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The Native Army of Bengal: Its Constitution, Organization, Interior Economy, and Equipment

Lieut.-General, Sir Peter S. Lumsden
Bengal Staff Corps, &c., &c. G.C.B.,
C.S.I.

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LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR PETER S. LUMSDEN, G.C.B., C.S.I., Bengal Staff Corps, &c., &c., in the Chair.

THE NATIVE ARMY OF BENGAL: ITS CONSTITUTION, ORGANIZATION, INTERIOR ECONOMY, AND EQUIPMENT.

By Major-General J. J. H. GORDON, C.B., Bengal Staff Corps.

THE Native Army of Bengal consists of 2½ regiments of cavalry, 6½ battalions of infantry, a corps of Sappers and Miners, and 4 mountain batteries of artillery. This is inclusive of the Punjab Frontier Force, which has recently been transferred from the administration of the Government of the Punjab to the command of the Commander-in-Chief, but continues as a separate unit for frontier duties; and retains its local and distinctive character. It has a strength of 4 regiments of cavalry, a Corps of Guides (1 regiment cavalry, 1 battalion infantry), 4 batteries mountain artillery, and 11 battalions infantry.

In addition there are also 6 regiments of cavalry, 12 battalions of infantry, and 4 field batteries, under the orders of the Government of India, comprising the Hyderabad Contingent, the Central India Horse, and local corps in Rajputana and Central India. With the exception of the Central India Horse they are all organized on the old irregular systems, with 2 to 4 British Officers to each corps.

Constitution of Regiments.

Two-thirds of the Bengal Army are recruited from Northern India and Nepal, and one-third from the North-West Provinces. Many diverse and warlike races are scattered over this vast area. The chief among them are the Hindoo classes of the Sikh and the Dogra Rajput of the Punjab, the Gurkha of Nepal, and the Brahmin, Rajput, Jat, and other Hindoo classes of the north-west, while of the Mahomedans there are the Pathan border tribes of Northern India, the Punjabi, and the Hindostani classes. All are of the peasantry class, of good physique, hardy, enduring, and courageous. There is no lack of them. The military spirit still lives among them, our service is popular, and they

come forward freely to enlist. Indian history shows what good soldiers Hindostanis have proved themselves in many brilliant actions against warlike enemies in vastly superior numbers. We know with what courage and tenacity the old Sikh Army, composed of natives of the Punjab, fought us in two campaigns, and at what cost we secured victory. The Pathan, the Gurkha, and the Jat have fought gallantly against us and as gallantly for us. Our stoutest foes have become our strongest friends, and flock to fill our ranks. The regiments have a provincial rather than a territorial character. Some are formed wholly of one class or race, and are termed class regiments, but the majority are composed of mixed classes organized in separate troops and companies, and termed class troop or company regiments.

Of the 24 cavalry regiments, 9 recruit from the North-West Provinces, and 15 from the Province of the Punjab; 5 are class regiments, and 19 have class troops.

The class regiments are the 1st Bengal Cavalry (Mahomedan), the 14th Jats (Hindoo), the 15th Mooltani Pathans (Mahomedan), the 16th Sikh and Dogra (Hindoo), and 17th (Mahomedan) Punjab.

Of the 64 infantry battalions, 31 recruit from the Punjab, 13 from Nepal, and 20 from the North-West Provinces. Of these, 22 are class battalions, and 42 have class companies. The class battalions comprise 13 of Gurkhas, 5 of Sikhs, 1 of Dogras, and 3 of Muzbis (Punjab Pioneers).

The Sappers have class companies, and recruit in Hindostan and the Punjab. The mountain batteries recruit from the Punjab.

Organization.

The Cavalry Regiments are numbered from 1st to 19th Bengal Cavalry, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th Punjab Cavalry. Seven of the Bengal Cavalry Regiments are Lancers.

Each regiment consists of 8 troops, organized in 4 squadrons, and has a complement of 9 British Officers, viz., the Commandant, 4 Squadron Commanders, and 4 Squadron Officers, one of the latter being Adjutant. It has a strength of 625 natives of all ranks, viz., 4 Ressaldars, 4 Ressaidars, 1 Woordie Major (native Adjutant), 8 Jemadars, 8 koti duffadars, 56 duffadars, 8 trumpeters, 536 sowars. One of the Ressaldars has the rank of Ressaldar-Major, which makes him the senior native Officer.

The infantry regiments are numbered 1st to 45th Bengal Infantry, 1st to 5th Gurkha Regiments of 2 battalions each, 1st to 4th Sikh Infantry, and 1st to 6th Punjab Infantry.

Each battalion consists of 8 companies, organized in 2 wings or half-battalions, and has a complement of 8 British Officers, viz., the Commandant, 2 Wing Commanders, and 5 Wing Officers, two of the latter being Adjutant and Quartermaster. It has a strength of 912 natives of all ranks, viz., 8 Subadars, 8 Jemadars, 40 havildars, 40 naicks, 16 drummers, 800 privates. One of the Subadars has the rank of Subadar-Major, and one of the Jemadars is native Adjutant.

The Corps of Guides of the Punjab Frontier Force consists of

6 troops of cavalry and 8 companies infantry, under one Commandant. It has a complement of 14 British Officers, and a strength of 1,381 natives of all ranks, organized on the same system as cavalry and infantry regiments.

The corps of Bengal Sappers and Miners consists of 8 companies, viz., six service Companies; A dépôt company—special for bridging, telegraph, submarine mining, field printing and photograph services; B dépôt company—recruits; Commandant, Adjutant, Superintendent of Park, Superintendent of Instruction, 8 company commanders, 8 company Officers, 1 warrant Officer attached to the park, 1 sergeant-major, 1 quartermaster-sergeant, 12 sergeants, 14 corporals, 14 second corporals of the Royal Engineers, and 8 Subadars, 16 Jemadars, 48 havildars, 80 naicks, 1,200 sappers, 16 buglers, making a total of 1,431 natives of all ranks.

