



The Musketry Training of the Militia

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LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR ARTHUR J. HERBERT, K.C.B., Quarter-
master-General, in the Chair.

THE MUSKETRY TRAINING OF THE MILITIA.

By Colonel GEORGE G. WALKER (Commanding 3rd Battalion, Royal
Scots Fusiliers).

RECENT military events in Zululand, in the Transvaal, and in Egypt have brought into prominence the question how far the fire of our British infantry is practically effective in the field, and it can hardly be maintained that to that question public opinion is disposed to return an altogether favourable reply.

It is not for me, as a member of the Auxiliary Forces, to pass a judgment on the shooting powers of our Infantry of the Line, though I will briefly express my opinion that our musketry system, if imperfect in the sense of being limited and insufficient, was yet sound in principle, that it was on the whole faithfully and intelligently carried out in our battalions, that it at least laid the right foundation for good shooting, and that those who complained of its incompleteness, and contrasted it unfavourably with that of the German and other armies, hardly took into sufficient account the immensely different conditions of armies permanently stationed, like most continental ones, in home quarters, with no other occupation than to prepare for the next great European struggle, and an army which, like ours, is ever on the move, which is constantly, both at home and abroad, split up into detachments, often on police rather than military duty, and which at home is in great measure debarred by the closeness of the country and the density of the population from carrying out satisfactorily the more advanced branches of military shooting.

But our battalions of the Line do not represent the whole effective of British infantry; behind the Line stands the Militia, a force comprising,

besides 35 brigades of Garrison Artillery, and 3 corps of Engineers, 138 battalions of infantry, or only three fewer than the Line, exclusive of the brigade of Guards. And this is no paper force: it exists; it is called out annually for training; it is liable for permanent duty in case of war or great emergency; it has on every occasion, when our country has armed for war, shown its warlike spirit by voluntarily offering to extend its services beyond the legal limits of its engagements; and, further, something approaching to one-fourth of the pick and flower of its rank and file is enrolled in the Militia Reserve, and is liable, therefore, in time of need, to reinforce the ranks of the line.

I submit, therefore, that it is a question of no mean national importance how far the men composing these 138 battalions are capable of using with effect the weapons placed in their hands.

For the present we are, as regards musketry, in a transition state: for last year the Snider, with which we had hitherto been armed, was replaced by the Martini-Henry, a measure the value of which it would be impossible to overrate, both as ensuring unity of rifle drill, and a uniform and single description of ammunition for both Line and Militia, and as placing in the hands of the latter an arm which, from the flatness of its trajectory and its greater velocity, remedies to some extent two of the weakest points with imperfectly instructed men, namely, inaccurate judging of distance and sighting, and the failure to make adequate allowance for the action of wind on the bullet. At the same time the allowance of practice ammunition was doubled, the distances fired at were extended from 300 to 600 yards, and the course of musketry drill, both for drilled men and recruits, was considerably extended. And yet further changes have been quite recently recommended by the Committee on Musketry which sat in 1881 and 1882.

From various causes, however, we have hardly sufficient data to enable us to judge how far the new armament and the changes inaugurated last year have been successful. Owing to the late issue of the orders modifying the practice, a large portion of the force, 47 battalions, were exercised under the old system; of the remainder, many were prevented by want of adequate ranges from carrying out the new course; 3 battalions, owing to an ambiguity in the wording of the order, went through the drill and practice laid down for recruits, and only 31 battalions, or parts of battalions, carried out the new course in its integrity.

It will therefore, I think, be desirable to divide our subject into two parts, considering first the results of our Militia musketry system, as it existed up to last spring, and then applying the results of the experience so gained, together with that of the partial and fragmentary performances of last year, to the question of how far we may count on satisfactory results and progress in the future.

With this object I have examined and analyzed, as far as possible, the Returns of the decennial period from 1872 to 1881 inclusive; and, though it is difficult, owing to various causes, such as the non-training of the Irish battalions in some years, the attendance of various corps at autumn manœuvres in others, frequent changes in the positions and distances of firing, &c., to arrive at strictly accurate data, I have

yet got near enough the facts to force on my conviction the following points:—

1. That, very short and elementary as was the course of instruction laid down, yet every year a considerable number of battalions from one cause or another omitted it altogether.
2. That every year a varying proportion of other battalions failed to bring to the targets a minimum of 70 per cent. of their strength, exclusive of recruits.
3. That of the remainder a considerable number were only trained by half-battalions in alternate years.
4. That both in the battalions and half-battalions classified as having gone through the course the number of non-trained men was excessive.
5. That the target practice of those men who were exercised left much to be desired.

The following facts and figures will, I fear, conclusively establish the above points:—

1. Of the 148 battalions the maximum number ever trained in one year was 95 battalions and 20 half-battalions, in 1878. Only in three other years out of the ten has the number of battalions and half-battalions together exceeded 100. The maximum number of men ever trained in one year was only 43,162, in 1880.
2. Once only, in 1880, no battalions were excluded from classification, owing to the insufficient numbers trained, the numbers so disqualified in the remaining nine years varying from 15 in 1873 to 2 in 1881.
3. Since the option of training by half-battalions was first given, in 1873, the numbers of battalions availing themselves of it have varied from 13 to 29, exceeding 20 in seven out of the ten years.
4. In the battalions and half-battalions actually trained the proportion of non-exercised men has only once in the ten years fallen below 10, while thrice it has exceeded 20 per cent.
5. The maximum number of points obtainable for the twenty rounds which were fired, at distances never exceeding 300 yards, being 80, the figure of merit of the whole force has never in any year exceeded 31.11, while it has been as low as 24.40.

If we turn from the decennial period which I have been considering, and the shortcomings of which are brought above into pretty strong relief, to the results obtained under the new system in 1882, we shall hardly, I fear, find them much more encouraging: for the total number of corps exercised in that year, both under the old system and the new, amounted only to 62 battalions and 23 half-battalions, leaving 52 battalions and 23 half-battalions entirely untrained. Of these, 12 appear to have omitted the practice owing to want of ranges. The total number of men in the whole force, exclusive of recruits, who went to the targets was only 34,961, the number of non-exercised men in the battalions and half-battalions actually exercised exceeding 11

per cent. Of the success of the target practice itself it will be, perhaps, more convenient to speak at a later period.

I fear I have already stated more facts and figures than enough to prove that the Militia is still, to a great extent, entirely untrained in shooting, and that the performances of the men who actually go to the targets are, to say the least, indifferent.

Objections may perhaps be urged against what may appear to some rather a pessimist view of the subject: it may be argued, for instance, that the non-training of the Irish Militia, which accounts for the non-exercising of a considerable number of battalions in some years, is temporary and exceptional. I would reply that the training of the Irish portion of the force has been omitted for no less than seven years, since 1865, and that partly owing to those breaks in their instruction, and partly owing to the want of range accommodation in Ireland, the target practice of that portion of the force has been attended generally with very partial and moderate success, a fact which cannot be left out of consideration in an attempt to estimate the military value of the whole.

A more specious objection would be that the Militia is, after all, only an Auxiliary Force, and that it is vain and unfair to expect from it the same proficiency either in musketry or drill that is demanded from the regular army.

This is perfectly true, as far as it goes; but, granting this relative inferiority, it does not follow that it should be, as it unquestionably is, far greater in shooting than in drill. The noble and gallant author of "The Soldier's Pocket Book," published in 1869, says in his chapter on campaigning (page 143); "As for drill, the worst Militia regiment can do enough for all practical purposes." But the Militia has immensely improved in drill since 1869, and I think it may be fairly admitted that any tolerably good Militia battalion is, in respect of drill, at least within measurable distance of a battalion of the Line. Will any one venture to say as much with regard to their relative proficiency in shooting, though this is with some reason considered one of the weakest points in our regular infantry?

It would not, I think, be hard to establish that, of the two, it is somewhat more important that the Militiaman should be thoroughly trained beforehand in shooting than in drill, inasmuch as musketry is a business essentially requiring the most minute individual instruction, ample time, ample space, numerous teachers, and various appliances of all kinds. Supposing, for instance, the Militia embodied on a sudden emergency, every spare hour, from the moment of its assembly to the moment of its going into action, could be utilized more or less for drill; we know that in the Franco-German War, Prussian battalions and even brigades were sometimes sent to drill at the end of the day's march, and that during the siege of Paris, every spare day was utilized for drill by those troops not actually in presence of the enemy. But to improvise any useful process of musketry-instruction under similar circumstances would be obviously impossible; and it may fairly be taken for granted that the measure of efficiency in shooting possessed by a battalion on its mobilization would be practically the same as that with which it would go into action.

If then I have established the fact that shooting is the weakest point in the Militia, both positively and relatively to the Line, there rises the question whether this inferiority is an accident inseparable from the nature of the Militia service, or whether it is due to causes admitting more or less of remedy, and, to arrive at a just conclusion, it will be desirable to look back at the history of rifle practice in the force.

We have not very far to go, for it is an institution of comparatively recent date. During the old French war the Militia were, I believe, exclusively "red soldiers," and their musketry practice was simple. I read recently, in the old order books of my own regiment, a brigade order, dated at the end of last century, when the corps was encamped on the East Coast of Scotland, and a French invasion was considered imminent, directing each regiment to fire twenty rounds of ball, and recommending to Commanding Officers the purchase of old herring barrels to serve as targets.

On the reconstitution of the Militia prior to the Crimean War a certain number of battalions were, on no very apparent principles, converted into Rifles, but only nominally so, as they, as well as the "red" battalions, were exclusively armed with the smooth-bore percussion musket, and it was not until the spring of 1858 that the Enfield rifle was issued to the battalions embodied during the Indian Mutiny. These corps were about the same time ordered to send Officers and non-commissioned officers to qualify as instructors at Hythe, and those of their number which continued to be embodied during 1858, 1859, and 1860 went annually through the same course as the Infantry of the Line, with results by no means unsatisfactory, as, although composed of young soldiers with no previous practice, and in competition with the Line, which had had the advantage of some previous acquaintance with the Minie and the Enfield rifle, several battalions took a fair place in the Annual Returns—one, in 1858, standing above fifty battalions and depôts of the Line. In one important respect this experiment was of substantial value, because it proved that the Militia could, after a comparatively short period of embodiment, provide sufficient and competent instructors from its own ranks, without drawing on the Line. Having myself been a Musketry Instructor at that time, and having put a battalion through the annual course, I can testify that some of the smartest and most successful musketry drills I had, were young lance-serjeants and corporals, whose service had been limited to the Militia. Some of these, on the disembodiment of their regiments, were placed on, and became valuable members of, the Permanent Staffs.

