [of purchase] was to be found in providing proper means of retirement for military officers."³ Parliament, he

¹Ibid., "Report from the Select Committee on Army System of Retirement," 1867, VII, 4.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., "Copy of Statement by Sir Charles Trevelyan to General Peel," 1859, XV, 15.

continued, had relieved the civil servants from having to pay, in the form of deductions from salaries, for the allowances awarded to them on their retirement. "What I suggested was, that a similar boon should be conferred upon the military servants. This is the only solution of which the question is capable."¹

Perhaps the most important reform that affected the purchase system during the post-Crimean period occurred in 1855 -- the reconstruction of the war office and the consolidation of the powers and jurisdiction of the commander-in-chief. In February, 1855, the secretary of state for war replaced the office of the secretary at war.² In March, 1855, all business connected with the militia was transferred from the home department to the war department. Finally, in May of that year the powers of the board of ordnance were invested in the secretary of state for war, while the commander-in-chief assumed from the master-general of the ordnance the supreme command of the royal engineers and the royal artillery.

By this latter reform, i.e., the consolidation of the scientific units and the nonscientific units under the jurisdiction of the commander-in-chief at the Horse Guards building, two totally different systems were placed under a single head. This union produced unsuspected consequences. The fact that the engineers and artillery (whose officers were selected by educational qualifications) and the infantry and cavalry (whose

¹Ibid.

²The office of secretary at war was not abolished until 1863, but from 1855 onward, the secretary of state for war was commissioned to act as secretary at war and presided over the war office, a department created by Charles II to govern his standing army.

officers received their commissions by purchase) had long existed in the same military establishment could not be said to have seriously jeopardized purchase. But with the administrative confrontation of 1855, the contradiction became overly sensitive. "From that moment," wrote Fortescue, "purchase . . . was doomed."¹

"The army cannot," declared Sir Charles Trevelyan, ". . . be administered according to two different systems; and it is necessary to determine whether purchase shall be introduced into the new regiments, or be withdrawn from the old."² In retrospect, the purchase system after 1855 was in an untenable position. It could not be extended to nonpurchase units. Army administration deemed it unfeasible to implant it on the scientific corps; and public opinion, generated by the avalanche of royal inquiries, would have undoubtedly questioned such an attempt. Moreover, at this juncture of English history, the soft shore upon which the principle of purchase had long rested was now being undercut by the lapping waves of liberalism and democracy.

In 1860 there can be witnessed perhaps the last realistic effort to modify the purchase system. Under Lord Palmerston's second government, an attempt was made to abolish the sale of the rank of lieutenant-colonel. It failed to materialize. Hereafter it appears that the anti-purchase forces rallied to Lord Grey's now famous dictum: "If you touch

¹Fortescue, British Army, XIII, 170.

²Sessional Papers, "Copy of Statement by Sir Charles Trevelyan to General Peel," 1859, XV, 36.

the system of purchase at all, it would be wiser to abolish it altogether."¹

In retrospect, a general attitude favoring military reform characterized the post-Crimean period. It was stimulated in large part by the events of the Crimean War and the onslaught of civilian inquiries that followed. The army remained stoically opposed to sweeping reforms, however; only a few soldiers near and around the war department in the late 1860's seemed to sense the imperative need for fundamental alterations in the military establishment. This handful of soldiers realized that a mere system of "repairs to the rickety coach in which our military administration had travelled for over half a century, would no longer suffice."²

Not until 1868 did real action regarding the abolition of purchase seem likely. The first Liberal government under William E. Gladstone came to power in 1868. The prime minister selected a most able administrator to assume the difficult duties at the war office -- Edward T. Cardwell. Sir James Graham, who had been appointed chairman of a committee of inquiry in 1860 to examine the war office, had said: "There is only one word that can describe it [the war office], and that is Chaos."³ Cardwell immediately set out to modernize this important

¹Biddulph, Lord Cardwell, 18.

²Wolsley, Soldier's Life, II, 229.

³Biddulph, Lord Cardwell, vi.

spending department. And in Secretary Cardwell, a man often referred to as the "father of the present-day British army,"¹ the army reformer had at last discovered a sympathetic and influential friend, for the new war minister, wrote Colonel Wolseley, "wanted men about him in the War Office with modern views upon Army matters."²

¹Eric William Sheppard, A Short History of the British Army to 1914 (2nd ed.; London: Constable and Company, 1934), 217.

²Wolseley, Soldier's Life, II, 227.

CHAPTER IV

THE CARDWELL MILITARY REFORMS

Before turning directly to the matter of purchase, the general scope of the military reforms that were accomplished during the Liberal ministry of 1868-1874 should be discussed as well as the series of events that culminated in the move to abolish the purchase system during the parliamentary session of 1871. To fully appreciate the final contest over purchase, it is necessary to understand the mood of William Gladstone's first ministry toward army reform, to evaluate the impact of the Franco-Prussian War on Great Britain, and to examine the general nature and extent of the Cardwellian reform movement.

In a true sense, the abolition of purchase was only an integral part of this reform movement. Moreover, from a purely military point of view, the termination of the practice of purchasing army commissions was perhaps not the most important military reform of this period. In retrospect, however, the abolition of purchase did mark the climax of the reform movement; it was the most exciting and most controversial feature of the Cardwell reforms and still stands as one of the greater achievements of Gladstone's first ministry.

Just prior to the general election of 1868, Blackwood's reported to its readers that if the newly-formed Liberal party was victorious it would "betray this ancient constitutional monarchy in its hour of

greatest danger."¹ The Liberal party, a fusion of Whigs, Peelites, and Radicals, was successful in winning a popular mandate on a slogan promising "peace, retrenchment, and reform;" and in early December of 1868, William E. Gladstone was called on to form a new government.

The mid-Victorian years witnessed a rising tide of a new liberal philosophy. Imbued with this new liberalism, the members of the Liberal party rallied together. They all had the common desire to adapt the British system to the needs of the nineteenth century. The time had arrived, they believed, for the basic institutions of Great Britain to receive an essential overhaul. English conservatism had been too cautious and too gradual. Now it was up to the new Liberal party, they contended, to set things right -- to begin abolishing class privilege, furthering individual opportunities, and generally sweeping aside the survivals of the past in order to make way for greater democratic government built upon the sturdy, twin principles of efficiency and economy. They speculated -- these new liberals -- that the "golden age" of liberalism had arrived.

Among the great bulwarks of English conservatism, the British army appeared to be one of the most vulnerable. Many liberals realized that the military establishment, with its archaic and almost medieval-like features, afforded great opportunities to institute liberal reforms. It was believed that the army could be reorganized with a view

¹"The Coming Elections," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (Edinburgh: Wm. Blackwood & Sons), CIV (November, 1868), 644.

toward increased efficiency and decreased expenditure. Moreover, the aristocratically-dominated officer class appeared to be the most blatant denial of the principle of human equality, and in the area of military reform, an attack against class privilege began with an attack against the purchase system. It should be noted, however, that all who were to support the move to abolish purchase were not motivated by this liberal attitude, per se. Most of the army officers interested in reform as well as those civilians connected with the war office were more inclined to view the abolition of purchase as a professional necessity. To them the aristocratically-dominated officer class was not the real issue, but rather that under the current system men of merit and ability were too frequently prevented from advancing in the ranks.

Prime Minister Gladstone in forming his cabinet surprised many by his selection of Edward T. Cardwell¹ to head the war office. Most

¹Cardwell was born in Liverpool on 24 June, 1813, of a prosperous merchant family. He was educated at Winchester and Oxford where he distinguished himself with an open scholarship at Balliol and ended with the distinction of a double First-Class in classics and mathematics. Upon leaving Oxford, Cardwell entered the law profession, but later decided to devote himself to a political career. He entered Parliament in 1842 and fell under the admiring eye of Sir Robert Peel. Peel's confidence in Cardwell was displayed by the fact that before Peel's tragic death, he had appointed the young politician as his co-literary executor. In 1852 Cardwell joined Lord Aberdeen's ministry as president of the board of trade. When Lord Aberdeen resigned in February, 1855, Cardwell along with the other Peelites resigned upon finding that Lord Palmerston intended to give way to the demand for an inquiry into the conduct of the war. Lord Palmerston strongly pressed Cardwell to become chancellor of the exchequer in the place vacated by Gladstone but Cardwell declined. In 1859 he joined Lord Palmerston's second ministry and held successive

politicos of the period expected Cardwell to receive the post of chancellor of the exchequer, a position not unfamiliar to him. Cardwell had no previous experience with the war office, but perhaps he anticipated Gladstone's announcement naming him secretary of state for war, because on 3 December the very day that Gladstone received the queen's command to form a ministry Cardwell was busily preparing a paper dealing with army and navy matters.¹ Cardwell's paper stated that the most urgent administrative question facing the new government would be that of reviewing the army and navy with respect to increased efficiency and decreased expenditure, and further pointed out that the general areas of appointment and promotion, recruitment, and retirement would require detailed examination.