Each mountain battery of 6 mountain guns has a complement of 4 British Officers from the Royal Artillery attached to it, viz., a commandant and 3 subalterns, and a strength of 3 native Officers, 98 gunners and N.C.O., and 138 drivers.

A British Medical Officer with a native hospital establishment is attached to each regiment.

Interior Economy.

In the cavalry and infantry each troop and company is immediately commanded by a native Officer, who is responsible for it in every situation. He carries out all details of duty and interior economy under the orders of his squadron or wing commander, and reports to him daily. Wing and squadron commanders are responsible for the efficiency of their commands. The commandant conducts the ordinary business of the regiment at the orderly room when all Officers are present, and troop and company commanders bring up all cases requiring his orders. A general system of administration and supervision is exercised by the British Officers, who all have defined duties, and who personally attend to the technical education and training of their commands. The routine regimental duties are carried on by orderly N.C.O. of troops and companies, by the orderly native Officer of the day, and by the British Officer of the week.

Drill and discipline are similar to those of the British Service.

The commandant has large powers to punish and reward, and can summarily try and dispose of offences coming within the jurisdiction of a garrison court-martial. All the British Officers and troop and company commanders are invested with certain powers of punishment.

The native Officers live in the lines alongside their men, but in separate quarters. The lines consist of hut barracks of a humble description, but suitable for the men, considering their mode of life and what they are accustomed to at home. A small portion of the lines is set apart for families, but as a rule few live in the lines. They are left at their own homes.

Beyond the usual stable duties, inspections of lines, arms, kits, &c., the men are left pretty much to themselves.

Furlough and leave of absence to the men's homes are liberally granted, and are much prized.

Each regiment arranges for its own food supplies by means of a regimental commissariat in the shape of a small bazaar establishment of shopkeepers, who follow the regiment, and are under agreement to supply all food requirements daily for the men, payment of the same being made monthly. All native soldiers have to pay for their own food except when free rations are issued on active service. They live simply and frugally, and drunkenness is of the rarest occurrence.

Enlistment is purely voluntary. The term is for 3 years, with option of serving beyond that period; the standard age 18 to 25; height not under 5½ feet, with exception of the Gurkhas who are especially of small stature. The average period of a recruit's training is 9 months. Recruiting is carried on under regimental arrangements.

The cavalry soldier owns his horse, equipment, arms, tent, baggage-pony, and everything necessary for the Service except the carbine, which alone is given free by Government. He pays all demands for the up-keep of his horse, pony, and himself, in return for his monthly pay. He brings a certain amount of money with him. Regimental funds advance the rest and provide everything required. He repays by instalments. The pay on first enlistment is 27 rupees a month. After his many deductions he has very little over to spend on himself, but still the Service is popular, and sought after by men of good family. The pay ranges from 27 rupees a month to 51 rupees up to the highest N.C.O., and from 60 rupees to 300 for the native Officers. An increase of pay is given after 3, 6, and 9 years' service for sowars, and 2, 4, 6, and 8 for N.C.O.

The infantry soldier gets 7 rupees a month on first enlistment, and a money allowance for provision of a kit, with an annual amount to keep it up. The pay is small to begin with, but it is sufficient with care to provide for his requirements. Pay ranges from 7 rupees to 23 a month up to N.C.O., and from 50 to 150 for native Officers. Increased pay is given after 3, 6, and 10 years' service for sepoy, and 2, 4, 6, and 8 for N.C.O.

Promotion is made entirely by selection and merit. In mixed class regiments every class has its fair share of N.C.O. and the commissioned grades. Direct commissions are given now and then, but the commissioned ranks are almost entirely filled by men who have served up through the regiment. The Commandant recommends for promotion to and in the commissioned grade through the Commander-in-Chief to Government. The ranks supply many fit and tried men of good family, who entered the Service in view of winning the prized commission.

Regimental schools are maintained by Government in the lines, in which English and the vernacular languages are taught.

Equipment.

The uniform and equipment is a workmanlike and serviceable one. The uniform consists of parade and ordinary or marching kit made

of cloth or serge for the winter, and of khaki or drab-coloured cotton drill for the summer. The latter is used for field service over warmer under-clothing.

The general pattern of uniform and equipment in the cavalry is much the same throughout this branch, varying only in a few minor regimental details. The uniform consists of a loose turban head-dress, a long easy blouse with chain shoulder-straps, a "kammerbund" or waist girdle, loose riding trousers worn with long boots, or "puttis" and ammunition boots.

Of the 19 regiments of Bengal cavalry, of which 7 are Lancers, 13 are dressed in blue, 4 in scarlet, 1 in drab, and 1 in yellow. Of the cavalry of the Punjab Frontier Force, 2 are dressed in blue, 1 in scarlet, 1 in green, and 1 in drab.

The cavalry soldier is armed with a Snider carbine and sword. Native Officers, superior N.C.O., and trumpeters carry revolvers. The Lancers carry the long lance in addition.

The "Mackenzie" pattern belt equipment is now introduced for the cavalry. This consists of a broad leather waist-belt in three pieces, waist-plate in front, buckles on right and left side under the arms. Attached to it is the usual frog attachment for carrying the sword, and two ammunition pouches for ten rounds each carried in front. Two narrow leather braces, worn in marching order, are attached to the waist-belt, crossed and brought over the shoulders underneath the shoulder-chains, and fastened in front by buckles. These support the weight of the ammunition pouches and sword. Bandoliers carrying ten rounds of ammunition are also attached to these braces on each side of the breast, enabling the soldier to carry thirty rounds.

The sword can be carried also affixed to the shoe case, passing through a stout leather loop.

The carbine is on all ordinary occasions carried in a leather bucket affixed to the saddle by the usual strap and flap attachment, but when necessary can be slung on the soldier's back, for which provision is made in the "Mackenzie" belt equipment.