With the close of the Indian Mutiny, and the consequent disembodiment, came a very critical time for the Militia, and specially for its musketry. Retrenchment seemed urgent after the vast war expenditure of previous years; the enthusiasm which heralded the foundation of the Volunteer Force threw into shade the old constitutional army, the entire suppression of which was advocated both in Parliament and in the Press, not only by extreme politicians, to whom it was odious, both as a military body, swelling the Estimates, and as a force largely controlled and commanded by the territorial aristocracy,

but also by a class of theoretical military reformers, with whom ideal systems, based on foreign models, outweighed in value a force which, if, like so many of our institutions, anomalous in principle, has yet proved itself eminently national and valuable in practice. It has ever been to me a convincing proof of the value and practical character of the Militia, that it survived those years of grievous discouragement. But, though it did survive, it was very far from being unscathed. The length of the trainings was reduced in 1859 to twenty-one days, and, though raised to twenty-eight in the following year, it was again lowered to twenty-one in 1861, and remained at that figure till 1864. So unattractive at that time was the service that it was impossible to keep up the establishment of Officers: the rank of Ensign was abolished, or rather abolished itself; many battalions found it impossible to keep up the number of Captains; and an order had to be issued that, in the absence of sufficient Officers to command the companies, the colours need not be taken on parade. The force further suffered from the fact that not a few of the experienced Instructors of Musketry, who had learnt their work during embodiment, were tempted to leave the Militia by the offer of Adjutancies in the Volunteers, and in 1861 there were only nineteen qualified Officer Instructors remaining in the entire force. But what above all made any useful musketry instruction impossible at that time, and for many years after, was at first the entire absence, and subsequently the miserably inadequate extent, of the preliminary drill; for of this I am quite sure, that, however much we may differ on other points, there is no Militia Officer in this room but will agree with me that, to be of any use at all, our musketry system must have its foundation laid on the sound and thorough instruction of the recruit. But nothing of the kind was possible from 1859 to 1873: for the first two years of that period there was no preliminary drill whatever, while from 1861 to 1873 it varied in the most casual manner from seven days to twenty-eight, having twice been at the lowest figure of 7, seven times at 14, once at 21, and twice at 28 days.

I think I may say of the whole period from 1859 to 1873, and indeed of several subsequent years to a considerable extent, that, although battalions were annually ordered to go through a limited course of musketry, that branch of instruction occupied very much the same place in our Militia system that the study of modern languages did in our public schools some thirty years ago: on paper it formed part of the studies professedly taught, and, if any one chose to devote to it time that could very ill be spared from more remunerative work, he was welcome to do so. But practically it was more or less ignored: no credit whatever attached to its performance, no penalties whatever attended its neglect or its entire omission. I can recall a case in which, after a battalion had carried out the prescribed course with great zeal during a training limited to twenty-one days, sacrificing to it at least two-thirds of the scanty time available, it was inspected by an Officer holding an important Staff appointment, who totally ignored the existence of musketry throughout the whole proceedings, and when invited in the orderly-room to examine the registers

and Returns, declined to do so, giving as his reason that he knew nothing about musketry, and that he did not believe that any one else who had not been at Hythe, did. Undeterred by this, the battalion repeated the course in the following year, and this time was inspected by a veteran holding the appointment of Inspecting Field Officer, who likewise treated musketry as non-existent, excusing himself on the ground that he had never had anything to do with troops armed with rifles. I make no doubt that some of the Officers I see before me, can recall similar experiences.

Can it be matter for surprise that, up to 1873, the shooting of the Militia, conducted under such discouraging conditions, was miserably inefficient, and that Commanding Officers and Adjutants and serjeant-majors, despairing of producing satisfactory results, or of getting much credit for them if attained, and knowing well that the efficiency of their battalions would be judged very much more by marching past than by musketry, too often grudged every hour seemingly wasted on the latter, and gladly availed themselves of every plausible excuse for avoiding or curtailing it?

With 1873, however, there came at least the dawn and promise of better things, for in that year the preliminary drill was extended, for all battalions which were willing to avail themselves of this great advantage (and they were, I believe, the great majority), to fifty-six days, and for the first time it became possible to attempt some sound and systematic grounding of the recruits in the use of their weapons. But the mischief resulting from past years of neglect clogged and hampered progress, as indeed it still does to some extent, at every turn: the dislike and neglect of musketry among those responsible for the instruction of the Militia long survived such circumstances and conditions as those to which allusion has been made above, and which to a certain extent justified them. If any one will glance at the answers given by Commanding Officers to the queries addressed to them by the Royal Commission of 1876, he will find that no inconsiderable number of them roundly condemn the course of instruction then existing, and which continued with but little change till last year, as an utterly useless waste of time, while many others gave it only the most cold and qualified approval. Moreover the rank and file, and specially the non-commissioned officers not on the Staff, were, from the lack of previous thorough training, almost more difficult to deal with successfully than mere recruits; for they had become confirmed, by long habit, in faults which it was almost impossible to eradicate, and the ranks were long cumbered with these survivals of scamped instruction and desultory practice. Even to this day most of us are familiar with the shambling figure of the old re-engaged man, who has supplemented or supplanted his insufficient position drill on principles of his own, who faces the target in an attitude borrowed apparently from the bayonet exercise, who after an endlessly long and wavering attempt at aim spasmodically twitches the trigger with the tip of his finger, and accepts the jeers of his comrades at having ploughed a furrow in the turf 30 yards from the muzzle, or sent his bullet wandering in celestial space, with the callous stolidity bred of habitual failure.

In 1880 an experiment was made in the direction of giving a comparatively thorough course of training to a certain number of battalions, the idea being that corps thus instructed at certain intervals might altogether omit musketry in other years, and devote all available time to other drill. The fifteen battalions selected were made fairly representative, being drawn from England, Scotland, and Ireland. But the results were disappointing: the shooting was either moderate or indifferent; the system was generally, I believe, most unpopular with the Officers and men subjected to it, the general opinion being that whatever little gain was made in the shooting was more than counterbalanced by the falling off in drill and discipline; and it is, I imagine, safe to say that the experiment will not be repeated—a result not to be regretted, as it is contrary to all experience that men can be so thoroughly taught how to shoot as not to fall off in accuracy, if absolutely deprived of all practice for several years.

On the failure of this experiment, matters in 1881 practically reverted to the old groove so often traversed.

Under such unfavourable conditions progress could but be slow and gradual, yet progress there was: the numbers of only partially trained battalions visibly though slowly decreased between 1873 and 1881, and, though it is impossible, owing to changes made from time to time in the mode and distances at which the firing was conducted, to the accidents of weather, and other causes, to institute strictly accurate comparisons between the various years comprised in that period, there is a general and marked tendency towards improved shooting indicated in the Annual Returns.

I believe that that improvement would have been far more general and more rapid, but for two drawbacks, which I did not include among those with which we had to contend in the past, because unfortunately they belong not more to the past than to the present: they are most grave ones, and, until they have been effectually dealt with, must continue to be stumbling-blocks in the way of all real progress.

There is, in the first place, a most serious, and unfortunately an increasing, deficiency of properly qualified instructors. I am aware that the appointment of both Officer and sergeant Instructors has been recently discontinued in the Line, and that the training of the companies is entrusted for the future entirely to the company Officers. The Line may possibly be ripe for such an experiment, for during more than a quarter of a century they have been steadily preparing for it: during that period each battalion has always had one, generally two, subalterns who had qualified at Hythe, and consequently they now comprise in their higher ranks a very considerable proportion of Officers who have had practical experience in musketry instruction. In the Militia, unfortunately, this valuable leaven is almost entirely wanting; for, although for over twenty years it has been the rule on paper that each battalion should have a qualified instructor, a subaltern if possible, practice has in this matter lagged very far behind precept: little or no pains seems to have been taken to see the rule carried out, and, as a consequence, many battalions have, I believe, never had an instructor at all, the greatest number appearing in the Army List for any one year being 92 in 1873, and even this modest proportion

has fallen to 51 in 1883, so that at present we have 87 battalions out of 138 unprovided. And even this does not show the full measure of our shortcomings, for, although the order is that these appointments should be held by subalterns, if available, only 17 subaltern instructors appear in the Army List of last February, the remainder being Captains, who have held the post, some of them for many years, presumably because there were no subalterns willing and able to replace them. Those battalions which have been without instructors are of course pretty fully represented among those which in past years have omitted the annual course altogether. Others have endeavoured to make up the deficiency during training by borrowing Officers from the Line, a makeshift, precarious at all times, certain to be found wanting at any time of real emergency, and further involving the humiliating admission that we are unable to provide adequately for the instruction of our own men—a conclusion which, with some experience both of musketry and Militia, I feel bound emphatically to deny. It is impossible to doubt that in the past this want of qualified Officer Instructors has very largely contributed to the unsatisfactory results already indicated, and that the Militia has suffered much already, and must do so largely in the future, from the almost entire absence among the senior Officers of men who have had the advantage of a Hythe training. One instance has indeed come under my notice, where a battalion, by steadily adhering to the regulation of having a subaltern Instructor, now numbers six Officers, besides the Adjutant, holding Hythe certificates; but this is just one of those exceptions that prove the rule.

The deficiency in instructing power has, unfortunately, not been limited to Officers: one of the chief difficulties has always been the small number of really competent non-commissioned officers available for drill, and the large numbers consequently composing the squads, which, though ordered to consist of not more than ten men, could rarely be reduced much below double that number. The non-commissioned officers not on the staff, being little, if at all, better instructed in musketry than the rank and file, have generally been able to render but little assistance hitherto, and two staff-sergeants per company, supposing the staff to be complete, were woefully insufficient to give to sixty or eighty men, within the compass of a few days, or rather hours, the minute and detailed instruction which they required.