From the very beginning of his tenure at the war office, Edward Cardwell adopted a vigorous hand in the matter of army reform. He displayed an unusual degree of boldness. This was surprising to those who knew him as Cardwell had always acted somewhat timid and overcautious. He was, because of his conservative heritage, normally not the type of individual to disrupt the social order. Yet his Peelite tradition and his firm belief that the military establishment was in dire need of reorganization compelled him forcibly to push through a series of vital

posts of chief secretary for Ireland, chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and secretary of state for the colonies. Edward Cardwell was fifty-five years of age when he became secretary of state for war in 1868.

¹A copy of Cardwell's paper can be found in Biddulph's Lord Cardwell, 249-254.

army reforms during the years 1868-1874. For the most part, the war minister was given a free hand in the management of the war department, and it was not until the later years of the ministry that Prime Minister Gladstone attempted to exert influence on Cardwell.¹

Criticism of Cardwell's military proposals was forthcoming once they were made known. The opposition party and its influential press never ceased to denounce the "Liberal lawyer;" and when Cardwell's program appeared likely to increase the army estimates, many of the economy-minded Liberals found reason to criticize the minister. Moreover, the army found it difficult to trust this "civilian" and it vigorously resisted the firm manner in which Cardwell conducted the business at the war department. His actions were thought to be politically motivated.²

For purposes of dating the revival of interest in army reform, both the Abyssinian Expedition of 1867-1868 and the change of war ministers in December, 1868, suggest a beginning point. Of the former, one

¹The problem that caused Cardwell and Gladstone to clash on several occasions in 1873-1874 centered over the question of budgets. Gladstone found Cardwell not willing to accept the prime minister's proposed slashes in military estimates. Gladstone seemed always to fear "bad budgets more than bad soldiers." Erickson, "Cardwell," Transactions, II, 92.

²In the autumn of 1870, due to this criticism, Cardwell offered to resign his position so that the prime minister could appoint a distinguished soldier, one who would be able to placate the critics. Gladstone replied, as quoted in ibid., 96: "In my opinion . . . the qualities of a good administrator and statesman go to make a good war minister . . . far more than those of a good soldier. Show me the soldier who has those qualities equally with you, and then let him take your place. . . . But not till then." A year later Cardwell again offered to resign and the war minister received similar support from his chief.

writer stated that "popular enthusiasm in England [over the Abyssinian Expedition] . . . contributed in no small degree to the reawakening of interest in military matters;"¹ and with respect to the latter, the appearance of the new liberal war minister seemed to quicken the hopes of those army men who had long advocated extensive reform. Colonel Wolseley wrote: "It was . . . in my opinion, the feeling that the Army Reformer had behind him a strong Minister of War who would protect him from the fierce enmity of the old school that gave him . . . the courage to express . . . opinions openly."²

The Cardwell reforms were the result of a series of parliamentary acts coupled with some administrative changes issued under the jurisdiction of the war office. The year 1869 was basically devoted to the study and evaluation of the British military establishment. In 1869, however, the first major Cardwellian reform was initiated. Cardwell formally abolished flogging as a disciplinary measure during peace time. This action was a part of the growing concern over the treatment of common soldiers during that period. The humanitarian movement with respect

¹Sheppard, British Army, 253.

²Wolseley, Soldier's Life, II, 231. Edward Cardwell seemed as a magnet. He tended to pull men of youth and vision about him. Among the many who assisted in the Cardwellian reform movement were: Lord Northbrook, first under-secretary of state for war; Major General Sir Henry Storks, who served in various positions during Cardwell's period as war minister; Colonel Garnet Wolseley, who had just returned from Canada where he had successfully put down the Red River Rebellion; Major George Colley, a leading professor of the staff college; Major Robert Biddulph, Cardwell's military secretary; Captain Henry Brackenbury; and Captain Evelyn Baring (afterward Lord Cromer), who eventually became an important figure in the intelligence branch.

to the army had received substantial impetus as a result of the Crimean War; and corporal punishment received a solid blow when in 1859 the practice of flogging was restricted. It was not until 1880, though, that the practice of flogging was abolished altogether.¹

The years 1870 to 1872 proved to be the significant period of the Cardwellian era, for during this span of time the bulk of the reforms were accomplished. One of the most important alterations from the point of view of military efficiency was the reorganization of the war department. The movement to unify the war office had been started in 1855 and Secretary Cardwell wished to complete it. Before true consolidation of the war office could be achieved, however, three changes were necessary. First, the office of commander-in-chief had to be clearly subordinated to that of secretary of war. The office of commander-in-chief had been, in the history of the British army, a rather aloof and independent one and not always subject to Parliament's control. Under the system, the commander-in-chief was able to exercise considerable authority without consulting the secretary of war. Even though the commander-in-chief was technically subordinated to the civilian secretary of war, a problem of "dual control" did exist in practice.²

Second, the physical union of all military offices was considered

¹For a brief historical account of the practice of flogging in the British army, see de Watteville's British Soldier, chapter 10: "The Reign of the Lash," 109-122.

²For Cardwell's evaluation of the matter, see Great Britain, 3 Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 1869, CXCIV, 203-204.

necessary. Prior to 1871 the war office itself was located at Pall Mall, while the office of the commander-in-chief and several other departments of the military establishment were housed in the Horse Guards building at Whitehall. This physical separation did much to create the disunity that existed in army administration. Queen Victoria, after the reluctant consent of the commander-in-chief, the Duke of Cambridge, signed an order-in-council in early 1870 that removed both obstacles from Cardwell's path, i.e., the clear subordination of the commander-in-chief to the secretary of state for war and the physical union of all military offices at Pall Mall.¹

Third, Secretary Cardwell believed it was necessary to revamp the organizational structure of the war department with a view toward further consolidation of authority and increasing efficiency of army administration. In February, 1870, acting upon the recommendations of a committee that had completed a study on army departments,² the war minister submitted a bill to Parliament outlining a change in army administration.

¹The commander-in-chief was thereafter to be appointed for a five-year period only. Prior to the order-in-council, appointments were made for indefinite periods. For Cardwell to obtain the Duke of Cambridge's support in this matter, the war minister agreed to allow the duke to remain at his post as long as he desired, thereby planning to begin the new five-year tenure restriction on the office upon the retirement of the Duke of Cambridge. This compromise prompted criticism from certain members of Cardwell's party.

²Lord Northbrook, first under-secretary of state for war, was chairman of a committee that submitted three reports to Cardwell on matters of army reorganization. These reports were the basis for much of Cardwell's legislation. For the report concerning the war office reorganization, see Sessional Papers, "Army Reorganization, Third Report," 1870, XII, 1.

In June of that year, with the passage of the War Office Act, the military department was divided under three heads: the commander-in-chief, the surveyor-general of the ordnance, and the financial secretary.¹ Thus by the end of the year 1870, army administration had undergone a thorough reorganization.

Cardwell also began the policy of gradually removing British troops from self-governing colonies. He followed the Manchester school in believing that colonies should be prepared for independence. Moreover, under the pressure of liberal colleagues to achieve unprecedented economy, Cardwell realized that in order to strengthen home defense without increasing military expenditure, a program of withdrawal of army units from foreign duty would be necessary. Therefore, the number of men stationed in the colonies was decreased from 49,000 in 1868 to 20,941 in 1870. With regard to expenditure, a reduction from £ 3,388,023 to £ 1,905,538 was made during the same period.²

During the summer of 1870, an event occurred outside Great Britain that was to have momentous ramifications on military reform in England. The rolling cadence of the Prussian drum sent panic vibrations through the halls of Whitehall and Westminster. With great interest

¹Ibid., "War Office Act," 1870 IV, 779.

²One account of the withdrawal of colonial forces stated: "The evacuation of the troops went on all over the empire; and when in November, 1871, the last imperial soldiers marched down the streets in Quebec singing 'Auld Lang Syne,' the second empire of Great Britain was ended forever." D. C. Creighton, "The Victorians and the Empire," The Making of English History, ed. Robert L. Schuyler and Herman Ausubel (New York: The Dryden Press, 1952), 560.

Cardwell and his colleagues watched the events of the Franco-Prussian War that were transpiring across the channel. In July and August, Prussia's war machine was mobilized and, under the command of officers promoted by merit, it moved with breathtaking speed across the Rhineland and into France.

English public opinion was initially hostile to its old enemy, France. This opinion was further inflamed by something that appeared in The Times. On 25 July, 1870, a text of a draft treaty supplied by Bismarck showing Napoleon III's designs on Belgium enraged England and appeared to be an ominous forecast of an English entry into the continental war. England, therefore, found the Prussian cause more sympathetic for the moment.

By the winter of 1870-1871, after the bombardment of Paris had begun, the British public opinion had veered to the side of the French. The perennial war scare of invasion swept over the island during the course of the war. An anonymous pamphlet issued under the title, The Battle of Dorking, appeared and raised the specter of a German attack on the home islands. In September, 1871, when invasion hysteria had reached a new high, Blackwood's of that month gloomily wrote: "Verily, if matters go on as they are doing, the oldest of us may live to see a real battle of Dorking."¹

Colonel Wolseley, writing on the effects of the Franco-Prussian

¹"How is the Country Governed?" Blackwood's, CX (September, 1871), 397.