The saddles are light and comfortable, made under regimental arrangements according to the Government interchangeable pattern. Cawnpore is the great manufacturing place for saddlery.

Marching order-equipment consists of saddle with wallets, numna, bridle, breastplate, surcingle, picketing ropes, rein, shoe cases, corn bag, forage net, pegs, blanket, cloak with cape, mess tin, and "chagnol" or leather water carrier. The latter is carried flat under the horse's belly by a strap attachment passing over the back under the saddle-tree. The blanket is carried under the saddle between it and the numna, the cape in front of the wallets, and the cloak and mess tin behind the saddle. The breastplate was abolished, but experience at the late Cavalry Camp of Exercise in the Punjab has led to its re-introduction in the shape of a hunting one. The picketing rope is formed into a standing martingale.

India supplies country-bred remounts. The average price is about 235 rupees at present, and the height 14.2½ to 14.3, but they are

allowed to be purchased as low as 14.1 when difficulty is experienced in getting them. The average weight of a sowar (cavalry soldier) is a pound or two over 10 stone, and of his full marching order equipment a little over 4 stone, so that the total weight carried by the horse may be put down as under 14½ stone.

The system of the cavalry is one of contract between the soldier and the Government, the former, as I have mentioned before, finding himself in everything except his Snider carbine and ammunition. It is one which suits so far that the Government knows the extent of its liabilities, encourages care from self-interest, is popular with the Service, and brings in a superior class of men. On service out of India, Government acts liberally and generously towards the men, and this relieves them of anxiety as regards self-interest. The full value of a sowar's set-up is about 370 rupees. If a man on enlistment brought this sum he would be provided with horse and everything. Every recruit is supposed to bring either a suitable remount or 200 rupees in cash. A horse is rarely brought, and good men are taken with sometimes even as little as 50 rupees.

Sikhs generally bring 200 or more, whereas Pathans and others may not be able to produce more than 100 rupees. The regimental funds advance the money necessary to find the outfit, and recover it gradually. The outfit consists of his horse, equipment, arms, clothing, kit, and share of tent and baggage pony. There is one pony to every two men, which also serves as forage pony.

The infantry uniform consists of a short cloth tunic, or a loose khaki blouse, loose trousers drawn in below the knee, "puttis," and ammunition boots or shoes. The Gurkha regiments wear the "Kilmarnock" cloth cap, the rest of the infantry the loose turban, which varies in colour regimentally. The summer and service uniform is of "khaki" drill from head to foot.

Government supplies the cloth uniform, the remainder of the kit is provided under regimental arrangements. A free issue of waterproof sheets, jerseys, blankets, and boots is given by Government to corps going on active service.

Of the 64 infantry regiments, 36 are dressed in red, 14 in dark green, and 14 in drab.

The Gurkha and Punjab Pioneer Regiments are armed with the short Snider rifle, the rest of the infantry with the long Snider.

Gurkhas also carry the *kukri*, a curved knife, a most formidable weapon in their hands, suitable for every work. Native Officers carry swords and revolvers.

The Mackenzie belt equipment is now being introduced. It is on the same system as that of the cavalry, consisting of the waist-belt, in three pieces, two ammunition pouches for forty rounds each, carried in front by means of loops through which the waist-belt passes. Braces attached behind to Ds. in the waist-belt cross behind like ordinary braces, are fixed in front by buckles to Ds. on the pouch, and take the weight of the ammunition off the man's stomach. The great coat of the British infantry pattern is carried on the back by two straps which pass through loops on the braces.

A haversack and water-bottle are carried in marching order.

A close-fitting sheepskin long jacket (a Poshtin) is also worn by cavalry and infantry during winter in Northern India.

The Sappers and Miners and Pioneers have a special equipment. The dress of the former is the same as the infantry.

The uniform of the native ranks of the mountain batteries is of the pattern of the infantry with blue tunics. Two batteries are armed with 2.5-inch rifled muzzle-loading guns, and two with 7-pr. guns of 200 lbs. each.

Each corps has in possession its tents and Service ammunition ready for the field.

The forage pony establishment of the cavalry regiments forms the personal transport for service. It is supplemented by Government transport for the ammunition, hospital establishment, &c. All the Punjab frontier force is kept equipped with transport ready to take the field, and a certain portion of the rest of the Army is similarly equipped.

Reserves.

A system of reserves for the infantry is now under formation. They are of two classes, active and garrison. The first, formed of men who have served not less than 5 and not over 12 years with the colours, is limited to 218 per battalion. They are to be embodied for one month every year. The second, of men who have completed 21 years' service with the colours or colours and reserve combined, is unlimited in number. They will be embodied for one month every alternate year. The scale of reserve and embodied pay and pensions is a liberal one. A large number of men, especially of the Panjabis, have hitherto taken their discharge after serving a few years—the active reserve should now receive these men.

Pensions.

Liberal pensions are granted for length of service, the ordinary after 20 years' colour service or 25 combined colour and reserve, and the superior after 32 years. Wound pensions are given for wounds received on active service, and family pensions to heirs of all ranks killed in action or who die in service out of India.

Rewards and Decorations.

There are two special Orders for the Native Army, the Order of British India, and the Order of Merit. The first is for commissioned Officers, for long, faithful, and honourable service, and consists of two classes, the 1st carrying with it the title of Sirdar Bahadur and an allowance of 2 rupees a day; the 2nd, the title of Bahadur with 1 rupee a day. It consists of a star, worn suspended by a red ribbon round the neck. The Order of Merit is open to all ranks for conspicuous bravery in the field, and carries with it the substantial reward of an increase of one-third of the pay of the rank of the recipient. It consists of a star, inscribed "For Bravery." Good

conduct medals, with annuities and gratuities on the following scale, have just been sanctioned:—To each regiment of cavalry and infantry a silver medal inscribed "For Meritorious Conduct," with an annuity of 25 rupees, for duffadars and havildars only. Two silver medals will be given annually in each regiment for long service and good conduct, with a gratuity of 25 rupees, open to the rank and file. Duffadars or havildars must have 18 years' service and privates 20 years.