A second, and, if possible, a still more serious drawback than the want of instructing power, has been, and unfortunately still is, the entirely insufficient amount of range accommodation. A glance at the Annual Musketry Returns will show that every year a certain number of battalions, sometimes as many as thirty, are returned as having omitted target practice owing to want of ranges, and we may also, I think, safely conclude that a considerable proportion of those battalions reported to have omitted the course with "no reason assigned" have done so for the same reason. But, in addition to the battalions entirely debarred from target practice by this cause, there is a yet larger number which are most seriously impeded and inconvenienced both by the distance of the ranges from their headquarters and by the

inadequate number of targets, markers' butts, and other necessary appliances. And, though this evil has year by year very largely checked the proper training of the force, and caused the utmost inconvenience and discomfort to many corps, it has as yet been but little abated. The Annual Returns only give us the number of battalions entirely untrained owing to this course; but I have before me, thanks to the kindness of Major-General Cameron, C.B., commanding the Northern District, a circular memorandum giving the results of the practice carried out by the Militia under his command, from which I find that no less than fourteen out of forty-four battalions were either not instructed at all, or were only partially so, from want or insufficiency of ranges, and I have no reason to believe that the shortcoming has been less in other districts. There being very few Government ranges available, it has been necessary in a great many instances to hire those belonging to the Volunteers, and these, unfortunately, besides being often situated at most inconvenient distances, are in a great majority of cases unprovided with a number of targets in any way sufficient for putting 500 or 600 men through a course of practice in a space of time limited practically to about fourteen days.

Major Salmond, D.A.A.G. for Musketry in the North British District, in an official memorandum, dated this year, puts the case, as regards the Militia under his supervision, in the following terms:—"It is an utter impossibility for more than 400 men to get through that quantity (*i.e.*, forty rounds), and up to the full extent of 600 yards, on a range having only two targets (*i.e.*, a two-section range), *which is all that is available in the majority of cases.*" And I feel sure that many in this room will agree with me that nothing has done so much to make musketry unpopular—as in too many cases it unfortunately is, both with Officers and men—as the necessity for parading men at unseasonable hours, and detaining them on the ground for long and weary periods, too often in inclement weather, owing to deficient range accommodation. I have myself seen companies paraded at 3.15 A.M., in order to make use of a tidal range, and cases of similar inconvenience are only too common; some companies have a railway journey of 12 miles or more intervening between them and their targets.

I have, I believe, stated enough to prove that, if our progress in musketry has in the past been slow and halting, that result has been due to the fact that it has never really had a fair chance. It has always been treated as an extra, rather than as a matter of extreme importance; it is only within a very recent period that the extension of the preliminary drill admitted of any attempt to impart some solid system of instruction to our recruits, and we have had all along to carry out in an extremely limited time what ought to be a most minute course of individual training with a wholly inadequate amount of instructing power. Add to these drawbacks the absence and the inadequacy of ranges, and it will be seen that throughout we have been contending with immense difficulties, and that, if the results have been disappointing, this has been due rather to the very limited opportunities afforded to us than to any inherent weakness in the Militia system.

Let us now inquire how far the changes inaugurated last year are calculated to effect the improvement urgently required. Of the great and substantial advance made by the substitution of the Martini-Henry for the Snider rifle I have already spoken; and the changes in the drill and practice, both of recruits and trained soldiers, by the Army Circular 129 of 1882, are of at least equal value. The largely increased amount of musketry drill now exacted from the recruit must in the course of a few years fill our ranks with a class of men infinitely better trained than those we have now, though these latter are undeniably superior to those of ten years ago. Nor can I consider the time devoted to it, amounting on paper to fifteen and a half hours, but really occupying in practice something near a half more, if the work be thoroughly done, as at all excessive, or as interfering unduly with the other branches of instruction. I am of course well aware that under the new system adopted last year, of drilling our recruits immediately on enrolment, their adequate instruction in musketry has been attended with the greatest difficulty, and that the percentage of non-trained and only partially trained men, in battalions working under the new system, contrasts most unfavourably with that of those battalions which, owing to their being detached from the regimental headquarters, still drill all their recruits together, although by a very strange anomaly these latter, working on the old and condemned system, are allowed only fifty-six days to do the same work for which sixty-three days are allowed under the new. I cannot but hope, in the best interests of musketry, that we may yet retrace our steps in this matter, and revert to the old plan of drilling our recruits in one body, carrying them straight on from the preliminary drill to the training.

At present, owing to the men coming in by twos and threes, as enlisted, it is always difficult, sometimes impossible, to arrange them properly in squads for musketry instruction, and further, the dead months of winter, when civil employment is most scarce, being naturally the briskest time for recruiting, a large proportion of those who join have to go through their preliminary drill at a season of the year when it can only be conducted at the greatest disadvantage. The shortness of the winter day greatly limits the hours available for drill, and too frequently the inclemency of the weather either still further curtails them or makes them periods of discomfort, and almost misery, to the men. Position drill in February or March is too often the reverse of a genial occupation, though even that yields in cheerlessness to hanging about for hours at the same season on a wind-swept range.

But, however this question may be settled, I maintain that we ought to be able in sixty-three days to spare for musketry the proportion of time set apart for it by the circular of 1882, and that with very strict economy of time it may be just possible for those battalions which are, as I think, unfairly handicapped by being limited to fifty-six days, to compress the work into that period; and I confidently look forward to good results from this change, if faithfully and zealously carried out.

I will now pass on to consider the course of instruction laid down for the drilled men of the battalions in Table B of the same circular.

Among the answers, already referred to, given in by Commanding Officers to the queries of the Royal Commission of 1876, there are not a few which treat the possibility of carrying out any useful course of musketry within a period of twenty-seven days as entirely out of the question, and which suggest a prolongation of the training as the only solution of the difficulty; and if Officers, whose zeal and experience entitled their opinions to the greatest weight, entertained those objections to the course, as it existed in 1876, and which only exacted two hours' drill a day for four days, and two days of three hours each for practice, I fear they must entertain yet stronger objections to Table B.

But, while respecting their convictions, I must frankly say that I cannot agree with them. I concede at once that it is impossible in twenty-seven days to teach 600 or 700 men how to shoot. But that is the business, not of the training, but of the preliminary drill, and I am convinced by experience that, if the men have been fairly well grounded as recruits, it is quite possible, even within the very limited time available, not only to maintain the amount of knowledge and familiarity with their weapons already acquired, but year by year to improve upon it. Were it not so, I should feel disposed to regard the whole question with despair, for I look on the suggestion of prolonging the training in order to allow more time for musketry not only as hopeless of adoption from a financial point of view, but as one which, if adopted, would do the Militia more harm than good. You can, of course, do more work in forty-two or in fifty-six days than you can in twenty-seven, *provided always that you have the men to do it with*; but, so far as my experience goes, the present period is quite long enough for the men in general, and specially for those who are the most valuable element of the whole, those, namely, who are not the mere drifting waifs and strays of the population, but who by their steadiness and industry are able to command well-paid employment in civil life. This is a stratum of society which cannot be too largely drawn upon by the Militia. It furnishes a large proportion of the non-commissioned officers not on the Staff, and of that most valuable class, the re-engaged men. To many of these it is a considerable sacrifice of wages to turn out even for twenty-seven days: that they do so in such considerable numbers is, I think, one of the most satisfactory proofs of the popularity of the Militia, and of the strong *esprit de corps* existing in the battalions.

But I am convinced that to add a fortnight, or even a week, to the present period would drive many, and those the best, of this class out of the service, and that, in default of them, we should be driven more and more to compete with the Line for the "loafer" class, already much too numerously represented in both. Were confirmation required for what I have advanced on this point, I believe that it could be supplied by those Commanding Officers who had their training prolonged last year to fifty-six days, owing to the exigencies of the Egyptian War: though the men accepted the extension as a matter of duty, it was the reverse of popular, I believe, with the great majority of them. It was attended in many cases, I know, with considerable want and suffering

among their wives and families, and great difficulty was found by some of the men in resuming civil employment after so long an interval. It must be remembered that a large proportion of our rank and file is drawn from our large factories, the managers of which do not always view with a very favourable eye the enlisting of their hands, even for the present limited training; were it extended, I fear the notice, "No Militiaman need apply," would come into universal use, and we should thus dry up, by a stroke of the pen, one of our best recruiting grounds.

There is really no choice for us but to make the most of such time as we have, and, so far as the musketry drill laid down in Table B is concerned, I am not prepared to make more objection to the time required by it than in the case of Table A for recruits; considering the vital importance of the subject, it does not appear to me to be excessive, in proportion to the time still remaining at our disposal for other duties, while it is sufficient to do much towards confirming and improving what the men should have already been more thoroughly taught as recruits. I may here mention, though only to condemn it, a suggestion that has once or twice been made, that the recruits should be thoroughly trained in musketry once for all, and that the trainings should be exclusively devoted to other drill. I hold this to be utterly impracticable; we can indeed lay the foundations of good musketry in our recruits, and it should be our business to lay them sure and deep, but, to be of any good, they must be built upon in after years. The young lads who form the bulk of our recruits are incapable, physically as well as from the nervousness inseparable from the first essays at burning powder, of being made, as a rule, really good shots; in spite of their more extended period of instruction, and of the advantage they possess in always being drilled in comparatively small squads, their performances at the targets, so far as my experience goes, have always fallen very far short of those of the drilled men, although these latter still include among their numbers many men whose instruction as recruits had been either superficial or entirely neglected. The best shots soon fall off, without at least occasional practice, and it will hardly be alleged that the practice provided for the drilled men errs on the side of being excessive.

While approving, however, of the arrangements for musketry drill made in Table B, I cannot but think that, as regards practice, too much has been attempted, not in the number of rounds, but in the distances at which they have to be fired. I have already remarked that the results produced last year under the new system were too fragmentary to admit of our drawing thoroughly trustworthy conclusions from them, and the difficulty is enhanced by the fact that, owing to the existing system of centralization (if that can fairly be called centralization which consists in referring everything connected with musketry to a sea-side village in Kent), the results of that year's practice had not been in our hands till after the date at which it was necessary to place this lecture in the hands of the printer. Thanks, however, to the kindness and courtesy of the Inspector-General of Musketry, I was furnished early in last month with the figures recording the performances of the various battalions exercised, and in those

figures I find strong confirmation of my opinion that we have attempted too much.