War, stated: "The Franco-German struggle . . . opened the eyes of our people to the real state of our out-of-date Army, and to our absolute military inefficiency."¹ With the critical international events capturing the attention of the British populace, the matter of army reform again became a popular issue; and it appeared to many of those who thoughtfully pondered the state of the military establishment that, in Wolseley's words: "We must change our Army System or cease to be a great power."² To fully comprehend the Cardwell reforms, it is necessary to view them against the stormy backdrop of the Franco-Prussian War. The war had a profound psychological impact upon the military reform movement and did much to condition the public and rally their support. To Cardwell and his colleagues, the war served as a signal to begin preparing for the more difficult, controversial reforms.

In April, 1870, well before the continental war began, Cardwell had sent a bill to Parliament designed to shorten the length of enlistment service.³ This Army Enlistment Bill also sought to establish a

¹Wolseley, Soldier's Life, II, 236.

²Ibid., 229.

³The principle of enlisting for life had been adopted in 1829, subsequently modified to twelve years with strong inducement to re-enlist for an additional nine years in 1847. This system had created a serious reserve deficiency as there were few trained and experienced soldiers being carried over into the auxiliary forces. The long-service soldier had become passee in continental armies at the time of Cardwell's administration. In 1870, of the six great powers, only Great Britain still clung to long service. Prussia, for example, had seen the value of short service early in the century and the victory of the Prussian armies in the Austrian War of 1866 was clear evidence that a soldier serving two or three years could show himself as a formidable fighting man.

more efficient reserve system. Cardwell, speaking before the House of Commons, stated that the purpose of the bill was to create a reserve force "trained in the Army, by the Army, and for the Army, and constituting in the moment of emergency a Reserve upon which the Army may rely."¹

The Army Enlistment Bill, after lengthy debate and nearly two months in committee, had still not passed the House of Commons when France declared war on Prussia on 19 July, 1870. The declaration of war shocked the Commons out of its lethargy. On 22 July the bill passed the third reading and was sent to the Lords where it had its first reading the same day. The second reading, after a short debate, took place in the House of Lords only four days later. By 4 August the Army Enlistment Bill had passed and it received royal assent on 9 August, 1870. The new Enlistment Act of 1870² fixed twelve years as the maximum and three years as the minimum period of enlistment. It was Cardwell's idea that, as a result of the new enlistment program, men would serve three to six years with the colors and then six to nine years in the reserves. Two measures that accompanied the new enlistment program proved popular, and both tended to elevate the general tenor of the military system. One was the abolition of the recruiting bounty and the other was the adoption of a policy of discharging men of bad character from the army.

During the Cardwell period, there were other alterations in the

¹For Cardwell's speech, see Hansard's 1870, CCI, 787-790.

²Sessional Papers, "Army Enlistment Bill," 1870, I, 83, 91.

military system. There was a readjustment of the wage scale that afforded the British soldier a better price for his services. The soldier for the first time in British military history received a shilling a day with the opportunity to save as much. Moreover, his free daily ration was increased and the practice of good conduct pay was extended. Throughout this general period also, new educational facilities came into being which tended to encourage military efficiency. Schools of military instruction were established at Aldershot, Manchester, Glasgow, and Woolwich for officers and qualified noncommissioned officers. Military camps for weapon training were also set up.¹ Cardwell instituted regular annual maneuvers beginning in 1871, and they proved to be successful. Blackwood's reported on the first autumn maneuvers by stating that they "were the first of the kind which had ever been attempted in this country. They did immense good; and they promise, if regularly continued, to do more."²

During the period 1868-1874, the infantry was rearmed with the new Martini-Henry rifle. This was the first satisfactory breech-loading rifle in the British army.³ With regard to artillery, however, Cardwell was less successful in rearmament. The breech-loading cannon had been successfully demonstrated in the China War of 1860; but because of conservatism on the part of the ordnance officers, the

¹Riddulph, Lord Cardwell, 68.

²"Autumnal Manoeuvres," Blackwood's, CXI (March, 1872), 322.

³After 1866, the old muzzle-loading Enfields were converted into efficient breech-loading rifles on what was known as the "snider-system."

secretary of war was forced to submit to their demands for the reissuing of the outdated muzzle-loading field pieces. In light of past experience and the proven capability of the newer-type cannons during the Franco-Prussian War, such an adamant stand on the part of the ordnance officers exhibited a high degree of military backwardness. As a consequence, the artillery efficiency of England was to be "behind the rest of Europe for a good part of twenty years."¹ The secretary of war was at least able to increase the over-all fire power of the horsed guns from 180 to 336, as well as adding approximately 5,000 men to that branch of the service.

Finally, credit can be given to Cardwell for starting the trend of localizing the British army.² Under Cardwell the British army was divided into fixed territorial districts and the "linked battalion" system was adopted, greatly improving the organizational structure of the army. Concerning the infantry, the secretary of war divided Great Britain and Ireland into sixty-nine infantry regimental districts, each containing a regimental depot. Each regimental district was to be comprised of at least two regular battalions and with one, two, or three battalions of militia, and all the volunteer infantry belonging to that particular district. The eventual purpose of such a plan was to dovetail the various branches of the army into individual locales, with the

¹R. C. K. Ensor, England, 1870-1914 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), 15.

²See Sessional Papers, "Military Localization Act," 1872, III, 215.

hope that regiments would soon become known by their territorial or county names, rather than by their historically-long and cumbersome titles.¹

The artillery was also localized much like the infantry, although because of technical problems related to this specialized branch, it failed to reach the state of perfection that marked the infantry localization. The cavalry regiments, "whose officers wielded more social influence than any,"² posed a special problem to Cardwell, a problem that he was unable to resolve. His attempts to localize the cavalry proved to be futile, although the secretary was successful in increasing the total of their establishments from 8,762 to 10,422 men.

Cardwell's famous "linked battalion" was an extension of the localization of the army. The object of attaching at least two battalions to each regimental depot was that one battalion should always remain at the depot engaged in home duty while the other battalion was employed on active service abroad. Recruits theoretically were to be drawn from their own particular district and were to receive military training and preparation by first serving in their home district and then, upon the return of their co-battalion from foreign duty such as Malta or India, by serving on active duty abroad. It took several years before complete territorialization of the British army was achieved.

¹For a discussion of later territorial reforms, see Fortescue's British Army, 561-562.

²Ensor, England, 14.

After a long and arduous process the program was finally accepted and applied in full in 1881.¹

The proposal to abolish the purchase system proved to be the most controversial reform of the entire Cardwellian program. The assault against this time-hallowed practice was destined to meet fierce resistance from certain sections of British society. What Secretary Cardwell had hoped would remain a purely military question was soon catapulted into the political arena, where it came to resemble a class issue.

In the early spring of 1870, Cardwell proposed that the lower officer ranks of the regular army, i.e., cornet in the cavalry and ensign in the infantry, be abolished. His reasoning was that these positions had become obsolete. Their original function was one of flagbearing for a troop or company, and this practice by 1870 had been discontinued. In order to abolish the ranks of cornet and ensign, it was necessary to assist the existing holders of those commissions to purchase the rank of lieutenant. Cardwell proposed that the government should pay an additional sum to those officers affected in order to aid them in purchasing a lieutenant's commission since it was valued at a higher rate than that of cornet or ensign. Before such a measure could be undertaken, however, it was necessary to make a study to determine the amount of money needed for compensation. It was common knowledge

¹See Fortescue's British Army, 561-562; also de Watteville's British Soldier, 165-166.

that overregulation payments existed and, therefore, Cardwell appointed a royal commission in April, 1870, to inquiry into the practice. The commission submitted its findings to the war minister in late June. Cardwell and his associates spent the entire summer studying and evaluating the committee report while at the same time carefully following the course of the Franco-Prussian War.

This government report, in effect, reopened the purchase issue by dramatically exposing that illegal bedfellow of purchase -- the overregulation payment. The commissioners stated in their report that prohibition against charging more than the official regulation price for a military commission although "stringently worded" was "habitually neglected." They further disclosed that the actual price paid, "except in the purchase of the first commission, almost invariably exceeds the price fixed by authority."¹ The following is a statement from the report showing the regulation prices according to the royal warrant of 3 February, 1866, and the average overregulation prices:

¹ Sessional Papers, "Report of Commissioners on Over-Regulation Payments," 1870, XI, 209.

STATEMENT OF PRICES IN CAVALRY REGIMENTS
AND INFANTRY REGIMENTS¹

Cavalry Regiments of the Line

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Regulation</u>	<u>Overregulation</u>	<u>Total</u>
Cornet	£ 450	£ --	£ 450
Lieutenant	250	575	825
Captain	1,100	2,006	3,106
Major	1,400	1,600	3,000
Lieutenant-Colonel	<u>1,300</u>	<u>1,794</u>	<u>3,094</u>
	4,500	5,975	10,475

Infantry Regiments of the Line

Ensign	450	--	450
Lieutenant	250	100	350
Captain	1,100	600	1,700
Major	1,400	800	2,200
Lieutenant-Colonel	<u>1,300</u>	<u>1,000</u>	<u>2,300</u>
	4,500	2,500	7,000

The commission's report summed up its findings thusly: First, the practice of paying prices in excess of the regulation price was general throughout those corps where promotions were granted by purchase, and it also prevailed in nonpurchase corps as well. And in the case of regimental exchanges from one corps to another and from one battalion in a regiment to another in the same regiment, excess payments also existed. Second, overregulation payments were a matter arranged between officers and were frequently made through regimental agents acting as

¹Ibid., 210. By comparing the overregulation prices of the cavalry and infantry, it is readily apparent that the cavalry carried greater prestige than the infantry.