I have omitted many details connected with the main subjects referred to, as it is only my intention to try and give in a short sketch a general idea of the system of the Bengal Native Army. I now propose to make a few remarks regarding that system.

One-half of the army dates its rise from 1857. Of the cavalry, the first eight regiments belonged to the old Bengal Irregular Cavalry. Of the infantry, the first 11 regiments belonged to the old Bengal Regular Army, while the 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 18th, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Gurkhas, and the 42nd, 43rd, and 44th Gurkha Light Infantry were formerly irregular corps.

The Punjab Frontier Force was raised in 1849 on the annexation of the Punjab, wholly on the irregular system, and in that force the irregular system was seen at its best. When the great crisis arose in 1857, this force was ready for the emergency, untainted by the general disloyalty and eager to be employed in the defence of the Empire. At the capture of Delhi, of the 2,750 men who composed the three main assaulting columns, 1,300 belonged to the Punjab Frontier Force. The remaining regiments of the present Bengal Army were raised in 1857 and since.

The old Bengal Army was organized on the regular system, that is, with a regimental establishment of British Officers to each troop and company. Promotion was gained regimentally by seniority up to Major, after which it was made in a general list of each branch throughout the Army. There were a certain number of irregular corps officered from the regulars, having only three British Officers attached to each in the well-paid grades of Commandant, 2nd in command, and Adjutant. These regiments were notably efficient. The Officers were less fettered by the unbending regulations enjoined to the regular regiments, they had greater power to punish and reward, were in positions to assume larger responsibility and freedom of action, and were supported in the full exercise of their authority. The supremacy of the Commandant was the main principle. The system made the Officers. In the regular regiment, on the other hand, the Commanding Officer's authority was much hampered and interfered with, there was too much successful appealing on the part of the men against punishment, and ill-judged leniency in dealing with crime too often resulted.

On the revolt of the Bengal Army in 1857, the lately disbanded Sikh Army took the place of a reserve. Its old and tried soldiers then swarmed in every town and village of the Punjab. Corps of cavalry, infantry, and artillery were rapidly raised, commissions were given to men of family and influence who brought their men with them. The corps were organized on the irregular system of the

Punjab Frontier Force, and at once put in the field to fight for the Government which had so recently conquered and annexed their country, and against the Hindostani auxiliaries who had aided in the overthrow of the Sikh power. Many other corps were also raised from Pathan tribes and the warlike peasantry of the north-west.

In 1861 this improvised force was pruned down and incorporated in the Bengal Army, which was now entirely organized on the irregular system. The Staff Corps was formed the same year, which for the future was to supply British Officers for the Indian Army.

In 1863 the Army was reorganized on the present system of squadron and wing commands, with seven British Officers to each regiment, and the class constitution of each laid down.

In 1865 a fourth squadron was added to each corps with two additional British Officers, while one British Officer was added to each infantry battalion, making the present complement of nine to cavalry and eight to infantry corps. The strength of each battalion has recently been increased, and two new regiments of cavalry and nine of infantry raised, these latter in the form of class corps of Sikhs, Dogras, Gurkhas, and Pathan and Punjabi Mahomedans, Sikhs and Gurkhas preponderating.

The Gurkha is essentially a foreigner, and, being a native of a cold climate, a hardy mountaineer and a good fighting man, is ranked among our best native soldiers. The Sikhs are noted for their militant characteristics and warlike traditions. Theirs is the religion of the sword. Formerly military service was the prerogative of every Sikh; he was born to be a soldier. This was the teaching of his priests. Originated in the Punjab about 200 years ago as a reformed peaceful sect of Hindoos, it took its military rise in the blood of one of their high priests, who was beheaded at Delhi by the Mahomedans. The social habits of the Sikh "Khalsa," or Commonwealth, as it was called, were formed on a military basis, in order to enable them to hold their own against persecution. The master mind of Runjit Singh formed them into the powerful military nation which fell after a tough struggle with the British. Though they are but a small section of the vast population of India, no race responds so freely to our call for recruits or furnishes so many. They numbered 600,000 adults at the last census, and inhabit a comparatively small area, which may be regarded as a military preserve. They eagerly take service anywhere, and are of a hardy enterprising nature. As a class they are undoubtedly loyal. They number over 20,000 in the army now. In one of the new Sikh regiments lately raised, no man has been enlisted under 5 ft. 8 in., and a chest measurement of 35 inches. It got its numbers in a short time.

The comparative merits of class *versus* composite class corps have often been argued. It has been said that the mixture of warlike classes in the same corps is often more productive of evil than good, that it nullifies their best qualities, and is a source of irritation among themselves. This may exist to a certain extent where Sikhs and Pathans are mixed, owing to their hereditary enmity. The Pathan is a native of a purely Mahomedan country.

All the regiments of the Punjab Frontier Force have mixed classes, this being found to be the best system for the special service of the border, where the troops are so much scattered in small bodies over a long line of frontier. The "divide and govern" principle, in the shape of the small unit, may be necessary there, but the larger class unit of the regiment has also proved a valuable one. A martial spirit and sentiment somewhat akin to our national feeling is evoked in class corps, which maintains pride of race and stimulates them to fight for its reputation. This is markedly shown in Gurkha and Sikh regiments. The various races and religious antipathies of India are our security from universal combination against our supremacy, and this is to be maintained more by means of class than by mixed regiments. The recent addition of class corps to the Army may therefore be considered a military-political gain.

Since the irregular system was applied to the entire Army in 1861, the tendency to reform and improve has resulted in the gradual evolution of the present regular system, it may be called, as regards the duties of the British Officers. We have now the Squadron Commander with his Aide, and the Wing Commander with his two, the latter taking their places on foot on parade, supervising two companies each, in order that their presence and influence may be more felt throughout the ranks. The old Bengal Army progressed in a similar manner. Originally, with very few British Officers to each regiment, and with regiments even commanded and officered wholly by natives, as our rule extended northwards and harder races with better organized armies had to be conquered, the regular system was established with British leaders to each company.