Of the thirty-one battalions, or parts of battalions, exercised under the new system, one half-battalion only made a figure of merit exceeding fifty, while the figure of seventeen battalions was under forty. I cannot, I believe, better explain the significance of these figures than by quoting again from the memorandum of the Deputy-Assistant Adjutant-General for Musketry for the Northern District. He says, with reference to the results of the practice in his district, "The trained Militia soldier has now to fire at the same distances as the Line recruit, viz., from 100 to 600 yards; the only difference is, the former expends half the number of rounds at each distance. If, therefore, we halve the results of the shooting of Line recruits, we shall have a standard by which to judge. Taking bad with good, I should say that the figure of merit (including volleys) of Line recruits is at least 112 points per man. It is very seldom, indeed, that the figure of any party is below 100, a good many regiments and depôts show between 120 and 130, and a few between 140 and 150. Taking the average as 112, and halving it, we have our standard figure of merit, viz., 56. But not one single battalion comes near this, although the men who fired were not Militia recruits, but men who had all had previous musketry training. The best figure is 47.94; the worst 28.66." And Major-General Cameron, C.B., commanding the same district, records his opinion on the same subject in the following terms:—"Making every allowance, the shooting is very very far from what it should be, and every effort must be made to reach a higher standard. . . . The Major-General is convinced, from what he has himself observed (the men are unable to stand up properly to their rifles when firing), that much more position drill is required for both recruits and trained soldiers."

It is, I venture to think, impossible to study the above facts and figures without coming to the conclusion that a great deal of the ammunition expended in order to produce these deplorable results was worse than wasted, that we have attempted too much in pushing our men on at once from 300 yards, which had been the maximum for many years, up to 600 yards, and that we should have made more real progress if, so long as our ranks comprise, as they do now, a large proportion of imperfectly trained men, we had contented ourselves with the course of *practice* laid down for recruits in Table A. I am very far from disparaging the value of long-range fire: it will always be valuable, for some operations of war it is essential; but battles are not won by it, and in every action there will be critical times and places where infantry who can fire with calm and accuracy within comparatively short range will make their mark. It should suffice us for the present to endeavour to work up to this standard, which, modest as it is, is yet still far above us; and, when the mass of our men are able to shoot steadily and quickly up to 400 yards, it will be time enough, and will then be a comparatively easy task, to carry them on further, or, what would in my humble opinion be the preferable course, to select those whose good shooting and general intelligence

gave good promise of further improvement, and to train them specially for the duties of marksmen, continuing to improve the remainder as far as possible in the delivery of that steady, accurate fire, at comparatively close range, which after all must be the main function of the mass of our infantry in action.

But, after all, the question of the distances at which the forty rounds should be expended is one of detail, though by no means an unimportant one, while, taken as a whole, the circular of 1882 marks a distinct stage of progress, from which valuable results may justly be expected. Unless, however, it be supplemented by other reforms, the progress made will, I fear, be slow and halting.

The first step should, I think, be to place the superintendence of the musketry, as well as of all other branches of instruction, wholly in the hands of the Generals Commanding districts, and, under them, of the Officers Commanding regimental districts. The present system of referring the battalion Returns to the Inspector-General of Musketry naturally predisposes the former Officers to leave mainly to him what appears to be his speciality, and rather to limit their own attention to the other details of instruction. But, unlike them, the Inspector-General, having no personal knowledge of the various corps, has no means of judging how far their practice may have been affected by bad weather, bad or insufficient ranges, or other causes, and how far the Returns can be accepted as representing fairly their shooting capabilities, while he can only after an interval little short of a year, and then in a comparatively circuitous manner, bring any pressure to bear to check such irregularities as do come under his notice.

To the urgent necessity for additional range accommodation I have already called attention, and I need only add that the present system of hiring ranges from the Volunteers is in very many cases not only insufficient, but costly. The Volunteers, having very heavy expenses of their own, can hardly be blamed if they make the most of the practical monopoly they enjoy; but I cannot but think that if the sums now annually paid for very insufficient accommodation were capitalized, very much might be done towards permanently providing really good ranges for both the Line and the Militia.

Whether the appointment of Instructor of Musketry be abolished or not in the Militia, as in the Line, it appears to me more essential than ever, if company Officers are to be made responsible for the shooting of their men, that some opportunities, beyond what can be afforded them during the annual trainings, should be given them of learning themselves what they have to teach. Whether this should be done by establishing a short course, say of one month, at Hythe for Militia Officers, or by temporarily establishing classes for the same period at the headquarters of districts, or by assembling the Officers of each battalion at their own headquarters before the training, is a matter of detail. But, unless something of the kind be done, disappointment must result: the Officers, despairing of teaching what they do not know themselves, will practically abandon the business to the over-worked staff-serjeants, and the system of Officers instructing their own companies must be a sham, and nothing else. I wish, rather than hope,

that this matter may not be overlooked, for while of late years very much has been done to promote the efficiency of the Militia privates, comparatively little has been done for the Officers who have to command them, and, while it is still too easy for the idle and indifferent to get on with a minimum of professional knowledge, it is still too difficult for those who are fond and proud of their work to find opportunities for making themselves masters of it.

Something more might also, I think, be done in supplementing our want of competent non-commissioned instructors by loans from the Line. Those fair hopes which were held out to us when the brigade dépôt system was first established, of each battalion being able to borrow non-commissioned officers for the training from its own dépôt, have, I fear, generally proved delusive; in my experience I have only once, in ten years, been able to borrow three, who proved so useless that I sent them back at the end of three days. But the necessity for such help is so pressing that I think that the question should be taken up systematically, and that in every district lists should be prepared of non-commissioned officers or men, belonging either to dépôts or battalions of the Line, capable of drilling in musketry, or familiar with marking, and that these, so far as they might be available, should be told off to assist in the drill of the several Militia battalions.

It seems possible, also, that some assistance might be obtained from non-commissioned officers belonging to the Army Reserve, some of whom would probably be found willing, on receiving the pay of their rank, to be attached for this purpose for three weeks or a month to the Militia battalion nearest their place of residence.

I cannot profess to regret the proposed abolition of the regimental "figure of merit," as, owing to the various conditions under which different battalions shoot, and the varying degree of strictness with which the practices are carried out, and their results are recorded, the "figure of merit" failed in a great measure to provide a really trustworthy estimate of the shooting powers of the different corps, while it held out a premium for irregularities which have not been wholly unknown in the Line, and which can hardly be supposed to be non-existent in a force so little subject to supervision in its practice as the Militia. Still it seems desirable that, in some form or other, a healthy spirit of rivalry in shooting between the various corps should be kept up, and I do not think this could be better done than by the Government adopting and making its own the machinery and organization of the Army Inter-Regimental Rifle Matches, an organization which has done a great deal to promote a healthy interest in shooting in the Line, and which has most generously included the Militia in its operations, although as yet, I am sorry to say, we have not availed ourselves as fully as we might have done of its advantages.

It seems further to be a question whether, now that the "figure of merit" has been discontinued, some discretion might not be permitted as to not sending to the targets men who have proved themselves at drill incapable of doing any good there, and also of stopping the practice of men who have broken down on trial: men of both these categories would probably be far better employed in going through a

renewed course of drill, and in firing blank at empty cartridge cases,¹ than in wasting time and ammunition on the ranges.

The plan of training by half-battalions seems to require modification: in theory it may appear to have the advantage of allowing all the instructing power to be concentrated on a comparatively small number of men; but in practice, so far as can be judged from the Annual Returns, the half-battalions show no superiority whatever over those corps which train all their companies. Moreover a plan having for its result that the soldier, during his five years' engagement, may only twice, and can only be thrice practised in musketry, seems self-condemned. In the case of battalions of ten companies, and of others which suffer from limited range accommodation, it may be impossible to train the whole, but in a great many cases this difficulty can hardly exist, judging from the very small numbers trained in many of the half-battalions, twelve of which last year each exercised less than 250 men. It would seem a much preferable arrangement for each battalion to carry out the course to the best of its ability every year, reporting the number of companies not exercised, and the reasons for the omission, to the General Officer Commanding the district, who would be in a position to judge how far the omission was due to unavoidable circumstances.

Authority should, I think, be given to such Commanding Officers as might desire it, to draw a certain proportion of ammunition, not exceeding five rounds per man, for private practice and match shooting, its consumption being accounted for in the Annual Returns.

While it may be impossible to devote more time than at present to the shooting of the rank and file generally, some of the old and thoroughly drilled men might occasionally with advantage spend an afternoon at the targets, instead of at the usual drills, and such an indulgence would be looked on as a privilege, and would do something to raise the general standard of the shooting.

I would further recommend the issue of three or four sets of the "Morris" attachment (rifled tube) to all battalions able to provide suitable ranges. I have two in use in my own battalion, and consider them valuable, as enabling recruits to become familiar with the handling and sighting of their weapons in practical use; and, as an amusement, tending to keep men in camp, and out of the public-house, they have a value, quite independently of musketry.

Some such changes as the above should, I think, be made in order to give full effect to the new system inaugurated last year. But it is not our duty to sit still with our hands folded, awaiting the arrival of such reforms as we may think desirable. We have it in our own power, independently of all extraneous aid, to do very much towards levelling up the shooting of the Militia, if we really recognize its importance. It is not so much a question of how much, or how little, time we devote to it, as of the use we make of the time. If it be grudgingly given, if Commanding Officers and Adjutants count every moment lost that is not spent on their parades, if company Officers vote musketry drill a bore, and leave the drudgery of it to their staff-

¹ Firing blank at an empty cartridge case, placed on a wall or rail at a few paces' distance, is a good test of accuracy of aim and steadiness in pressing the trigger.

serjeants, the men are imitative enough to vote it a bore also, and the poor results at the targets, due to scamped and careless drill, will confirm them in the belief that the whole thing is a mistake, and a waste of time.

If, on the other hand, it be recognized that all other drill is a means to an end, that end being to bring the soldier into the position in which he can use his weapon to the best effect,—if the Commanding Officer is constantly present both at the ranges, and, what perhaps is even more useful, at the musketry drill,—if the company Officers take a keen and personal interest in getting their men into good position, and watch and coach them carefully and kindly at the targets, their influence will rapidly spread in the ranks, and in the pride and emulation between man and man, and company and company, will be found the leverage and motive power that is required.