"private bankers"¹ who invariably kept no records of the transactions. Third, the chief effects of the practice were: a) the raising of commission prices, with the exception of the first commission, presented a "serious inconvenience" to officers of limited means; b) it offered a considerably pecuniary advantage to nonpurchasing officers in the event of their retirement; c) the acceleration of promotion by the inducement of officers to retire; and d) the habitual violation of the law because the practice was long established by custom and unchecked by any authority. The report concluded that "there has been a tacit acquiescence in the practice amounting, in our opinion, to a virtual recognition of it by civil and military departments and authorities."²

On the matter of the purchase system serving to accelerate promotion by inducing officers to retire, the commission did concur; however, the report pointed out a fact that had long been disregarded.

It stated:

One chief advantage of the purchase system is said to be that it facilitates the retirement of officers. . . . We believe that this result is in great measure due to the practice of paying more than the regulation price, and that if it were possible to restrict the sum payable to an officer for his commission on retirement to the regulation price, and to

¹In the minutes of evidence attached to the royal commission report of 1857, Mr. C. Hammersley of the firm of Cox and Co., the army agents, disclosed that while the regulation price of a lieutenant-colonelcy of a cavalry regiment was £ 6,175, the usual price was £ 14,000 and that it had been known to go as high as £ 18,000. See *ibid.*, "Report on System of Purchase and Sale of Commissions," 1857, XVIII, Session II, 1.

²*Ibid.*, "Report of Commissioners on Over-Regulation Payments," 1870, XII, 199.

prevent any sum being paid to a retiring officer when nothing is allowed by regulation, there would be less inducement to officers to retire, and promotion would in consequence be slower than it is at present."¹

This revelation on the part of the royal commission did much to weaken one of the fundamental arguments of the purchase advocates -- that the legal practice of purchase accelerated promotion. And, obviously enough, the recommendations expressed and implied in the complete report on overregulation payments were directed against the practice in specific and against the purchase system in general. As a result of this inquiry, the army reformers received new and valuable ammunition to aid them in their assault on purchase.

¹Ibid., 214.

CHAPTER V

ABOLITION OF THE PURCHASE SYSTEM

The parliamentary session of 1871 provided the final round in the purchase controversy. It was in preparation for this session that Edward Cardwell devoted the latter months of 1870; and before the session commenced in February of 1871, the public had been thoroughly informed of the impending controversy. The Annual Register for 1871 reported that a

. . . general voice . . . called upon them [the government] to take rigorous measures for increasing the efficiency of our forces by a sweeping reform, which, all allowance made for panic and exaggeration, was universally felt to have become a pressing necessity. Orators "stumped" the country in all directions, preaching the need of vigorous action.¹

Among the numerous individuals who helped bring the issue of reform to the public, mention should be made of George Trevelyan, the young MP for the border boroughs who had made the issue to abolish purchase a personal cause and took every opportunity to state his view that it was "the first great step required." Trevelyan made numerous speeches and in early 1871 he proposed the formation of "a little meeting of Radical army reformers, say ten or twelve or fifteen, to arrange parts for a practical work in the House, and to found a nucleus for an Army Reform

¹Annual Register for 1871, p. 3.

Association in case of dire need (to stamp the country)."¹ Also, Sir William Mansfield, raised to the peerage during the 1871 session under the title of Lord Sandhurst, proved to be an active voice on the side of reform. In a prominent speech delivered in the period prior to the opening of Parliament, Mansfield spoke out for the need of everyone's uniting behind the task of military reorganization. He said in part:

I am not a political man, and I will not venture to say whether such a result will follow . . . but this I do say, that it is the duty, not only of those who are in office, but also of those who are out of office, to see that the session does not terminate without this great subject being weighed, and such practical results, at least, attained as shall cause the division to which I have alluded to cease, and be known henceforth only as a matter of history.²

Later in the speech Mansfield struck a note that perhaps became the chief argument of the public in its support of the move to abolish purchase. Near the conclusion of his address, Mansfield is quoted as saying: "A primary obligation should rest upon every man to serve in the army in person, and no pecuniary sum of any amount should enable a man whatever his rank or whatever his position, to save his person by means of his purse." According to the Annual Register, this remark was followed by an outburst of applause.³

By early October, 1870, Secretary Cardwell had completed his plan

¹Stephen Gwynn, M.P., The Life of the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles W. Dilke, completed and ed. by Gertrude M. Tuckwell (London: John Murray, 1917), I, 137.

²Annual Register for 1871, p. 19.

³Ibid., 20.

for abolishing purchase. The detailed proposal for abolition was apparently first submitted to Gladstone in late December. A lengthy memorandum by Cardwell, dated 29 December, 1870, exists and bears the title "Confidential Material on Abolition."¹ The memo states that "it cannot be expected that the change will be popular in the Army," and lists three practical difficulties in the matter of abolishing purchase: compensation to officers, future rules of promotion, and a new retirement program. With regard to compensation, Cardwell suggested that the government should buy up a number of commissions each year. Future promotions would be granted to those passing competitive examinations at Sandhurst, to properly qualified militia subalterns, and to deserving noncommissioned officers by means of selection. With respect to retirement, it was generally contended that a plan based upon the existing retirement program of the nonpurchase corps would resolve that particular problem.

Cardwell and his staff anxiously awaited the beginning of the 1871 session of Parliament. Before a full House of Parliament, the war minister himself introduced the Army Regulation Bill, of which the principal feature was the abolition of purchase. It was in formally moving the army estimates on 16 February, 1871, that Cardwell explained his scheme for army reorganization to the House of Commons, the object of which was to combine into one harmonious whole all of the branches of Great

¹Gladstone Papers, Vol. entitled "Added MS 44,119," British Museum, London, 185-190.

Britain's military forces. Cardwell began his speech by drawing reference to the Franco-Prussian conflict still raging on the continent and the necessity it occasioned for prompt action in the area of military reform. He spoke out:

Sir, since we last met in this House to consider questions of military organization and military expenditure, events have occurred in Europe of so marvelous a character that I think it no parallel in the records of history from the pages of Herodatus to those of Sir William Napier.¹

The war minister clearly outlined his scheme for army reorganization. He left no one in doubt as to where the government stood on the matter. The "events" in Europe, the ambiguous nature of the British military establishment, and the need for efficient and unified defense, according to Cardwell, were matters of mere record. It was now up to the members of Parliament to remedy the situation by adopting Cardwell's program that, in the words of The Times, "will introduce into the Army . . . influences that will grow stronger and stronger, till they compell the gradual Perfection of the service."²

The initial reading of the bill took place on 16 February, 1871.³ The principal features of the Army Regulation Bill were: First, the sale of military commissions would be prohibited and compensation would be given to all officers holding saleable commissions (for both regulation and overregulation prices) out of money voted by Parliament. Second, the secretary of state would be empowered to make regulations to length

¹Hansard's, 1871, CCIV, 327.

²The Times (London), 17 February, 1871, p. 9.

³Hansard's, 1871, CCIV, 374.

of enlistments. Third, the jurisdiction of lieutenants of counties in military matters would be re-vested in the crown.

Formal debate on the second reading of the Army Regulation Bill began in early March, and it was clear to all that the fate of the bill hung chiefly upon the question of whether or not to abolish purchase. Colonel J. Loyd-Lindsay began the debates by moving a resolution that an expenditure necessary for abolishing purchase could not be justified under the heading of national defense.¹ His personal estimate of the cost was £ 12,000,000. Other members followed Loyd-Lindsay in opposing the army bill. Secretary Cardwell received little support from his party or from government members and was forced to defend the measure almost single-handedly.

The war minister spoke out for his army bill on 16 March by attempting to answer the charges of his opposition. When Cardwell had concluded, Disraeli suggested that Loyd-Lindsay withdraw his motion. The colonel agreed, but Secretary Cardwell adroitly insisted that the motion be put to a vote. It was then voted down and the Army Regulation Bill was read for the second time. Further progress on the bill was hampered by the obstruction tactics of the so-called "Parliamentary Colonels," a title given to the small band of pro-purchase members seemingly identified with one of the most vociferous opponents of the army bill -- Colonel George Anson.²

¹Ibid., 1397.

²Cardwell himself thought of Anson as the "prime mover of the whole opposition." Gladstone Papers, Vol. entitled "Added MS 44,119," 242.