The system of the squadron command, 156 strong, as the administrative unit for the British Officer, works well. The formation of a corresponding command in the infantry, in the shape of the double company 225 strong, is desirable. The present wing command of 450 men is too strong for the requisite individual attention of its Commander to its training. The company unit under the native Officer would no more be interfered with under a double-company system than that of the troop in the squadron. The creation of four responsible commands for the British Officers of the battalion in place of the two wings would increase its fighting efficiency, give a greater number of experienced Officers, bring the men more in touch with their Officers, and also accelerate promotion, which stagnates too much at present. There are too many wing Officers approaching to twenty years' service.

The number of Officers with each regiment is always kept complete, vacancies caused by absentees on furlough being filled up by probationers for the Staff Corps, so that practically each regiment may have two or three Officers above its regulated number on its rolls. These last, however, are moved about from regiment to regiment, until a permanent vacancy is found for them. The regimental establishment might be increased to such an extent as to obviate the necessity of filling up vacancies caused by Officers absent on furlough, such absentees representing a small reserve, as all would be

recalled for active service, and the probationer could then look in his first regiment as his home.

The system of linked battalions has been applied to the infantry. By treating them as one regiment as regards the British Officers, we could get such a number that would enable promotion to be regimental throughout the linked battalions, and even admit of the principle of selection being advantageously applied. This can hardly be done in the regiments of eight and nine Officers. The regimental feeling and sentiment would be strengthened by such an arrangement, and battalions going on service could be supplemented with additional Officers from their co-battalions, who would not be strangers to the men. This is equally applicable to cavalry regiments. Under such a system some of the linked regiments could be so organized as to admit of selected native Officers from the regimental group being placed in more responsible positions than at present, so as to open out gradually a more extended career for exceptionally good men, professionally fitted and trained for higher grades.

Under the old regular system of the Bengal Army, though a large number of Officers was borne on the strength of the regiment, still there were rarely more than seven or eight present, including the last joined. The advantage of the system was that all absentees were liable to be recalled for active service, thus ensuring a sufficiency of British leaders who were known to the men. The great aim of most of the Officers was to get away from the regular regiment to some better paid and more attractive appointment, military or civil. The present system is to have a regulated number of Staff Corps Officers always with the regiment, and to place regimental duty comparatively on a level with other departments as regards pay, extra pay in addition to Staff Corps pay of rank being allowed for each regimental appointment. Consequently regimental duty is well paid, and the Officers are contented men. But there is no reserve of Officers under this system, and such may be required now that the native Army is called upon to be ready to take the field against a highly organized military foe. The 4th Punjab Infantry during ten months of active service in 1857-58 between Delhi and Lucknow, lost 13 out of 15 British Officers who had been appointed to it. The establishment of British Officers must have been renewed several times over, as it was on the irregular system. Fortunately there was then a reserve of British Officers in readiness for war.

The native Officers are indispensable links in the management of native regiments. They are good commanders of small units, are practically experienced men in fighting, and are at home in the field, but are defective in early military education. They are brave enough, and advance with gallantry and dash against every danger. Courage is a very important element of success, but the tactics of the breech-loader demand that the men must be guided by skilfully trained Officers, otherwise they will be mown down by a breechloader-armed enemy. Practical leading is more than ever necessary. The true interpretation of this fact dominates the whole question of Officers with native regiments. Modern war with all its scientific aids insists

on tactical knowledge, ability, and manœuvring power on the part of all Officers. The British Officers have always been the leaders, whether they were three or twenty to a corps, and the native soldiers understand and appreciate their leadership. The more British Officers there are with the native regiment on service now, the better the leading, the better the following will be, and the more decisive the results. They will direct with judgment, and, in combination with the native Officers, lead with energy.

I trust that it is not thought for one instant that I depreciate the services of the native Officers. From a long service of close association with them I know full well how much fidelity, devotion, and hard work we get from them. There is an immense amount of quiet heroism among them. Indian military history teems with instances in which native Officers have, when placed in isolated positions of responsibility, shown ready resource, cool daring, and calm judgment, the fruit of military instincts and practical experience. But the breech-loader is a hard task-master, and much is now demanded which military education and study of the art of war can alone give. It may be said that with more British Officers the native Officers will be over dominated, or completely dominated. The domination of the native Officer commenced with the issue of the rifle to the Native Army, and increased as an improved one was given. The most difficult task of the modern art of war is to train an army for pitched battles. The Indian Army is liable to be called on to take its place in line to oppose an enemy who fights according to the principles on which war is conducted between highly trained armies. But there will still be a field for irregular corps in Asiatic campaigns, both from the nature of the country and the auxiliaries which will always be attached to any invading army, "the masses of Asiatic cavalry," to wit, which are proposed as the advanced guard of an army to be hurled on India. I think that a combination of a Native Army firmly organized for pitched battles, with a certain number of corps organized for light service to rally round them, is compatible with efficiency throughout.

Many of us were glad to see in a late "Gazette" that a very meritorious native Officer, Ressaldar-Major Mahomed Aslam Khan, C.I.E., has been granted the honorary rank of Major in the Army for his good services. He is commandant of an irregular corps of Pathan tribesmen which guard the Khyber Pass for our Government. I should like to see a few more of our old and tried native Officers similarly rewarded. The garrison reserve might supply the opportunity for giving higher rank to some who have earned claims for the honour, and who would in that position, from their influence and experience, render valuable service when called out.