I have hitherto abstained from touching on those recommendations of the War Office Committee on Musketry, presided over by Sir D. Lysons, which refer to the Militia, because they are as yet merely suggestions. Yet even as suggestions they demand our consideration. That it is desirable that the Militia recruit should receive the same amount of musketry training as the Line recruit is in theory unquestionable; that the shooting of the Militia soldier would be materially improved by his annually firing sixty rounds, instead of forty, as at present, is equally undeniable. But when we come to consider these suggestions practically, we are at once confronted by the difficulty of want of time. Whatever may be the shortcomings of the Militia, no one will, I think, venture to say that we do not pretty exhaustively utilize the time placed at our disposal. Every hour is appropriated, and we cannot possibly devote to musketry more time than we do at present, save by sacrificing some other kind of work. And I cannot but feel that, when it comes to be a question of what is and what is not essential, of what must at all costs be done, and what may be left undone, it might be well, by dispensing with some of the more ornamental portions of the field exercise, to reduce somewhat the great amount and variety of drill that we are expected to master, and so to spare a few more hours for perfecting our men in the use of their rifles. At present we have to master two entirely distinct tactical systems—the one that of the old two deep line, which holds so glorious a place in the history of British infantry; the other that which, in some form or other, has been forced on every European army by the introduction of breech-loading arms of precision, and which with us is represented by “the attack formation.” The old two deep line was the “attack formation” of Maida, of the Peninsula, and of Waterloo; it has been of necessity replaced by a more modern formation; yet, if any one examines Part III of the Field Exercise, he will find that about one-half of what is called battalion drill consists of varieties and combinations of the two deep line, and further that one considerable section is devoted to a variety of formations for receiving cavalry, though all modern experience teaches that the only practical formation for the latter purpose is to develop the largest possible front of fire, and to shoot as hard and fast as possible, so long as the cavalry are misguided enough to remain within range.

I am quite prepared to admit that the practice of these movements may have its value in making troops handy, *if there is time to teach them*. But, when it is merely a choice of what must be sacrificed, it might perhaps be as well at least to postpone the study of this class of manœuvres until the mass of our rank and file are somewhat less miserably incapable of shooting straight than they are at present.

I trust no one will so far misunderstand me as to suppose that I seek to disparage drill generally in favour of musketry: it is, I believe, impossible to be too strict in exacting the most faultless finish and precision in all movements performed; but there is all the difference in the world between good drill and complicated and unnecessary drill. To put the point practically, if, of two battalions, both equally able to move handily in any direction in quarter-column and in fours, and to work with intelligence and precision through all the phases and varieties of the attack formation, the one be able to shoot, and the other, *not* being able to shoot, can change front at less than a right angle on a central company, can retire in column of double companies and form line to a flank, can form a two deep square from line at the double, or perform faultlessly any other of the stately movements which go by the name of battalion drill, it seems to me that the first might prove a useful fighting unit, while the latter would be as sheep for the shambles in the day of battle.

It is of course our duty to do simply what we are told, and we shall continue to teach, if required, the same amount of manœuvres as heretofore; but we cannot make bricks without straw, we cannot make more than seven days in the week, or twenty-four hours in the day, and I must confess that for myself I can see no other plan than that which I have suggested that can render it possible for us largely to add to the time now devoted to musketry.

I may perhaps be asked what results I expect from the changes and reforms which I have advocated, supposing them to be carried out,—whether I believe it possible ultimately to make of the mass of our men finished marksmen, capable of shooting accurately at long range, and of meeting on equal terms such men as the Boers of South Africa. I answer emphatically, *No*, no more than I should expect, by training a party of city clerks to shoot at glass balls on Saturday afternoons, to make them fit to compete in shooting at driven grouse with the men who expend their thousands of cartridges at them every season. My ambition is a much humbler, but, I believe, a more practical one. I believe it to be quite possible, by honest effort on our own part, aided by assistance and encouragement from the authorities, to raise the general shooting of the Militia above the dead low level at which it unfortunately stands at present, and to make our men at least as formidable with their weapons—I will not say as the half-drilled Egyptian rabble, who yet made us pay dear for our victory in the twenty minutes' scramble of Tel-el-Kebir—but as the men who once and again hurled back the Russian and Roumanian columns, crushed and bleeding, from the entrenchments of Plevna, or those who lined the heights of Gravelotte, and choked the valley beneath them with the wreck and havoc of the Prussian Guard.

TABLE, giving results of *Militia Musketry Practice* from 1872 to 1881 inclusive.

Years.	Battalions exercised.	Total numbers of men minus recruits.	Total numbers of men exercised, minus recruits.	Numbers not exercised.	Percentage not exercised.	Rounds per man.	Ranges. (Yards.)		Battalion classification.				Total figure of merit.	Remarks.
									Very good.	Good.	Moderate.	Bad.		
1872	79	45,311	34,556	10,755	23.73	20	{ 150 standing 200 kneeling 250 kneeling 300 kneeling }		34	31	13	1	29.24	{ 6 battalions engaged at autumn manoeuvres. 10 do. do.
1873	94	37,461	32,080	5,381	14.36	20	" "		33	32	20	9	28.23	do.
1874	80	39,792	33,273	6,519	16.36	20	" "		38	32	12	7	29.43	do.
1875	103	42,478	36,308	6,170	14.52	20	" "		34	39	24	6	28.39	
1876	91	40,836	34,918	5,918	14.48	20	{ 200 standing 300 kneeling }		10	33	29	19	24.92	7 battalions mobilized.
1877	104	47,786	40,674	7,112	14.88	20	" "		12	27	40	15	24.51	
1878	115	39,496	36,054	3,442	8.71	20	" "		34	39	24	6	24.40	Musketry made optional, owing to training being reduced to 20 days.
1879	38	23,961	17,149	6,752	28.24	20	" "		7	11	18	2	25.78	
1880	103*	49,134	43,102	5,972	12.15	20	" "		11	33	35	11	25.78	{ * Including 15 battalions specially exercised.
1881	93	43,383	34,352	9,031	20.81	20	{ 150 standing kneeling 200 kneeling 250 kneeling 300 kneeling }		48	37	6	0	31.11	Irish Militia not trained.

Colonel G. P. EVELYN (Commanding 3rd Battalion East Surrey Regiment): In the remarks that I am about to make I shall differ in some respects from the lecturer, although on a great many points I perfectly agree with him. It is not that I am apt to take a slight view of the musketry training of the Militia, for I think it is very well proved, by the figure of merit of my own battalion this year, which has headed the list, that we pay a great deal of attention to our shooting. Looking, however, at the limited period allowed us for training, I fear that there is a mistake in increasing the number of rounds. Twenty rounds are as many as we can manage, and I do not consider that any advantage would be gained by increasing them to forty; we have to fire in all weathers, and if there be bad weather it becomes a perfect nuisance to the men, and I am afraid is very apt to be inefficiently performed. It is always difficult to keep one's-self to one line of a subject, such as the musketry training of the Militia, without considering the musketry training on a larger scale as embracing the whole of the Service. I am inclined to think that a very great mistake has been made in increasing the number of rounds in the army; I doubt whether it will improve the shooting; it is always considered a great worry. Soldiers have a great deal to do besides shooting, and if you increase their work day after day, bringing them up to the targets in all weathers and at all times, they get so sick of the thing that, so far from improving the shooting, it will go back. We talk a great deal about the shooting of the Boers as being something that we cannot stand against, and that it would be impossible to make the English troops shoot as well. Why, we used always to thrash the Boers, and at the battle of Boem Platts, in which my old regiment—the Rifle Brigade—took a part years ago, there was no difficulty in taking the Dutch position,—certainly with considerable loss, but it was successfully stormed. In those days the Dutch were far better armed than we were. Now we have an excellent rifle, and are at least on an equality; but with all our great improvements in arms—long-range rifles, breech-loading, and so on—our shooting, as was proved at Majuba Hill, is really less efficient than it was in the days of smooth-bore muskets. Why is that? Because the better the arm we get, the more ammunition we waste in long ranges; so that really our shooting in action is less effective than it was when we had short-range arms, because we throw away our ammunition at long ranges. I believe almost the whole of our target practice should be done at very moderate ranges; it is far better practice. At long ranges you have errors in your rifle, the wind, and various matters to take into consideration, but at a moderate range, if the bullet does not hit, the fault is in the man and not the arm; the errors of wind, and the errors of deviation, are not sufficient to make any practical difference; if the rifle is held true it must hit the target at a moderate range; and I really believe that if our men were first of all taught that their object in action is not to fire away an immense quantity of rounds but to place one shot well, and if they were also taught that they are never to shoot at long ranges, and that battles, as the lecturer very properly said, are not won by the few casualties that occur at long-range shooting, we should then have no difficulty in thrashing the Boers or any one else. In point of fact, the Boers have no target practice; they now and then, in trying a new rifle, fire at a mark or break a bottle or two, but they have no regular target practice, and there are very few Boers in the whole country who fire sixty rounds of ammunition a year, or ever have done such a thing; and the proof that they cannot do so is easy to find. First of all they have no target practice, and as for their shooting, it is always at big game, which they seldom miss. If they fire many rounds the quantity of bucks that would be destroyed in the Transvaal would be something more than that prolific buck-country could afford. This is a very vast subject, and I will not attempt to discuss it further now, but I wish to impress on the Officers present the advantage of short-range firing, both for practice and in action, and to point out the well-attested fact, that the fire which proved so disastrous to our troops in attacking Laing's Neck, and defending Majuba Hill, was delivered at ranges from 40 to 60 yards, whilst our men fired away thousands of rounds at long ranges, and only hit at Majuba Hill three Boers and one horse.

Lieutenant-Colonel GARNHAM (late 6th West York Militia): I am sure most of the Officers present will agree with me in differing from the opinion expressed within the