The arguments that were presented against the abolition of purchase during the early weeks of the debate were not new, and generally can be divided into three categories -- economic, social, and professional. The economic objection simply stated that abolition of purchase would prove too costly. Most members who adhered to this argument placed the estimated cost of compensating all of the officers for their commissions in the vicinity of £ 12,000,000. The Liberal members who opposed the Army Regulation Bill did so, it appears, because of the suspected cost.¹

A substantial portion of the opposition rallied to the social argument. The Army Regulation Bill was considered a blatant attack against privilege. Those who followed this line of thought seriously believed that the aristocratic air of the officer class was essential to the best interests of the British army and that to dilute its "gentlemanlike tone" would be a serious mistake. The third argument was of a professional nature. Abolition meant promotion by selection or seniority. The former would create hard-feeling in the army, promote favoritism, and eventually produce a professional army much like that which existed in Prussia. The latter would never be justified since tenure and not merit would be the chief criterion for promotion.

Contemporary newspapers and periodicals devoted large coverage to

¹The Manchester School, a wing of the Liberal party, was cool to army reform and was more interested in the future Ballot Bill. Cardwell and Gladstone both refused to take action on the Ballot Bill until the army question was settled, fearing that the Manchester wing, once the Ballot Bill was obtained, would desert the government on the army bill.

the political issue that raged in Parliament over purchase. By the opening of the 1871 session of Parliament, most of the press had chosen their stand on the issue; and as the session got under way, the reading public was being served a plethora of viewpoints. The respectable and long-established periodicals tended to take a dim view of Cardwell's proposals. The Quarterly Review in its defense of purchase accused the opponents of the system of making so many "extraordinary statements" about the practice of purchasing commissions that "the mind of the public has conceived the most erroneous ideas on the subject." This periodical went on to state:

We have now considered the Government proposals for reorganizing the Army and improving the national defence for enabling our military forces to meet the altered conditions of the art of war, and for giving us that security and that protection which the enormous sum we annually pay entitles us to expect. And we find that they amount to nothing -- absolutely nothing.¹

The Westminster Review declared that the purchase system should not be abolished because it supposedly avoided the evils of promotion by seniority and the difficulties of promotion by selection. It stated that it was not aware of anyone "whose judgments command respect" supporting the government proposals and concluded that there was not "the faintest chance of its adoption."² Fraser's Magazine, then edited by James Anthony Froude, made its position known to the readers of the April

¹"On the Government Army Bill," Quarterly Review, CXXX (April, 1871), 569.

²"Army Organization," Westminster Review, VIII (April, 1871), 494.

issue. Taking Cardwell to task by asking what had the war minister done in the area of army reform "to encourage the English people to entrust themselves now blindly to his guidance," the periodical stated sarcastically:

The alluring proposal to abolish purchase was unquestionably the bladder which floated the Ministerial scheme on the tide of public favour; and, like the bladder when pricked, we are much mistaken if Mr. Cardwell's plan for effecting that measure will not be found to collapse at the touch of accurate criticism.¹

Blackwood's, seldom friendly to Gladstone's first Liberal ministry, also declared itself opposed to Secretary Cardwell's army bill. In the March issue of that year, this periodical delivered what may perhaps be referred to as the more enlightened attitude of the vested-interests -- reform the purchase system without essentially disturbing the system itself. It told its readers:

We have reason to believe that a large section of the country is strangely misinformed as to what that System [of purchase] really means. . . . The purchase system will soon . . . disappear, unless there be wisdom enough on the part of the public and on the part of the combatant officers to cure what is manifestly wrong.²

Other periodicals, such as Economist and The Gentleman's Magazine, generally looked rather unfavorably upon Secretary Cardwell's attempt to abolish purchase. Punch, of course, was an exception. In July, 1870, the popular periodical wrote -- with tongue in cheek -- "if purchase in

¹"The Government Scheme for Army Reform," Fraser's Magazine, III (April, 1871), 485, 471.

²"The Sick Army and Its Doctors," Blackwood's, CIX (March, 1871), 394-396.

the Church were abolished, we should have to abolish purchase in the Army"¹ But in a more serious vein, Punch stated in February, 1871: "Mr. Secretary Cardwell presented the Government Scheme for the Re-organization of the British Army -- the one important measure for which the British Nation was impatient."²

It does appear that although much of the influential press did not support Cardwell's efforts to abolish purchase, the public was generally sympathetic to the measure. As the Annual Register for 1871 states: "When purchase became the subject of discussion, no authority could dispel the popular belief that promotion obtained by the payment of money involved an undue and corrupt advantage to the rich."³ One of the more impressive instances of public support for Cardwell's efforts to abolish purchase is that of a Mr. P. H. Muntz, the member for Birmingham and a man who had served on a commission of inquiry into the purchase system. It is recorded that Muntz

. . . told his constituents, while condemning it [the practice of purchase] utterly, that it would cost 7,000,000 pounds to abolish it in an equitable manner. He explained this to them with great clearness and some peremptoriness, and asked them to tell him clearly whether they were prepared to pay the money. The question was put in the most formal manner to the meeting, and elicited an absolutely unanimous vote. Not a single hand was raised in objection, though the pecuniary difficulty had been most forcibly explained.⁴

¹Punch, LIX (16 July, 1870), 24.

²Ibid., LX (25 February, 1871), 74.

³Annual Register for 1871, p. 71.

⁴Ibid., 22.

The delaying tactic in the House of Commons had met with such success that when late spring arrived, the Army Regulation Bill still had not been passed. Besides the opposition on the floor of Parliament, Secretary Cardwell found those nearer to him beginning to weary of the whole affair. In the cabinet itself, Robert Lowe, the chancellor of the exchequer, personally disliked the bill; and Gladstone, "though he admitted to Cardwell that he did not understand the purchase system, protested that its abolition would be 'very costly.'"¹ The prime minister, however, did believe that it should be abolished.

In an unsigned note to Cardwell dated 27 May, 1871, Gladstone apparently wrote the war minister: "I want air -- light -- elbow room -- . . . [in dealing] with the officers of the Army. May our fortification prove as difficult of capture as our officers and we are safe enough."² On the very next day Cardwell wrote the prime minister:

The abolition of purchase is a clear gain to both rich and poor. The outcry against it is unreal; and as Vivian³ truly said they are only crying "what more can we get?" But the abolition of the practice of selling exchanges is the extrusion of the indolent and self-indulgent from the service, - and the prohibition to the others of a gain which they now enjoy from ministering to the indolence and self-indulgence of men whom the service can very well spare. In short our principle is that the officers shall be made f [for] for the Army. Their principle is that the Army is made f [for] the officers.⁴

¹Erickson, "Cardwell," Transactions, II, 82.

²Gladstone Papers, Vol. entitled "Added MS 44,119," 237.

³Captain John C. Vivian, a firm supporter of Cardwell's reform proposals.

⁴Gladstone Papers, Vol. entitled "Added MS 44,119," 239-240.

In another memo of that same date, Cardwell penned an interesting observation concerning a prominent source of parliamentary opposition to the government bill. He wrote:

I suspect one of our difficulties is this -- eg. there sits below the Gangway on our side [of the House of Commons] a plutocracy, - who have no real objection to purchase, - and are in truth more interested in its maintenance than the aristocratic gentlemen opposite. They use popular arguments, . . . and they say in private that they want something more of the money involved, - that something more being the removal of the Duke of Cambridge: while in truth they wish to purchase an aristocratic position f [for] personal connections, who would never obtain it otherwise.¹

Cardwell wrote a memo on the problems of reform, also dated 28 May, 1871,² in which he spoke of the necessity of firmness with respect to "really obtaining the invaluable commodity, i.e., a professional, as distinguished from a purchase army, or an army of favoritism." He closes with a discerning note: "Patronage will ever be, as it has ever been, the crux of all human government:- but I think we are doing all we can to secure honest administration."³

It was the decision of the cabinet, as summer approached and with the bill tied up in committee, that a compromise might be necessary. In cabinet, Secretary Cardwell made a partial surrender by agreeing to abandon all but the two major features of the bill, to wit, the abolition of purchase and the reduction of the lord-lieutenant's authority. Cardwell insisted that these two "cardinal points" remain.

¹Ibid., 243.

²Ibid., 244-248.

³Ibid., 248.

Interest in the Army Regulation Bill waned considerably in June. With the termination of war on the continent, the public apparently decided the need for military reform was less urgent now. In the House of Commons, it became evident by the beginning of summer that the obstruction arguments had about run out and that many of the "Parliamentary Colonels" were resisting solely in the hope that a better price could be obtained for officer commissions. The emaciated bill finally reached the third reading on 3 July, 1871, and on that same day a vote was called which saw the Army Regulation Bill pass by a majority of fifty-eight votes.¹ That very afternoon the war minister wrote to Henry Ponsonby, the queen's secretary, that he regretted not having been able to push through the entire bill, but that had he insisted on doing so "I should have failed in my main object [abolition of purchase] and brought not only the measure but the Government into difficulty. . . . I do not think that the Lords will venture to throw out the bill."²

With the bill's entry into the House of Lords, the final and perhaps the most exciting stage of the purchase battle began. The first reading of the bill took place on the 4th of July and the second reading was proposed for the 13th of the same month. Lord Northbrook moved the second reading and immediately the Duke of Richmond rose and introduced an amendment to prevent it, thereby hoping to table the bill. The

¹The vote was 289 for and 231 against. See Hansard's, 1871, CCVII, 1073.