I regret that I am not sufficiently acquainted with the Hyderabad Contingent, the Central India Horse, and the other corps in Rajputana and Central India under the orders of the Government of India, to give all the details regarding them. They are armed and equipped like the Bengal Army. The two regiments of the Central India Horse are organized on the same system as the Bengal

Cavalry. They are admirably mounted and have a high reputation for efficiency won in the field. Cavalry and infantry regiments from the Hyderabad Contingent did right good service in the late trying campaign in Burma, and the local corps raised from the aboriginal tribes of Bheels, Mhairs, and Meenas have proved themselves first-rate soldiers and excellent shots.

There are other native troops which may be classed as auxiliaries. The native Princes of India have lately been placing their armies at the disposal of the Imperial Government for war. This is nothing new with them. I have seen some of these troops in the field, having been associated with the contingents of the Punjab Chiefs when they joined our army during the Afghan Campaign, and recently during the operations in Upper Burma had under my command some of the troops of the Munipur State on the eastern frontier of Bengal. The material is good, but their weak point, as is the case in all Asiatic armies, is the Officers. The Punjab Chiefs' contingents at the Delhi Camp of Exercise two years ago, under the guidance of one or two British Officers, in the manœuvres showed what might be made out of them. I hope we may see a defined position in the Army assigned to these auxiliaries. Picked troops from them might be affiliated in the shape of militia corps to our own regiments. When called out for war, a few weeks' training under British Officers would fit them to take the field as irregular corps suitable for the light service and communications of the army, as they have military habits and are inured to service of some kind.

I venture to think that the remarks I have made regarding desirable changes in the infantry organization contain nothing contrary in principle to the existing system in the Native Army of Bengal, and that they are rather a development of the system. I believe they would be welcomed by the Officers.

A great deal has been done of late to improve the conditions of service for the native ranks, and all are advancing steadily in efficiency. The men are very receptive of instruction, and the musketry returns show that they excel in the use of the rifle, the great majority of the regiments ranking as "very good" in their figures of merits. When they get the better arm remarkably good shooting will result.

The rapid manner in which the fighting strength of the Army was recently increased shows that our military resources are great and our service undoubtedly popular.

Lieutenant-General Lord CHELMSFORD, G.C.B. : I have but little authority to speak about the Bengal Army except so far as I have had experience of it for five years as Adjutant-General in India. I think the Institution may be congratulated upon the lecture which we have just heard. The manner in which it has been put together, and the feeling and sentiment which it contains, are admirable, and speaking as I do with very great admiration for the Bengal Army, I think that all its good points have been brought out, and the points in which it may be strengthened have been very judiciously remarked upon. I was very glad indeed to hear my friend General Gordon advocate the class regiment system as superior to that of the mixed and class companies. When I was Adjutant-General I formed very strong opinions on that subject. I knew of course at the time that

political considerations have always in these matters to be regarded, and I never ventured to express my opinion with regard to those political considerations, but I always maintained, and still maintain, that the fighting efficiency of the Bengal Army would be increased enormously if regiments were all on the class system. You then have that true *esprit de corps* which is essential to the fighting unit. This *esprit de corps* can be obtained in our British regiments through their number or title, but you cannot obtain it in the Native Army by such means. What they look to is their caste, and I believe if you had on service brigades consisting of three different class regiments, the rivalry between those three would be so great that we need never be afraid to lead them against the best organized European force that might be opposed to them. It is there that efficiency lies, and I cannot help thinking that the Government of India must have fully recognized that fact, when they ordered that the large additions recently made to the fighting force of the Bengal Army should be class regiments. With regard to what General Gordon has faintly hinted about the desirability of giving the Native Officers a more prominent military position, I should be very glad if it could be carried out. The difficulties are great no doubt. Native Officers have not been accustomed to accept full responsibility, as they have hitherto always had the English Officer to fall back upon. I believe it would be good policy on our part if we could entrust a certain number with independent command in irregular regiments, and thus practically prove to the Native Officer that he is trusted and valued by the Government. With these few remarks I will leave the subject to be discussed by those who can speak with more authority of the Bengal Army.

Lieutenant-General Sir HENRY HAVELOCK-ALLAN, Bart., V.C., K.C.B., M.P.: I beg to be allowed to say a word or two in continuance of what has fallen from Lord Chelmsford. I think the country in general has every cause to be deeply indebted to General Gordon for the very able paper which he has given us on a subject which is but too little known in this country. The efficiency of our Native Indian Army is becoming more and more an element of our Imperial defence, and it ought to receive the warm attention of our nation. I do not know anyone better qualified to have given us the very able, lucid, brief, and yet full summary of all the facts which General Gordon has given us. He began by recalling some of the circumstances of his earlier career as an Officer in the 29th Foot. I had the pleasure of being associated with him in the Mutiny thirty years ago. He has latterly held in Burmah a very extended military command, and I am sure that there is nobody better qualified from regimental experience to connect the old time with the present than General Gordon, who has favoured us with this lecture to-day. I may also be permitted to strengthen the remarks made by Lord Chelmsford as to the extreme judiciousness with which General Gordon has discussed one or two debatable points of the organization of the Indian Army. I am sure that he touched a chord in all our hearts when with so much discrimination, and yet with such a strong but tender hand, he dwelt upon that which all of us who are interested in the future of the Indian Armies as an element of Imperial defence know to be the weak point of organization in the Indian Army at present. The Staff Corps was raised in 1859 and 1861, and was developed in 1866. It has undoubtedly very great merits. One of its merits is certainly not its cheapness, but it has a great merit. It may be hereafter found to have the fatal demerit of having decreased to an enormous extent the available reserve of trained British Officers for expanding the regimental leaders of the Indian Army. I believe it is not too much to say that under the gradual operation of this system during the last twenty years our available reserve of British Officers—who, as General Gordon and Lord Chelmsford have said, must in the main be always looked upon as the real leaders of the native troops—has been diminished by one-third. There was no point to which I listened with greater attention and interest than to the hint thrown out by General Gordon, that in an improved system a wider field might be found for the development of the native military talent of Native Officers, by devising some system where, in cases of exceptional merit, a Native Officer might be chosen for the command of a certain corps, as it was in our old rule 100 years ago. I am glad to see acquiescence by Sir Peter Lumsden in that matter, for that is undoubtedly one of the thorny points of our military organization in India. The