last few years by a very distinguished General, to the effect that the British regimental Officer is the person who is to blame for any defects in the shooting of the British soldier; but at the same time I am exceedingly glad that my friend Colonel Walker has given us this lecture, and has appealed to the Officers of the Militia to assist in improving the musketry instruction; because I am perfectly certain that that is a very important factor in arriving at a better result, and that the Commanding and all Officers should make more of musketry than in many cases has been made of it. I feel that very strongly. But I am sorry to say I have to go further than that, as I think, however much the Officers of the Militia may exert themselves to teach their men, it is impossible for them to arrive at a satisfactory result in the present condition of things. The lecturer has alluded to making bricks without straw. Now I think our position is not only that of persons who are called upon to make bricks without straw, but very often after we have been able to get over the difficulty and to make bricks after a certain fashion, we have no opportunity given us for hardening those bricks and making them in any way useful for service. What we want is greater facility in the way of time and place for the carrying out of that important instruction in musketry. Facts are always better than theories, and my regiment happens to be one of those which in 1880 was told off for the purpose of going through the complete course of musketry instruction. I was delighted to hear it, and I may say most truly that I gave every possible assistance in my power; but from the very first I felt it was my duty to point out the fact that the range which we were going to occupy was simply an impossible one. We had to take our men down a valley 600 feet deep, and up again 800 feet on the other side on to a moor, 1,000 feet above the sea, which had been condemned as unsafe and on which good shooting is impossible.¹ We were encamped on peat ground, 800 feet above the sea, which, in the weather they generally have in that district, was so soaked that I was obliged to send the whole of my battalion for three or four nights into billets in the town; and my unfortunate men went through all this wretchedness, and then were supposed to be learning musketry under fair conditions. It may be asked whether under these conditions anybody was to blame. I do not think the regimental Officers were to blame in that case; in fact I know they were not, because I had done my best to represent what would be the probable position. We had made applications to be taken to Fleetwood. There was no fault on the part of the Brigadier or of the Officer commanding the district; everybody helped us in every possible way; there was no want of co-operation or kindly feeling of the superior authorities, but there was the system at the back of all which does not recognize the importance of having places properly prepared for the proper instruction of the Militia. *It was the system which was at fault.* The barracks at Fleetwood were wanted for a few days only for some regiment which required to have its barracks whitewashed, and there was some little expense which might have been incurred, and therefore all our time and trouble were wasted. I was obliged to apply for special permission to have the course brought to an end, simply out of justice to my men; but this permission was refused, and you can imagine how very unsatisfactory it was for a Commanding Officer, who was willing to give every assistance, to find that no good result was obtained from the special instruction. For the first week we were obliged to construct our own butts, for which working pay was refused, and I heard privately that the men complained. They said, "We do not come here to wheel wheelbarrows and to construct butts: we are labourers, we are men in mills, and we want to be taught some soldiering, instead of which we are employed in this way." I think, therefore, what we require is to have the system altered, by which in *all these matters* a strict but mistaken economy prevents the Civil and Financial Departments from seconding the efforts, not only of the Officers who command, but, as I have great pleasure in saying, also the noble efforts of those in high places who accept the reports of our difficulties, and are most willing to do everything they can for us. I quite agree with the lecturer that we want full preliminary musketry training for our recruits. We must instruct our recruits properly at first, but it is essential

¹ The regiment is this year to use the Volunteer range, the evils of the regimental range having been admitted after the result of 1880.

that we should follow it up afterwards. We must also have facilities afforded for Officers getting instruction at Hythe or elsewhere, and I think it fair to notice that not only is there great difficulty in getting Militia Officers appointed to Hythe, but it has happened to me on more than one occasion to be asked if I could use private interest to get young Line Officers admitted there, and the musketry accommodation at those schools is utterly insufficient for the wants of a country armed as this country now is. We must also remember that in many cases Militia Officers have been told that they may go to Hythe at their own expense. Now time was, when money was of very little object to many Officers of the Militia, and I believe that in some regiments there are still a great many wealthy men, but we have now a great many Officers who have come to us from the Line, and who know no more about musketry than the average well-instructed Militia Officer, and all those Officers will require to be instructed; and they are not, many of them, men to whom it is convenient to go and to pay so many pounds out of their own pocket in order to improve themselves in these branches. As to the question of ranges. If no range can be found near a regiment, surely ranges might be prepared where regiments might be moved, the expense of which is in no way to be regarded in comparison with the necessity of making the Militia effective. The regiments should be moved to these places; huts should be built, and they should be trained at proper ranges. Colonel Walker fears that prolonged trainings might injure the recruiting, but I do not think that when we went from three weeks to four weeks there was any diminution in the number of recruits; nor in my own regiment, when we went to the manœuvres for six weeks, did we find that the men came up any the worse. Nobody in this world is more opposed to billets than I am and always have been, and I am proud to think no one has said more in denunciation of what I must call the iniquitous system of putting the Militia in such billets as the low public-houses of this country than I have; but we must remember that the men would sooner go back to a warm billet-fire than go up to a cold wet camp where they have no means of drying themselves; and I think that some Commanding Officers will find that these things will make the Militia less popular. We must teach the men, but we must take care that in teaching them we do not make the service so unpleasant that they will not come to it. The withdrawal of the 10s. on enlistment no doubt has affected the recruiting of the Militia, and if, when they come up, they get nothing but musketry and wet jackets, I think we shall find fewer men come than at present. I cordially express my agreement with the lecturer in respect of the question of inspections. It is exceedingly disheartening for a Commanding Officer, who has done all that he can to promote musketry, to find that he does not make a good show on inspection. In 1880 our Brigadier most wisely refrained from any field inspection, and if musketry is to be properly looked after it will generally be necessary to strike out some of those manœuvres which are most pleasing to the Commanding Officers, and of which nobody was fonder than I was myself. I think it cannot but be for the benefit of the Militia that this subject should be brought forward. I may mention, with respect to the range, that it is a fact the range at Caterham, which is used by Her Majesty's Guards, is the property of a Volunteer Corps, and it is only by favour that Her Majesty's Guards can practise there, and they are limited to a certain hour for that practice. I do hope that such a state of things will not be allowed to continue, and that difficulties will be removed from the path of Officers who are anxious to raise musketry to its proper standard.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir JOHN BURGÖYNE, Bart.: As my battalion, the 3rd Bedfordshire, is one of an entirely different type to those of the three Commanding Officers who have spoken, it being entirely agricultural, I wish to say one or two words. I thoroughly agree with every word that has fallen from the gallant lecturer. The difficulties that we have had with regard to musketry have very much increased since July, 1881, and the new system of drilling recruits at the dépôt is, in my humble opinion, a most fatal one. It not only checks my recruiting so much that, instead of being up to full strength, we are now 160 men under our strength, but we have not the means of training our non-commissioned officers. As to musketry, no target practice of any sort or kind has been done at the dépôt for the last two years. We shall have close upon 300 men when we assemble next Monday who

have had no recruit course at all. Last year, thanks to General Elkington (to whom I think every Militia Officer will acknowledge we owe so much), my battalion was sent to Shorncliffe, to be trained with the first battalion. I mention this, because my battalion is the only one, I believe, in the Service that has been trained side by side with its first battalion, and a greater success could not be; but when I went down to Shorncliffe, full of zeal, thinking that I should have the means of training my men in musketry,—for I thought of all places in the world where I might possibly find a range it would be at Hythe,—to my deep disappointment I had the greatest difficulty even in finding any range at all, and I was only able to shoot a half-battalion: this year I hope to be able to shoot the whole of my battalion; but then, how am I to manage with my 300 recruits? I must either shoot men who have never been through a recruit course, or leave it alone, because there are only twenty-one days remaining, deducting the time occupied in travelling and the Sundays, and how is it possible to adequately train them in the time? There is one other point I would just mention, and that is that I think the authorities should give every Militia battalion at least one non-commissioned officer, who has a Hythe certificate, per company. I have three Captains and my Adjutant, who hold first-class certificates, and six sergeants, and I hope I shall be allowed two more.

Major-General MCKAY: Musketry is a subject that I have taken up, as I say, now for nearly thirty years, and when I heard the gallant Colonel's name mentioned to give this lecture, I said, "I will go and hear what is to be said on this subject." I quite sympathize with the Commanding Officers who have spoken with regard to their difficulties about musketry practice. I have experienced it, and unless the Militia have their ranges close at hand—within half-an-hour's walk of where they are located—it will be utterly impossible for them to give that attention to careful musketry training which is essential to their efficiency as an infantry force. I was rather staggered to hear musketry depreciated. We have an axiom in our drill-book that has been laid down ever since manœuvring was codified, and it is this: that all manœuvring is to place a man in the best position to use, not his bayonet only, but his rifle, and unless a man knows how to use his musket, whether he is brought to close quarters or is at a distance from his enemy, he is relying on a thing that will do him harm when it is needed for his safety and for the defence of his country; and you had better take it away from him and give him a club. There are one or two points Colonel Walker has alluded to which I think require a little explanation. One is about the centralization of supervision of musketry training. That of course became a necessity in the introduction of the system in 1853, but it has always been a mistake to suppose that it was ever intended to absolve the General Officer commanding a district, or a brigade, from his responsibility with regard to this essential portion of the training of troops; but I tell you what has happened—that musketry was ignored at the beginning; it was considered an incubus upon our drill, which, as a rule, only occupies an hour. Unfortunately for the success of musketry it occupies time; you cannot go and fire even a squad of ten men ten rounds per man in a minute, as they used to do in my early days, when the men were taken to the butts just before they went on a march, and fired volleys into the target, and if they exceeded an hour the unexpended portion of the ammunition went into the nearest dyke. Though it was laid down as far back as 1837 that the man was to be taught judging distances, the use of his sights, and was to be classified, how many were classified? I never had a lesson in judging distances or in the use of sights all the time I was in the ranks; but when the time came that you put a superior weapon into the soldier's hand, it became necessary that he should be instructed in its use; we must not put a superior thing into a man's hand and say that that inanimate thing is to be superior to the intellect that is to use it. No; if you get a good machine you must instruct men to use that machine; if you get a superior rifle you must instruct the men and develop their intelligence if they are to use that rifle skilfully. A good deal has been talked about Zululand. Why did our men fail there? It is very easy to see why they failed, and I can give many reasons. First of all, you can manœuvre in drill, like a machine; but you cannot make a man shoot as a machine. You must interest him in it; you must give him the why and the wherefore for everything he has to do; and you may rely upon this, that in cases of difficulty he will do that which has been instilled

into him as a matter of principle. When I commanded my regiment, and did a manœuvre, I did not think that I was injuring discipline, or that I was lowering my Officers, by telling them the reason why this was done, and why that was done; and I have even gone so far as to make mistakes and to ask them questions after the day's work had been done as to what I did that was wrong in detail. It gave them interest in their work, and the more you divert a soldier's mind in his instruction, the better. The rank and file is sometimes called a common soldier; it is the business of the Officer to make him by training an uncommon one. The rifle is only an arm of precision in the open in proportion to a man's knowledge of distances, the allowance to be made for wind, the shining of the sun, and so forth. The knowledge of distances is an absolute necessity for an independent use of the rifle in the open. We have taken that knowledge of distances away as a qualification from our marksmen. We have also taken the theoretical instruction test away; and then we are astonished that when the man gets into the open there is failure, the two elements of success in rifle training being removed. You can get a man to any pitch of perfection you please before a target, but take him into the open, as I have seen done in India, and he is nowhere without a knowledge of distances. And now I come to the figure of merit. The figure of merit, you may depend upon it, has a stimulating effect. When two regiments side by side are doing their musketry practice, I would ask, are we to abandon it simply because men are dishonest? Surely we must take higher ground than that? I do not believe that that can be the excuse for doing away with the figure of merit; all I say is, that I hope that time will prove the soundness of the judgment that recommended such a measure. I do not think my old chief, who was a man of the world, would, after his long experience in commanding a regiment, have recommended the figure of merit, unless he had been convinced of the soundness of such a proceeding to stimulate industry and interest in training. Are foreign armies abandoning a figure of merit? Why not go back to the old system of outer, centre, bull's-eye? for I think that by abandoning the figure of merit we are going backwards and not forwards in the cause of our musketry instruction. I quite agree that there is a difficulty in securing good sergeants for Militia regiments, but we experience a difficulty in the Line on our seven years' system. They won't grow like cabbages. They are a great element in the efficiency of our regiments, and the Militia will be worse rather than better off by the short service system. That is my view of the case; and as regards the training of recruits, I have had a little to do with brigade dépôts, and I can sympathize with Colonels of Militia regiments in wanting their recruits to be brought together for training a few weeks before the regiment assembles for the annual training. It will give them interest in their recruits, and will also give them the opportunity of having their non-commissioned officers trained preparatory to calling out the regiment. You may rely upon this, that as they have done away with instructors of musketry in the army, they will do away with instructors of musketry in the Militia; and I do not see how the musketry training is to get on in the Militia, without a Commanding Officer, has some one man whose speciality it is to work up the regiment to a musketry efficiency. And as to the drill, I do say that there are too many manœuvres. What on earth do we want with them? We do not want show manœuvring; we want practical manœuvres, and we want the time to be devoted to the essentials of discipline and good shooting. I am very pleased to find that an old pupil of Hythe has prepared so good a paper to be read before this audience.