²As quoted in Erickson's "Cardwell," Transactions, II, 83.

Richmond amendment, in essence, called upon the government to lay in front of the Lords its "complete and comprehensive scheme" for army reform before the second reading be allowed.¹ The specter of another political battle loomed again with the session well past the half-way mark. No soldier among the peers spoke out in favor of the bill in the early days of the debate except Lord Sandhurst.² It was as if the Duke of Wellington's ghost still haunted the chamber. The Lords stood fast. "For almost the first time since 1832," wrote R. C. K. Ensor, "the peers were brought into naked and downright conflict with the commons by class motives on a class issue."³

Cardwell and Gladstone had earnestly sought active support from the commander-in-chief, the Duke of Cambridge. His influence, it was realized, would have considerable weight in the House of Lords. In a series of letters between Gladstone and Queen Victoria in early July this question of the Duke of Cambridge's role in supporting the government was discussed.⁴ The queen in regard to the bill itself reacted to the "strong political feeling among officers" and asked Gladstone to do

¹Hansard's, 1871, CCVII, 1566.

²An old friend of army reform, Sir William Mansfield had been created Baron Sandhurst on 21 March, 1871. For an account of his speech on 13 July, 1871, before the House of Lords, see ibid., 1590-1597.

³Ensor, England, 12.

⁴George Earle Buckle (ed.), The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence and Journal Between the Years 1862 and 1878 (2nd series; New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1926), II, 141-147.

"nothing to increase it."¹

With respect to the commander-in-chief, the sovereign wrote: "The principal object which the Queen has in writing is to express her earnest hope that the Government will bear in mind the entirely non-political position of the Commander-in-Chief."² The prime minister responded to the queen's move to keep her cousin out of the army issue in Parliament by replying to her letter in typical Gladstonian fashion. He penned a lengthy letter, listing historical precedent concerning the role of the commander-in-chief in politics and again urged the Duke of Cambridge's support in the House of Lords.³

The commander-in-chief, after pressure from various directions, did give token support in the House of Lords during the debate over the second reading of the army bill. On 14 July, the duke spoke before the Lords;⁴ and later that evening in a telegram to the queen, Earl Granville said: "The Duke of Cambridge made a very able speech, skilful as to his own position, and fair toward the Government."⁵ Lord John Kimberley, colonial secretary, wrote in his personal journal, however: "what a miserable shilly shally part the Duke of Cambridge is playing about the

¹Ibid., 141.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 142-145.

⁴Hansard's, 1871, CCVII, 1690-1697.

⁵Buckle (ed.), Letters of Queen Victoria, II, 147-148.

Army Bill! His speech yesterday was rather more favorable to the bill, but after all it was a paltry performance."¹

In this same entry in Lord Kimberley's journal can be found the prediction of the government course in the light of the obstructive tactics on the part of the Lords. Kimberley disclosed: "If the Lords pass the resolution [Duke of Richmond's amendment] proposed by the Opposition, we shall abolish purchase by a Royal Warrant, leaving it to the Lords to determine whether they will then persevere in opposing the Bill which secures the over-regulation prices to the officers."² This was exactly the course that the government decided upon, when after three days' debate, the Richmond amendment was carried on 17 July by a vote of 155 to 130.

It has been generally thought that it was Prime Minister Gladstone's idea to end purchase by means of a royal warrant. Evidence suggests, however, that Cardwell was the real motivator of the action. In a memo to Gladstone in early July, 1871, Cardwell wrote the following:

The abolition of Purchase, strictly speaking, requires no new legislation. The Statute Law prohibits as stringently as is possible all sales, exchanges, etc. . . . The Crown can by altering the regulations at any moment abolish Purchase."³

¹John, First Earl of Kimberley, A Journal of Events during the Gladstone Ministry, 1868-1874, ed. Ethel Drus (Camden Miscellany Vol. XXI; London: Office of the Royal Historical Society, 1958), 24.

²Ibid.

³Gladstone Papers, Vol. entitled "Added MS 44,119," 254.

Then on 15 July after the House of Commons had passed the bill and sent it to the Lords, Cardwell wrote Gladstone:

My own idea of the Campaign is this:- . . . that we should have a Cabinet on Wednesday [19 July], that we should then resolve to abolish Purchase,- that we should announce on Thursday that we have advised The Queen to abolish it, and that we shall defer the Money Vote until we know the fate of the Bill in the Lords.¹

It seems, therefore, that the cabinet took Cardwell's advice. A cabinet meeting was held on 18 July -- a day earlier than the war minister had asked in the above letter -- and agreed to the maneuver. They recommended that the queen cancel the old warrant regulating purchase by a new royal warrant abolishing purchase. On the following day, Wednesday, 19 July, Cardwell wrote Queen Victoria:

The Act of 1809 renders all Purchase and Sale of Commissions in the Army illegal and highly penal, except for such prices as may be laid down in any Regulations of the Sovereign, or Royal Warrants:- and the effect of the Warrant [already drawn up by the government] will be to cancel all former Regulations and Royal Warrants and thereby to abolish the system of Purchase altogether.²

The queen requested further clarification of the issue, and her ministers immediately provided her with a detailed account of the problem in the form of a cabinet minute.³ She had expressed to Lord Halifax, the minister in attendance, that it appeared to be a strong exercise of her power in apparent opposition to the peers. Upon receipt of the formal cabinet advice, however, the queen signed on the evening of 19 July,

¹Italics are mine. Ibid., 258-259.

²As quoted in Erickson's "Cardwell," Transactions, II, 83.

³For a reprint of the cabinet minute, see Buckle (ed.), Letters of Queen Victoria, II, 151-154.

1871. Thus by means of her royal prerogative, the monarch put a legal end to purchase.

The recent publication of Lord Kimberley's journal confirms Cardwell's part in the use of the warrant to end purchase. An entry dated 31 July, 1871, reads: "It has been, I observe, assumed that the Royal Warrant was specially due to Gladstone 'the imperious Minister,' as it is the fashion of his enemies to call him. In point of fact, it is much more the work of Cardwell."¹

It has been frequently cited that the sovereign was somewhat coerced into signing the warrant. However, John Morley, one of Gladstone's biographers, flatly stated: "I find no evidence of this."² In analyzing Queen Victoria's motives, it should be pointed out that in the summer of 1871 the queen was at her peak of unpopularity and that public sentiment appears to have been generally in favor of abolition. Moreover, another biographer of Gladstone has suggested: "The Queen rather relished that arbitrary exercise of her Royal authority."³

On 20 July, Gladstone announced to a crowded and anxious House the abolition of purchase by royal warrant, while Lord Northbrook presented the royal warrant to the Lords. The warrant, which was to go

¹Kimberley, Journal of Events, 25.

²John Morley, The Life of William Ewart Gladstone (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1903), II, 363.

³Philip Magnus, Gladstone: A Biography (London: John Murray, 1954), 221.

into effect on 1 November, 1871, cancelled "all Regulations authorizing the Purchase or Sale or Exchange for money of Commissions in the Army."¹ The House of Lords had no recourse but to vote in the Army Regulation Bill in order to provide financial reimbursement to the purchase officers. This the Lords did on 17 August, 1871,² though not before they passed a motion censuring the government for its use of the royal warrant.³ Thus, the abolition of purchase was achieved with the aid of Queen Victoria, who reluctantly followed the advice of her ministers.

¹Sessional Papers, "Royal Warrant, 20th of July 1871, to cancel and determine all Regulations authorizing the Purchase, or Sale, or Exchange of Commissions," 1871, XXXIX, 681.

²Hansard's, 1871, CCVIII, 1658. Also see Sessional Papers, "Army Regulation Bill," 1871, I, 11.

³Hansard's, 1871, CCVIII, 454.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Reaction over the method of abolishing the practice of purchase was immediate and immense. A wave of criticism was launched against the Gladstone ministry for its use of the royal warrant. In Parliament the Conservatives alleged that they had been tricked, while the radical wing of the Liberal party openly expressed its disapproval because of a fundamental distrust of royal prerogatives. To Gladstone and the other members of the cabinet, it may have appeared as a Pyrrhic victory. The parliamentary session of 1871 had taken a heavy toll on the Gladstone government. As it turned out, the government was never to regain the loss of prestige that it incurred during the session. The Times, which tended to support the government's military policy throughout the session, reported the day following the announcement of the royal warrant: "The Ministers of the Crown have carried their point, but at a costly price. The act they have recommended Her Majesty to adopt is a violent wrench to the constitution, and must tend to damage their own reputation."¹

Other protest was forthcoming. Blackwood's announced blatantly: "Can any political crisis, short of a coming civil war, justify this

¹The Times (London), 21 July, 1871, p. 9.

proceeding?"¹ Moreover, it predicted: "The end of the Gladstone Administration is not far off."² Other leading periodicals, such as Fraser's and the Quarterly Review criticized the government vigorously and even the more liberal press found the use of the warrant not above reproach. The Annual Register stated that "not only the Conservative, but the leading Liberal journals expressed utter disapproval of the Warrant. The country, however, failed to take any great interest in the matter."³ It also went on to describe some of the foreign sentiment resulting from the government's method of ending purchase. One remark taken from the French Journal des Debats is perhaps typical: "The interpretation of the Crown [appears] . . . to be little in conformity with the usages of a Liberal Government."⁴

Benjamin Disraeli, who seems to have realized the indefensibility of the purchase system early in the session, took no prominent position in opposing the government's Army Regulation Bill. Indeed, throughout the long debates in the Commons he remained noticeably absent; but after the use of the warrant, he did speak up, calling the action a "shameful conspiracy of the Cabinet against the Upper House."⁵

¹"The Coup D'Etat," Blackwood's, GX (September, 1871), 366.