question is how to give that proper development to the undoubted rights of the Indian Native Officer to command under certain exceptional circumstances, while keeping the leadership of the small unit, the two-company or squadron system, in the hands of the European Officer. That is the crucial point of the whole organization in India. As regards the reserve of European Officers whom you require to be available in case our Indian Army should ever be opposed—as it may very shortly be opposed—to a European foe on the north-west frontier, I think that question has not received sufficient attention from those who have had to do with our Indian military organization. During the late campaign in Upper Burma, when something like 40,000 troops were engaged, I believe I am not in excess in saying that the military authorities were put to their last shift to be able to provide sufficient European Officers for the regiments. If that were the case in a small campaign, how much more strongly would it be the case if it should happen—which I am sure every Indian soldier wishes some day may happen—that we shall be opposed to a much more numerous and formidable foe on the north-west frontier. The native races of India no doubt—I speak as one who had the honour thirty years ago of raising and commanding a regiment of native cavalry, the 9th Bengal Cavalry—the native races of India afford an almost inexhaustible source of military talent and spirit as long as it is properly directed; but the native soldier himself, from the highest rank to the youngest private in a native Bengal regiment, would be the first to admit that the real fighting element in our military company is the European Officer, however young he may be. I hope, after what I have said about the desire to develop greater opportunities of leadership on the part of Native Officers of tried ability, that I shall not be accused of having any desire to depreciate the military talents of the natives; but, gentlemen, these are times when in speaking of a great crucial military experiment it is desirable that somebody should speak out. A very brilliant Indian statesman no longer at the head of affairs, who has been Chancellor of the Exchequer, but previously to holding that office was the Secretary of State for India, Lord Randolph Churchill, was on the point some two years ago, under what I may call misguided advice, of endeavouring to substitute the idea of Native Officership altogether throughout the Army for the English Officership. If it may be allowed to anybody to enter a word of caution against any step, however small, tending to such a result, I am willing to run the risk and danger of making such a suggestion. Let us by all means give every possible scope to the intelligence and spirit of Native Officers to the utmost extent that they are capable of exercising military command, but let it be understood that in our Indian Army the leading element is the British Officer, whether a Captain or subaltern, of eighteen years' or only of one year's service. We shall then unite those two extremes which will in the future give us a Native Army which, if its organization be improved, will show itself in the future fully worthy of being trusted with the great interests not only of our Indian Empire, but of our British Empire, which is dependent on it.

Lieutenant-General Sir ROBERT HUME, K.C.B.: I should be very sorry not to make some remarks on this occasion, but having been preceded by two Officers of my own service, I thought I would wait until we had had the benefit of hearing some remarks from old Indian Officers. None of those present speaking is the only reason why I get up now. I certainly should have done so at some time, but not so soon. Of course any remarks that one makes are valuable or otherwise according to your qualifications for making them. My qualification for speaking about the Indian Army is from the point of view of a British Officer, who served in India from 1864 to 1884, with only eighteen months out of the country in that time. During that time I had many opportunities of meeting General Gordon in different capacities, commanding that very fine regiment, the 29th Punjab Infantry, and afterwards as Brigadier-General, commanding a brigade at Mooltan, so that I had many opportunities of seeing how well qualified he is in every way to have given the lecture on the Bengal Army which he has done. Although I thought I knew a good deal about the Bengal Army, I must say I have obtained a considerable knowledge from the lecture, as I am sure most of you have done. What strikes me most about the Bengal Army at present—I only left in 1884—is, without depreciating for a moment what it was in 1864, the very great improvement in

every way that I, as an executive Officer, have seen in the different regiments that I met in the early years of my service, and that I again had the honour of serving with at the end of my service in India. Without depreciating the army as it existed in 1861, I must say that I think that the army at the present day is certainly superior, that it has progressed, as all other branches of our Service have progressed, and that the Bengal Army of the present day is a most admirable Army, and an Army that I, as a General Officer, would be delighted to serve with anywhere and against any enemy. I do not mean for a moment to say that if I were opposed to a European Army I should not like, in fact that it would not be necessary, to have a Native Army mixed with British troops, but the proportion in which I should like it to be mixed would necessarily depend upon the enemy I was going to meet. It would not be of course safe to meet a European Army simply with a Native Army, and as to the proportion of British Officers to serve with the native regiment, that, I think, must depend a great deal on the enemy whom we have to meet. As to the question of the Native Officers, there is no Officer in the British Service who more fully appreciates their good qualities, their devotion to the Service, and their soldierly qualities than I do. I think one of the principal questions to be considered now is how Native Officers are to be provided, and how they are best to be educated, and I myself certainly think that the education of the Native Officer will be best carried out by its being imparted to him in his regiment. I say that because I have seen questions sometimes raised as to whether there should not be military colleges for training Native Officers. I think there is no training ground for the Native Officer like his own regiment. The advance that the Native Army has made in rifle drill and musketry is marvellous, and in no regiment is it better carried out than in General Gordon's old regiment, the 29th Punjab Infantry. I see that this year one of his havildars is the best shot in the Native Army. As I say I was twenty years in India. I knew nothing about the natives or the Native Army when I went out; but I went out prepared to find a good army, and I must say I look upon it as a most fortunate point in my career that I was sent to India, and that I was able to complete my service up to the present day in that country. My relations and those of my regiment with the Native Army ever since the day I landed in India have been of the most cordial description, and I do not think that it can be sufficiently impressed upon the people of England that they have in India a most magnificent army, and that everything should be done to keep it up to the point of efficiency that it can attain. There is one other remark that I should wish to make. It is only Officers who have served alongside a native regiment who can understand the entire devotion of the British Officers who serve in those regiments. It is wonderful to see the amount of work that the few British Officers do in a year. Anyone who has seen the work that a good Adjutant of a native regiment does would be astonished if he had never seen the working of native troops. I wished to have the opportunity to say how very much I think the native owes to the Officers who go into the Native Army, and who give up their time in order to bring it to the perfection that it has really attained.