NOTE.—The value of the "figure of merit" in shooting is proved, if proof be required, by the great improvement in the rifle proficiency of the regiments serving in India when the instruction was under the supervision of Colonel, now Major-General, Gordon. It is said it is not a fair measure of efficiency, because the regiments do not fire under like conditions as regards weather. This is too weak. Do the men firing for the Queen's Prize at Wimbledon all shoot under the same conditions of weather, or has any shooting competition, where numbers are concerned, ever taken place where all things have been equal?

Captain READE: After the speech of the gallant General that we have just heard, I venture to state what has occurred for the last eight years in my own regiment, the 3rd Welsh. My regiment goes out into camp 2 miles from Cardiff; the

range is $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the camp; we have no means of getting there except by marching. The regiment is composed of 20 companies, and numbers from 1,000 to 1,100 strong. Now anybody conversant with musketry will see how impossible it is to give the men of that regiment, in twenty-seven days, the training that the gallant General has said is so absolutely necessary; and at the risk of seeming a pessimist it does seem to me that musketry instruction, conducted as it has been for eight years in my regiment, is a farce, a delusion, and a snare.

Major-General C. ROBERTSON: There was one sentence in Colonel Walker's paper which particularly struck me as showing the true military spirit which ought to inspire every Officer—the spirit which without cavil cheerfully accepts whatever conditions of service may be imposed by authority—the spirit which ignores impossibilities, which in the midst of difficulties is ever hopeful and fertile in resource, confident that where there is a will there is a way, and that, however adverse circumstances may be now, it is always possible to discover some expedient whereby good results may be obtained. The sentence I refer to was this:—"But it is not our duty to sit still with our hands folded, awaiting the arrival of such reforms as we may think desirable; we have it in our power, independently of all extraneous aid, to do very much towards levelling up the shooting of the Militia if we recognize its importance. It is not so much a question of how much or how little time we devote to it, as of the use we make of it." It may be interesting to mention that two years ago, at a Staff College dinner, I heard His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief make use of words exactly the same in spirit. His Royal Highness said: "In these times of change we know there are many Officers who are extremely opposed to many of the regulations which have been recently published; there are some of them which I myself do not like; but when I hear of Officers speaking of the total ruin and inefficiency of the army as the effect of these changes, I have no patience for such words. Let us not fear. The army is not ruined; it may still be relied on to do its duty, to perform nobly whatever services may be required of it. If any mistakes have been made experience will make them known and they will be corrected; in the meantime let every Officer accept the regulations and make the best of them."¹ Is not this exactly the spirit in which Colonel Walker spoke? With reference to the various excellent suggestions made by him for enabling the Militia to devote more time to musketry training, and for improving the methods of instruction, I was rather surprised at his omitting to mention the very obvious idea of making arrangements similar to those made by the Volunteers for enabling all men who have gone through the prescribed course of musketry instruction to practise ball firing at the ranges as frequently as they please, and at any time most convenient to each individual. I do not make this suggestion myself, but it seems so obvious, and likely to prove so effective, that I venture to put a question to Colonel Walker, and to ask him to inform us if it did not occur to him, or if he has considered it and does not approve of it. As regards the method of carrying out the suggestions, if no better could be devised, would it not be practicable to make arrangements for attaching squads of Militia to Volunteer Corps for this special purpose, and of employing Volunteer markers

¹ In the last paragraph of the epitome prefixed to the new edition of the "Historical Records of the King's Liverpool Regiment," recently published, the same idea is expressed in such apt words that it seems worth while to quote the passage:—"Military instructions are not exempt from the changes which time brings to all mundane things. Generations pass away, and others fill their places—the old order changeth, giving place to the new; but bronze cheeks and soldierly devotion were not the prerogative of any single generation, or the product of any special tactical system. It remains for the soldier of the future to enter into the true spirit of their regimental traditions,—to emulate that steady discipline which, no less than personal valour, distinguished those who preceded them,—and we may rest assured that whenever opportunities offer they will illustrate anew the motto of the King's Regiment, and of the Anglo-Saxon race, '*Nec aspera terrent*' (No difficulties dismay)."—"Historical Records of the King's Liverpool Regiment," 2nd edition, p. 40.

and instructors for keeping registers and recording the results of the extra practices of Militia squads?

Captain COCKBURN (late 42nd): There is one very startling statement that has been made this afternoon, namely, that the more rounds you give the men, the worse they shoot, with which I cannot agree, and fancy but few others will be found to do so; but I think every man of observation, who has had the opportunity of proving the fact practically in action, must have been struck with the wisdom of the remark made by the same speaker as to the danger, with long-range breech-loaders, of the men throwing away their ammunition uselessly at long ranges, and I think the great lesson to be taught, not only to the recruit but to the oldest soldier in the army, is to value every round of his ammunition as if his own life depended on it, and never to draw his trigger unless he is pretty certain of hitting his mark. Another observation that went to my heart was as to the non-commissioned officer. Now the non-commissioned officers are the backbone of the army, and of the Militia. You may make a soldier, as far as mere manœuvring goes, in a very short time. I have seen as many as 400 or 500 Coolies who, after a few minutes' drill, drove pigs out of a dense jungle nearly 3 miles broad, keeping their line and distances in a manner that would put into the shade many an old regiment in skirmishing order; but though a soldier may be taught all the manœuvring drill that it is necessary for him to know in actual action in a short time, it takes a long time to make the non-commissioned officers, for they cannot be grown like cabbages, as has been remarked by a previous speaker, and I would add heartily my little weight to that remark, which I am sure must have touched everybody's heart.

Captain TULLY (1st Tower Hamlets R.V.B.): With regard to the practical application of the instruction of musketry, I will tell you a short story. I am a shooting man. I have shot in the international teams. I have fired from 2,000 to 3,000 rounds in the year, and I have succeeded in walking off with a great number of prizes. I also went through a long course at Hythe. I went to the States, and went one day with some Officers of the army hunting. I took my rifle, and a herd of deer hove in sight. I carefully adjusted my sights and calculated the distances. I fired very carefully and missed. The deer, instead of being frightened, seemed to run straight for me. I fired again and again, and I am sorry to say I missed every shot. Now I have never fired at men, and I ask you to consider for one moment the position of a soldier, even one who has gone through the regulation course, when he is for the first time in his life brought before men armed with rifles like his own, shooting at him and trying to kill him. When the Officer who last spoke refers to the number of rounds being considered as an important element in teaching the soldier to shoot, I would ask the financial authorities to consider whether it is not worth while to give that soldier at least the value of the weapon he is armed with in ammunition to enable him to use it. For, as a pure matter of commerce, I should think that unless he were able to use his weapon it will be throwing the money away; and if you give him a rifle worth from 3*l.* to 4*l.* why should you expect him to perfect himself with a small number of rounds? I think that any expenditure necessary to make him useful in the use of his rifle is justifiable. I do not forget some years ago His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge saying the soldiers wanted more ammunition, and they would have to ask the House of Commons for it; and I remember Lord Elcho (now Lord Wemyss) rising and stating if His Royal Highness were to go to the House of Commons and say, 'We must have so much money for ammunition for the soldiers, we, that is the House of Commons, would have to give it you. If the authorities say they must have ammunition and they must have ranges, the House of Commons would be false to its traditions and its duty if it did not grant the requisition thus made.'

Captain the Honourable HAROLD DILLON (4th Oxfordshire Light Infantry): I think one thing which would increase the interest of the Militiaman in shooting would be if the Officers of his company were in all cases to shoot with him. It makes the men take much more interest in the practice if they see the Officer shooting, and there is a friendly competition between him and the men. Those amongst the Officers who cannot shoot well would probably by that means be able to shoot better. Another thing I would suggest is, that all Captains of companies in the Militia should go to

Hythe for a month or two at least. It would also be desirable that the instructor should be a Captain or a man who had been in the army; something more than a subaltern of perhaps three trainings is required. A man who has been at Hythe, even if he has not been in the army, is at all events quicker to detect carelessness on the part of the soldier, both in handling his rifle and in shooting, than the man who goes up for his one month's training in the year. Of course if a man has been in the army he has lived amongst rifles, and can detect carelessness on the part of the soldier in a way which it is impossible to expect from the ordinary Militia Officer who comes up for one month.

Colonel Sir LUMLEY GRAHAM, Bart.: I will only take up your time for one or two minutes. I merely wish to refer to a point which has not been touched upon. No doubt the difficulty of the ranges is felt both by the Line and the Militia in carrying through their rifle practice in a really practical way, and this applies particularly to the second part of the course. It is not only a question of money, as some seem to think, but it is also a question of legislation. Unfortunately there are some landed proprietors who are unpatriotic enough to prefer their own interests to those of the country; and I know cases where there are excellent sites for ranges, but the landed proprietors cannot be induced to let the authorities have them. It appears to me that it is very necessary that Parliament should pass a Bill empowering the Government to take suitable land for the purpose of ranges at a fair price, just as a railway company may acquire land to make a railway. If a Bill were passed through Parliament for that purpose it would be a very important point gained.