²"How is the Country Governed?" ibid., 402.

³Annual Register for 1871, p. 77.

⁴Ibid., 84.

⁵As quoted in Eyck's Gladstone, 209-210.

The royal warrant ending purchase had created a momentary storm of protest. It provided the enemies of the administration with an excellent opportunity to denounce the government. Reaction tended to subside gradually, however, as the summer of 1871 waned. The significant fact was that the practice of purchase had been officially banned. From a political point of view, the government might have found it wiser perhaps to have avoided the use of the queen's prerogative, but to have waited until the next parliamentary session would have undoubtedly wrought severe consequences. To permit the Lords to obstruct the bill successfully and thereby prevent its passage in the 1871 session would have been an acknowledged defeat of the administration. Furthermore, there would have been no assurances that the measure could have fared better in the subsequent session. Lord Kimberley, the colonial secretary, wrote: "After all the discussion which has taken place upon the Warrant, I feel more than ever convinced that it was the least objectionable course open to the Govt. after the passing of the Duke of Richmond's amendment to the Bill."¹

Thus, the practice of buying, selling, and exchanging army commissions came to an abrupt end as of 1 November, 1871. In the veracious words of Punch: "You may buy Commissions in the Army up to the 31st day of October next. After that you will be driven to the cruel necessity of deserving them."²

¹Kimberley, Journal of Events, 25.

²Punch, LXL (5 August, 1871), 43.

An army purchase commission was created in order to carry out the terms of the new law that became formally known as the Regulation of the Forces Act of 1871. Every officer holding a saleable commission after 1 November, 1871, was to receive upon his retirement from service such payment as authorized by the new law. The prices of saleable commissions were to be determined by the tariff scale that was devised according to the current rates as of 1 November, 1871, which included the overregulation prices. The government visualized itself as the "universal purchaser" whose function it was to buy back its army, and it pledged that no officer would be placed in a worse position than if the act had not passed.

The act had been designed to give to every officer what he would have received had the purchase system continued, subject only to the condition that the officer could reap no further advantage by purchase. He would, after 1 November, 1871, obtain future promotions without personal expense to himself. The new act did provide for some exceptions. Under certain circumstances, for example, an officer had the choice of receiving the value of his years of service prior to the termination of purchase instead of receiving the regulation price plus the overregulation payment for his commission. If the officer selected the value of his years of service instead of the other payment, the law declared that the sum could not exceed the regulation price of a commission immediately above the rank that was held by him on 1 November, 1871. The value of the years' service was determined according to the following scale:¹

¹ For further details of the law, see Statute Law, 4-8.

	<u>Service as an Officer</u>	<u>Service in the Lower Ranks</u>
Home service	£ 50 per year	£ 25 per year
Foreign service	100 per year	50 per year

The estimated cost of abolishing the purchase system was a significant factor in the parliamentary debates of the 1871 session. Those opposing the Army Regulation Bill had tended to place the cost figure in the vicinity of £ 12,000,000. The government, on the other hand, estimated the cost at a considerably lower figure. According to a royal committee report, the expenditure was figured at £ 7,995,067.¹ Of this amount it was estimated that £ 2,821,912 would be attributed solely to overregulation prices.² The following is a breakdown of these figures as reported by the royal committee:

Total Estimated Expenditure

Household Cavalry	£ 263,863
Cavalry of the Line	1,714,569
Foot Guards	791,650
Infantry and Colonial Corps	<u>5,224,985</u>
	£ 7,995,067

Estimated Expenditure Due to Overregulation Price

Household Cavalry	£ 92,377
Cavalry of the Line	897,585
Foot Guards	322,590
Infantry and Colonial Corps	<u>1,509,380</u>
	£ 2,821,912

¹Sessional Papers, "Report by Messrs. Robinson and Davey on Probable Cost of the Abolition of Purchase," 1871, XXXIX, 675. General Biddulph, writing shortly after the turn of the century, suggested that the actual cost was nearer £ 7,000,000. Biddulph, Lord Cardwell, 113.

²Sessional Papers, "Return showing what Proportion of the Total Sum Estimated as the Probable Cost of Abolishing Purchase is due to the Over-Regulation Price." 679.

According to the report on the probable cost of compensating the purchasing officers, it was thought that it might take as long as thirty-five years for them to be completely removed from the army; hence, it was believed that by the year 1906-1907, a purchasing officer would no longer be found in the British army. The estimated scale of maximum sums to be paid for extinguishing commissions up to 1895-1896 follows next. According to this scale it could take a minimum of twenty-four years to compensate all purchasing officers.¹

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>
1871-72	£ 1,160,058	1884-85	159,918
1872-73	1,017,501	1885-86	102,385
1873-74	874,609	1886-87	55,900
1874-75	763,782	1887-88	52,290
1875-76	687,974	1888-89	48,210
1876-77	608,214	1889-90	37,500
1877-78	511,875	1890-91	34,140
1878-79	393,732	1891-92	21,440
1879-80	346,327	1892-93	21,270
1880-81	305,422	1893-94	20,429
1881-82	276,375	1894-95	19,400
1882-83	252,015	1895-96	<u>10,760</u>
1883-84	213,550	Total	£ 7,995,067

The cost of compensating the purchasing officer was high, indeed, from the point of view of nineteenth-century military budgets. The fact that such a measure was pushed through by a Liberal administration stressing economy is, therefore, significant. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, a new and promising Liberal, had become financial secretary in the war department during the purchase controversy. According to his

¹Ibid., "Report by Messrs. Robinson and Davey on Probable Cost of the Abolition of Purchase," 675.

biographer, Campbell-Bannerman learned a valuable lesson about the role of the army and its relationship to liberal politics, "a lesson which he cherished all of his life -- that it was possible to be a good Liberal and yet to take a profound interest in military policy and the organization of the Army."¹

Soon after the machinery for liquidating purchase had been set in motion, the war office began receiving complaints from officers, singly and in groups, about unfair treatment. Under the new law the army purchase commissioners wielded considerable authority, and in the ensuing months petitions demanding redress began to be circulated. These petitions generally stated that the officers desiring to retire their commissions were, as a result of the new enactment, "worse off than before the abolition of purchase."² Cardwell and the commander-in-chief conferred on the matter, but the war minister was reluctant to appoint a commission to investigate the action of the army purchase commissioners as the Duke of Cambridge suggested.

Dissatisfaction on the part of some of the officers apparently arose because of the belief that future nonpurchasing officers would be receiving better pay than those who had invested money in the purchase of their rank. General Biddulph stated that the fault, if any, was with the purchase system itself and not with the new law. "It was not a valid

¹J. A. Spender, The Life of the Right Hon. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, G.C.B. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1924), I, 43.

²Erickson, "Cardwell," Transactions, II, 84.

ground of complaint that the next generation would be better off than the present."¹ Those who found the new law to their financial advantage remained silent, but individual complaints continued to be raised. Queen Victoria, hearing the discontent over the matter, pressed Secretary Cardwell to appoint a committee of inquiry. In July, 1873, a demand for such an inquiry was made in the House of Lords. The Duke of Cambridge, speaking on the motion, declared himself in favor of a thorough investigation and even went so far as to imply that the officers were being unfairly treated.

Cardwell conceded finally and appointed a commission of inquiry which assembled in October, 1873. After an exhausting study, the commission submitted its report on 1 June, 1874.² The report disclosed that most of the grievances were cases of individual hardship and that they generally could not be traced to the abolition of purchase. The study also pointed out that the two most prominent grievances were: First, although in the future officers would obtain their commissions without purchase, they were debarred from selling these commissions and thereby from realizing large sums of money; and second, in the future the commission of major or lieutenant-colonel would only be conferred upon them for the limited period of five years, whereas before the act there was no limitation.³

¹Biddulph, Lord Cardwell, 145.

²Sessional Papers, "Report of the Commissioners appointed to Inquire into Certain Memorials from Officers in the Army in Reference to the Abolition of Purchase." 1874, XII, 1.

³Ibid., 6.

Regarding the first complaint, the report stated: "It seems not to have been sufficiently considered that it was not the abolition of the opportunity to 'purchase' but the abolition of the right of 'sale' which pressed upon the officers, and seriously damaged their prospects."¹ This prospective loss, as a consequence, varied in the different branches of the service. The prospective loss was the greatest, the committee believed, in the infantry of the line; and, therefore, the commissioners recommended certain pecuniary compensation on retirement. As to the complaint that future appointments to the ranks of major and lieutenant-colonel were to be for a five-year period only, the commission observed that the new law allowed for reappointment and that to the extent that the new rule would diminish the duration of such tenure, rapidity of promotion would be a beneficial result.