Lieutenant-General Sir JONX WATSON, U.C., K.C.B.: Sir Robert Hume commenced by remarking that no Officer of the Indian Army had risen this afternoon to address a few words to the meeting. I should be very sorry if we broke up with an apparent slur on the Indian Army; and although I have no prepared speech or remarks to make, I wish to call the attention of the gentlemen and Officers present to the fact that two or three of the questions which have been put forward in General Gordon's lecture were pretty fully discussed at the small branch of this Institution meeting at Simla in October, 1886, and that if any Officers wish to study the question brought forward in General Gordon's lecture as to the relative value of European Officers and Native Officers, they should before forming their opinions procure the reports of the Simla Institution, and there read what Officers on the spot and Officers connected with the native regiments of India give as their opinions upon the question. I do not know that I have any other remarks to make. I simply rise to say that this¹ question was fully discussed, and that the reports of October, 1886, will give full information to any Officer who wishes to see them.

¹ Regarding European and Native Officers.

Lieutenant-General Sir PETER S. LUMSDEN, G.C.B., C.S.I.: If there is to be no further discussion on this question, I will make a few remarks on what I think we must accept as the very comprehensive and satisfactory memorandum which has been given to us by General Gordon. Perhaps I ought to point out that the enlistment of the Army is for long service, and not for three years, as might possibly be gathered from General Gordon's remarks. The men are enlisted for long service, although they are permitted after three years to take their discharge. I entirely agree with General Gordon in the view that he entertains of the military character and the capabilities of the different races which form our Army in Bengal. I think there is danger of an overestimate being made of the numbers we may be able to draw from the Sikh population. Although, as stated by General Gordon, that population amounts to something like 600,000, I doubt whether we could ever get more than 40,000 soldiers from the Sikhs. The Sikh is essentially first an agriculturist and a Jat, and then a soldier. His soldierly qualities developed under the reign of Runjeet Singh, owing to the necessities of the times and the peculiarities of the position in which he was placed, right across the path of every invader approaching India from Central Asia. I think the suggestions of General Gordon with reference to the substitution of four double-company leaders for two wing commanders, and the addition to each regiment of an extra European Officer, is one, as stated by Sir John Watson, which has been fully considered by different authorities, and has from time to time been under the consideration of the Indian Government. The Native Army of India must be accepted as an auxiliary to the British Army, and as such it is necessary to consider the cost of that Army. No Government can give more than a limited amount for the cost of any army, and the public do not realize the fact that the addition of a single Major, as a wing commander, or a double-company commander, is equal to the cost of a company, or rather some 600 native soldiers—that is to say, roughly, they cost about 700 or 800 rupees a month each. Then again as regards the number of British Officers with native regiments; the question has been over and over again considered since 1857. It is a very great advantage socially to regiments to have more Officers, it improves their messes, reduces their duty, and adds in every way to the comfort of the corps: but so far as the State is concerned, it has to arrive at the number of Officers actually required. It is very difficult to say what that number should be. In the old Native Army it had as many as twenty-four Officers in the regular regiments as compared to three or four in the irregular corps. I think those who know most of the subject will bear me out when I say that in action these irregular corps, at all events, did as good service and behaved on all occasions as well as the other corps with the full complement of Officers. I do not in any way wish to express an opinion that the number of Officers we now have is sufficient for the requirements. The great difficulty after all is to provide that reserve of Officers referred to by Lord Chelmsford and Sir Havelock Allan. We have Officers for times of peace, but are there sufficient to fill up vacancies in time of war? The present strength, as a matter of fact, has been arrived at by successive additions, to a certain extent, to meet this demand, and whatever number may be given I do not think we shall ever arrive at that point where Officers of regiments will allow that they are sufficient. Perhaps the most important point in this question is with regard to the Native Officer. If you have so many British Officers you must have duties for them to perform: you cannot have British Officers with regiments doing nothing. If you have given the companies over to the command of Native Officers, then what would be the duties left for European Officers? Government cannot be expected in time of peace to go on increasing British Officers if you cannot show that there is a necessity for them. At the same time, a reserve of Officers must exist to fill up the places of those who may fall in service. The questions referred to by General Gordon with regard to granting honorary commissions to Native Officers has lately been under consideration. A great difficulty presents itself with regard to giving commissions to Officers actually employed in regimental duty, but there is no such objections to giving such positions to soldiers who, like my friend Ressaldar-Major Mahomed Aslam Khan, commanding the Juzaelchi regiments in the Khyber Pass, holds a separate command, or to other Native Officers in similar situations or with the reserves. The proposal to raise corps entirely commanded by Native Officers, and

other proposals of a like nature, have been fully gone into and considered. Lord Chelmsford dwelt a good deal on the subject of class regiments as opposed to class companies in the Native Army. The Government of India has fully accepted the advisability of having class regiments whenever the necessities of the Service would allow of it: but when the Punjab force and other like forces were created it was necessary on the frontier to have class companies. For instance, a regiment composed entirely of Sikhs or other nationality of a plain country, would be at a great disadvantage, encountering Pathans or Gurkhas and other hill men in their own mountains. On other considerations such a mixture was convenient. I myself well remember an occasion when, after a fight on the frontier in the hills, there was a village to be destroyed, and a Mahommedan Native Officer turned round to the Officer commanding the regiment and said: "If you have no objections would you command the Sikh company to go and destroy that village, instead of the Mahommedan company, as that is a Mahommedan village?" and I think there was a political signification in that which everyone of us can understand. I do not know that I have anything more to say, but I feel confident that I respond to the feelings of all gentlemen present, when I convey to General Gordon our hearty thanks for the very interesting paper he has read to us.