The CHAIRMAN: The time has nearly expired, but perhaps you will allow me to say a few words. The provision of ranges comes a good deal under my department, and I know the excessive difficulty there is in persuading any one to let their land, even at high prices, for that purpose,—so much so that a correspondence took place only the other day with a landlord in Ireland, who for the privilege of shooting over a bog asked 300*l.* a year, the land in fee simple not being worth that money. We offered to buy the land at a fair price, but he refuses so sell it, because he knows we must come to his terms. Colonel Garnham said that it was advantageous to have ranges near barracks. A perfectly true remark, but utterly impossible in England. This country is so thickly populated, there are so many houses and farms, that day after day letters are received from landlords whose farmers have written to them to say that a shot has been heard, a pig killed, or something similar, at some excessively long distance beyond the targets. Whether these are exaggerations or not of course we cannot say, but the farmers write to their landlords and want to have their rents reduced on that account. The landlords send on to the military authorities, and state that we must stop the firing over that land. Three days ago a letter was received from one of the richest landed proprietors in England, saying that we were not to fire over his land, because some of the tenants said that they would not take on the farms at the same rent if the firing was continued. What are we to do? unless Parliament will grant the right of taking ranges forcibly, and even then it will be most difficult, because rifle practice cannot be permitted where there is danger to persons. Lately a letter was received from a gentleman residing near Wormwood Scrubbs stating that a bullet had been heard to whistle over his neighbourhood. The result was we had immediately to make estimates to raise the butts at a large cost; otherwise the range must have been done away with, and it is nearly the only one we have near London. Endeavours have been made to procure ranges which would answer for the Volunteers, the Militia, and the Line; but though permission could often be obtained for the Volunteers, because they were more careful, the proprietors objected to the Militia. Only yesterday I had a letter from a gentleman, himself a Colonel of Militia, to say that he did not object to the Line shooting at a range on his property, but he did object to the Militia regiment practising there. There are only about three or four places where field practices can be carried out at long ranges in the North of England. We have large Militia training barracks at Lichfield, where we have no range available, and these would be the most useful training barracks possible if ranges could be provided. I cannot say that I agree with General McKay in all his remarks on this subject. I entered the army

not very long after he did; with different regiments there are different practices; some were good, and some not quite as good. In the good regiments, the musketry instruction was not conducted in quite the slack way he mentions. I was told off as a very good rifle shot, at that time (the rifles were introduced in 1854), to instruct my regiment before we went to the Crimea, and I remember at Sandown, where we shot, our men were made to shoot fairly at 600 yards without any of the beautiful theories of lines of fire, trajectories, &c. I taught them how to aim, and what to aim at; I taught them how to judge distances, so far as I could, and to fire a volley; and I remember seeing a company fire at the targets at 600 yards, not knowing the distance, and I do not think a man of the company, that the target represented, would have escaped a hit of some sort. Much better than that cannot be accomplished with all the Hythe instruction. I entirely approve of musketry instruction in every way; but a figure of merit between a regiment shooting at Dartmoor, in the thick weather, over a rough country, and another shooting in a beautiful climate like Corfu, where there was often not a breath of wind, would be no fair comparison. Judging distances is what we want, and that ought to be carried out without the aid of the stadiometer. When I was commanding a brigade at Aldershot I happened to see a regiment judging distances for the prizes; they were judging distances very well indeed. The men I perceived were looking at the stadiometer by which the instructor was correcting the replies. I told him to turn it round, and then I found, though the men could judge their distances capitally before, afterwards, when the instrument was removed, they did not go near the mark; they were from 100 to 120 yards out. Talking to a district inspector, who had been an instructor at Hythe, I asked him to judge the distance of a cow which was 800 yards off, and he was above 200 yards out. He was a man who has the greatest faith in theoretic instruction. I made a guess at the same cow and went very much nearer, and I had never had any instruction at Hythe, but I had a good eye and was fond of judging distances. A soldier may learn to aim as correctly as possible, but he will not hit a man running while some one else is shooting at him. At the same time I greatly advocate constant rifle practice, and to fire away as many rounds as you can possibly procure; but not so with Militia. Militia never should practise at above 300 yards, with the exception of men selected by the Colonel for further instruction, and if possible they should be encouraged to shoot with the Volunteers.

Colonel WALKER: I regret that I cannot agree with Colonel Evelyn as to the amount of ammunition now afforded being excessive. I quite admit the great claims upon our time, and I quite admit that in the precarious climate we suffer from it is often very difficult to get through; but still I look upon the shooting as of such primary importance, that I should sacrifice almost everything to do it. I can only say that I have never, during the last twenty years, known a case in which we have not been able to get through the amount of firing required, and even this year we found no difficulty in putting my battalion through forty rounds, and going through our inspection quite to the satisfaction of the Commanding Officer. I am glad to find that I am in agreement with him on one point, and that is with regard to the comparative value of firing at short range; upon that we seem all agreed—that excessively long range, at any rate for the present, is not of practical use, and we should do better to limit ourselves to shorter ranges. My friend Colonel Garnham has alluded to the discomforts which men undergo under canvas, and has compared their comfort and efficiency in that condition to that of men in billets. Of course there is a certain amount of discomfort under canvas, but I would willingly at all times submit to it rather than revert to the condemned system of billets. My own battalion has trained for thirteen years under canvas, and when I say that we are situated on the south-west coast of Scotland, I think you will agree with me, it is not the driest climate in Great Britain; but in spite of that we manage to make our men fairly comfortable, and it is not unpopular with them. Colonel Garnham did not entirely agree with me as to the inadvisability of extending the training from four weeks to five or six, and he quoted the fact that there was very little falling off in the recruiting when the training was raised from twenty-one to twenty-eight days, and again that there was no reluctance on the part of men going out for the extra fortnight. I quite agree that there was no practical falling off in

recruiting up to the four weeks, but I do not think it at all follows that that figure should be raised higher. With regard to the extra fortnight for manœuvres I entirely agree there was no falling off whatever. I think it was excessively popular in my battalion, but that was an exceptional thing, and if that had happened every year, I am afraid the evils that I anticipate would occur. I am grieved to find my old friend and instructor, General McKay, to whom, only short of our friend and late chief, General Hay, I owe such little knowledge of musketry as I possess,—I am sorry that he does not agree with me as to the abolition of the figure of merit; but I am afraid Commanding Officers, and Officers who have had experience of shooting both in the Line and in the Militia, will agree that, however excellent in theory that system of the figure of merit may be, it has met with grievous abuses. General McKay will observe also, that while I do not object to the abolition of the figure of merit, I thought something at least might be done to replace it, and I am sure he is more familiar than I am with what I alluded to, namely, the system of the Inter-Regimental Rifle Matches, in which detachments of regiments, and individuals belonging to regiments are fairly pitted against each other when they shoot, not in the presence of their own instructors and non-commissioned officers only, but under the vigilant eye of an Officer belonging to another regiment, who has to testify on honour that the practice has been fairly conducted. My friend General Robertson has asked a question with regard to the possibility of supplementing the scanty time at our disposal during the training by getting our men to shoot during the non-training period. The circumstances of regiments are so different that what might be possible to some regiments might be entirely impossible to others. In my own regiment we do so. In three different towns from which I recruit, we carry on this practice every year; thanks to my friend Sir George Douglas, who commands the Volunteer battalion in that district, and who most kindly places his ranges at my disposal, and during the non-training period we fire from 2,000 to 3,000 rounds; the men are paraded with the utmost regularity, and march to the ranges just as steadily as if they were out for training; but what might be possible in my case might be impossible in others. Captain Cockburn has spoken of the waste of ammunition. Ammunition will be wasted whether men are well or ill-trained in musketry. It is not a question of musketry training; it is one of drill and subordination, and fire-discipline, and therefore it is a little beyond the object of my paper. I know that the best shots in the world, if they are not thoroughly under command, will infallibly waste their ammunition. I am glad to find that Captain Tully agrees with me as to the utter hopelessness of any mere mechanical process of teaching men to shoot, placing them on an equality with men who study in the great school of the hunting field. It is impossible by any mechanical process to make finished, practical riflemen of soldiers, such as the Boers, and other men who are constantly in the habit of shooting at large game for their livelihood. What we can attempt is to make our men equal, if not greatly superior, to the average of the rank and file of other European armies. Another Officer referred to the desirability of all Militia Officers going to Hythe. I heartily agree with him; but I am afraid if he is sanguine about that state of things being introduced, I cannot agree with him there. I know what an enormous difficulty it is to get one Officer to Hythe, and there is a young Officer in this room now who knows how many letters I had to write before I got him to Hythe. Sir Lumley Graham has directed our attention to the desirability of getting Parliamentary powers for the acquisition of ranges, and what he has said has been more than amply confirmed by our gallant Chairman. The case which our Chairman quoted was indeed a strong one, and the fact that an Officer, who himself for a long time commanded a regiment, should have kept a range open to the Volunteers, and have closed it to the Militia, is a very striking example of the difficulties to which we are exposed.

The CHAIRMAN: It was not himself, it was his tenant who took the action.

Colonel WALKER: I am glad to be able to acquit him. But if it be the case that while the ranges are kept open to Volunteers because they are more careful in practice, they are refused to the Militia because they are not so careful, I think I may be said to have proved my case, and that some reform is absolutely and urgently called for. I am sure I should be ungrateful if I sat down without asking you to join with me in giving our hearty thanks to Sir Arthur Herbert for his great kindness in occupying the Chair to-day, and for the keen and lively interest he has always taken in the Militia service.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank you for your kindness, and I beg to ask you all to join with me in voting our thanks to our gallant lecturer, for his very instructive lecture. It has not been a mere theoretical discourse, but it has been a lecture which we have all been able fully to understand and appreciate. I may state that in one year I inspected fourteen Militia regiments, and cannot agree that it is the fault of the inspecting Officer that musketry is not carried out, because where ranges are distant, Commanding Officers usually do not take much interest in the musketry instruction. Many in Ireland begged me not to ask questions upon that subject, but to see how well they drilled. Now the inspecting Officer is obliged, to a certain extent, to conform to the wishes of the Colonel of the Militia, as it is useless to inspect what has not been practised, and I therefore only saw two regiments fire out of the whole lot, and they did not fire so badly. Some of the other regiments I believe never fired at all, but they drilled remarkably well. I beg to return our best thanks to Colonel Walker for his lecture.