There were other complaints cited in the report, one of which was the loss of interest to purchasing officers. The commission's report stated:

For the compensation provided by the Act is only payable on retirement either from the Army or from Active Service, so that unless an Officer desires so to retire and give up his profession altogether, he must continue to lose in future the interest of the money he has invested in purchase.²

One point that the commission believed was a just ground for complaint centered on the prohibition of paying and receiving commission exchanges between officers on full pay. Exchanges had been prohibited

¹Ibid., 8.

²Ibid.

in the act because of the apparent apprehension that to allow any pecuniary bargaining between officers in this respect would be opening the door to purchase and the incidents that went along with it, such as bonuses, overregulation prices, escape from foreign duty, and so forth. The commission did not accept this view, however; and therefore recommended that regimental exchanges be permitted, thus allowing an officer by means of financial agreement to exchange his commission in a particular regiment with another officer of like rank in a different unit. The report did stress that controls should be erected to safeguard the practice and thereby insure that none of the evils of purchase be allowed to return.

In summing up the report, the commissioners contended that the majority of officers' complaints were, for the most part, unfounded and that everything was being done to administer the law properly. The report stated at one point: "A . . . result of the abolition of purchase is, that while the benefits of the system are thus withdrawn . . . , the burdens of it are in part maintained."¹

One significant result of the commission report was the passage of the Regimental Exchange Bill in 1875.² This act permitted the payment of money for exchanges between officers on full pay. The bill was sponsored by Prime Minister Disraeli's Conservative government that had replaced Gladstone's ministry in early 1874. A. E. Gatherne-Hardy, who eventually

¹Ibid.

²Sessional Papers, "The Regimental Exchange Act," 1875, VI, 5.

became the first Earl of Cranbrook, was the new secretary of war and personally introduced the proposal. The bill provoked opposition; and in the subsequent debate, G. O. Trevelyan and Robert Lowe led the opposition in the House of Commons while Lord Cardwell, recently elevated to the peerage, and Lord Sanders did the same in the House of Lords. These men "forcibly expressed their apprehension that . . . [the government] was restoring Purchase under another name."¹ The Spectator warned its readers as the debate got underway that "if the Government [Regimental Exchange] Bill is to be carried, that rule will, in all probability, become the lever through which Purchase will be reintroduced."² The fight over the bill, however, had only slight resemblance to the long battle that was waged in the 1871 session.

The new system of promotion replacing purchase was based on a blend of the twin principles of selection and seniority. The details of the new program, though complex, resulted essentially in an attempt to combine the best features of both, i.e., competitive examinations and proven merit, as well as some regard to tenure. In the case of initial appointments, it was declared that lieutenancies should be given to successful candidates after a competitive examination; or to noncommissioned officers recommended by the commander-in-chief; or to candidates from the universities, the queen's cadets, the pages of honor, and the lieutenants of militia. Regarding promotion, the rank of lieutenant-

¹Annual Register for 1875, p. 26.

²The Spectator, 13 March, 1875, p. 330.

colonel, i.e., regimental commander, was to be selected on the basis of merit. Ranks lower than lieutenant-colonelcy were to be given to the qualified senior officers of the next lower rank. By means of the new promotion system, it was now possible for any soldier in the lower ranks of the British army to advance in the ranks of his profession without the necessity of private wealth or social position. Merit and ability had replaced wealth and position.

Gladstone's government had lingered on after the 1871 session. By 1872 the bulk of its legislative program had been accomplished. It has been estimated that few governments had been more unpopular after three years of active service; and in the eyes of many, William Gladstone and Edward Cardwell were the chief objects of censure and ridicule.¹ In March of 1872, Blackwood's wrote:

For three years Mr. Cardwell has been treating the country to cheap Army administration; . . . he has been deliberately disorganizing and neglecting our means of defence. . . . He has adopted measures which threatened to destroy the discipline and tone of the Army. He has brought the War Office into a state of chaos.²

It was not until late January, 1874, that at Gladstone's request Parliament was dissolved. The Liberal party failed in its appeal to the electorate and a Conservative government under the leadership of Benjamin Disraeli assumed control of the country. When Edward Cardwell left the war office in early 1874, the British army was more effectively

¹Honorable Arthur D. Elliot, The Life of George Joachim Goschen, Viscount Goschen, 1831-1907 (2nd impression; London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1911), 126.

²"Ministers Before Parliament, 'Blackwood's, CXI(March, 1872), 374.

administered, more nationally oriented, and less costly. The army estimates were lower in 1874 than they had been in 1868, yet Cardwell had increased the strength by 25 battalions and 156 field guns, expanded the reserves available for foreign service from 3,545 to 35,905 men, and provided the army with an abundant store of supplies. In fact, Gathorne-Hardy, Cardwell's successor, informed Parliament when moving the army estimates in March, 1874, that the condition of the military establishment was such that it was possible to reduce the initial estimated expenditure by £ 100,000.¹ That Cardwell was able to institute such reforms and still show reductions in expenditures is remarkable.

Edward Cardwell had displayed his administrative talents well during the period 1868-1874 although not all were willing to admit it at that point in history. His accomplishments, however, loomed even larger to succeeding generations. The Cardwell reforms were the first major military reforms in modern British history; not since Cromwell had the army received such monumental and extensive alteration. In essence, Cardwell did much to weld together two diverse ingredients -- economy and efficiency. Moreover, he was quick to sense the changing times and the need for new military concepts designed to fit a modern world. He did much to provide the basis for a more modern military system. Unquestionably, the great British army of the twentieth century was initially hammered on a Cardwellian anvil.

To achieve all this, Cardwell dedicated his most productive years.

¹See Hansard's, 1871, CCXVIII, 432-453.

Amid personal and political crisis, the war minister served his party and his country well. Against the blasts of political critics, he seldom faltered; and against the resistance of the professional soldier, Cardwell successfully brandished the sword of compromise. Furthermore, Cardwell skillfully maneuvered the phlegmatic nephew of the queen, the Duke of Cambridge. And with respect to Queen Victoria herself, who attempted to guard her army from the designs of Parliament, Cardwell masterfully implanted further civilian safeguards and parliamentary control on the establishment. Not long after the session of 1871, the queen wrote to Lord Halifax: "The Queen hears that the Speaker of the House of Commons is to resign. Would not that be an excellent opening for Mr. Cardwell? . . . Personally the Queen has the greatest regards for Mr. C., but she has never thought him fit for his present post."¹

Shortly after Edward Cardwell relinquished his seals of office, he was elevated to Viscount Cardwell of Ellenbeck; and he moved from the House of Commons to the calmer atmosphere of the Lords. By the year 1879, Lord Cardwell was quite ill and rarely attended the sessions of the House of Lords. In 1880 he went to France to reside. By 1883, Cardwell was out of his mind much of the time. Lady Cardwell and his brother answered his correspondence to his friends in England; and on 15 February, 1886, Lord Cardwell passed away in France. Regarding Cardwell's tragic end, Wolseley wrote:

¹Frank Hardie, The Political Influence of Queen Victoria, 1861-1901 (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 179.

I have always believed that the mental strain thus imposed upon Mr. Cardwell was too great for him, and that the brain disease from which he died some years afterwards was the result of the worry, work, abuse and anxiety he then underwent at the hands of men who did not understand modern warfare or its requirements.¹

* * * * *

The Duke of Cambridge is reported to have once said: "We have seen many changes, but the changes have all come at the right time. The right time for change is when you can't help it."² To that generation in the seventh decade of the nineteenth century, the system of purchase was recognized as a fundamental pillar of the British regular army. To succeeding generations, however, the wonder was not that this "ancient abuse" was finally abolished, but that it had been tolerated as long as it had. The great effort on the part of Cardwell and the other enlightened army reformers of that period, as a consequence, has never since been seriously challenged. Thus with the abolition of the practice of purchasing army commissions, writes Fortescue, "the knell of the old British Army was rung."³ And it was perhaps fitting that the practice, legally born by virtue of a royal warrant, was ended by the same method.

The collapse of the purchase system in 1871 signaled the end of an era when wealth and position had been the prime requisites for officer

¹Wolseley, Soldier's Life, II, 256.

²As quoted in de Watteville's British Soldier, 182-183.

³Fortescue, British Army, XIII, 560.

promotion. Although the aristocracy continued to dominate the officer corps in subsequent years, a new principle had been ushered in -- a principle that emphasized merit and experience rather than wealth and position. In retrospect, the abolition of purchase can be viewed from two angles. First, it was in part an attack upon the privileged classes. Much of its support came from those who adhered to the philosophy of liberalism that was sweeping England in the nineteenth century. Second, it was the climax of a general military reform movement -- the most monumental military alteration that England had experienced since the era of Cromwell. In this respect the abolition of the purchase system was planned and promoted by a small group of dedicated reformers whose sincere effort was to place the control of the army in men of leadership, vision, and ability, irrespective of class affiliation.

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