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ON THE INSTRUCTION OF OUR SOLDIERS TO SHOOT UNDER ACTIVE CONDITIONS OF SERVICE.

By Colonel E. C. BROWNE, Commanding 21st Regimental District.

Tuesday, May 18th, 1897.

General Sir RICHARD HARRISON, K.C.B., C.M.G., R.E.,
in the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN :—Colonel Browne, who is about to lecture to us this afternoon, has had considerable experience, and has taken very great interest in the question of what is called musketry in the Army. He has been in charge of a musketry school in India, besides having always devoted considerable attention to the subject while he has been working in other capacities. He commanded the 1st Battalion of the Royal Scots Fusiliers for the authorised period of four years, and he is now commanding one of our regimental districts in Scotland ; so that I think you will agree with me that he is fully qualified to deal practically with the question that he is going to bring before us this afternoon.

LECTURE.

IT is only fair to myself to mention the fact that the lecture which I am about to deliver was written three months ago, and before I had seen Colonel Paton's Report for the year 1896-97. Otherwise, I may be accused of being wise after the event, as the Hythe Report foreshadows some of the reforms which I advocate in my paper.

In all the various spheres of human action, peaceful or warlike, commercial or domestic, where important issues are at stake, in order that the actors, collectively and individually, may be competent to successfully accomplish their task, it becomes necessary that each and all shall be trained beforehand to work under conditions resembling, as far as practicable, those under which their difficulties will have to be grappled with and overcome.

Any training which falls short of this, can be, at the best, theoretical, elementary, and incomplete.

There must be few amongst you who have not partaken of one of those hasty and indigestible dinners which railway refreshment-room contractors provide for travellers.

The train pulls up at a station, and it is announced that twenty minutes is to be allowed for dinner. A general rush is made for the

saloon, and in a few seconds every chair is occupied at the tables, and the repast has begun.

There is only a waiter to every ten passengers, the majority of whom are fussy and exacting, and desire his undivided attention. But he and his companions go about their work with a method which shows careful training and the confidence which such begets. To work under conditions of hurry and excitement has become easy to them. With what rapidity do they change the plates as they glide noiselessly about! There are no collisions, nor is the hot soup precipitated down the guests' backs. Course succeeds course in rapid succession, until, having bolted an extraordinary quantity of food, and finished your last glass of claret, you fussily jump up and pull out your watch to find, to your amazement, that the whole affair has been got through in twelve minutes, and that you have still eight minutes to spare.

Let us now change the scene to the palatial dwelling of a wealthy friend, where are a number of men-servants—highly-trained, highly-paid, and highly-powdered individuals.

In spite of the protests of the butler, you prevail upon your friend to try a dinner under refreshment-room conditions.

The result may be imagined. The men, accustomed to work under the slow and tranquil conditions imposed—the dinner lasting an hour and a-half—rush about hurriedly, jostle each other and upset the dishes. There is talking and confusion, and the more nervous ones become practically helpless. In vain the butler tries to infuse order into the operations of his little army, but he fails disastrously; and the time allotted has elapsed before the dinner is a quarter finished.

I have used the above simple parable to illustrate my paper and to indicate the general drift of my proposals.

The refreshment-room waiters, whom we have seen working so successfully under circumstances of hurry and confusion, are intended to represent soldiers trained upon such a system that they have acquired the habit of shooting straight and effectively, individually and in bodies under active service conditions, and who can confidently be relied upon in extreme emergencies such as those of battle.

The footmen, who although well-trained men and good waiters, when working under the orderly *régime* of a great house, but who have broken down when called upon to work under changed conditions, are soldiers—good men and true withal—whose only training to shoot has been the ranges, and, perhaps, a day or two of field firing over level ground free from physical difficulties and variety of feature, and for the most part with great individual deliberation at a black mark painted on iron or canvas—who one day find themselves called upon to shoot straight and steadily midst the hurry and excitement of a general action, and where, be their foes armed with breech-loaders or blunderbusses, with spears or assegais—they must be withstood and shot down while advancing at a run; or, if necessary, sought out and knocked over under changing conditions of ground and movement; in thick woods, o'er hill and dale, amongst rocks and boulders, along the banks of wooded

streams; now appearing, now disappearing; anon in dense masses and again in single skirmishers; but continually firing or throwing their weapons, and continually in movement throughout the ever-varying vicissitudes of an action, small or great.

Had it not been my lot to have had a very long and intimate connection with musketry—an out-of-date term now—in all its forms, as a practical shot, an instructor, as the inspector of a very large district in India and Burma, and as the chief instructor of a school, and as a commanding officer of a battalion, I should not have been here to-day. I am quite aware that the subject is of the driest—but the time for its consideration is not, I hope, inopportune.

A new rifle has of late been issued to Her Majesty's forces, and the question of an effective method of instruction on the principle of un-tiring progression in the art of shooting has within the last few months been engaging the attention of the Commander-in-Chief and his most able and distinguished coadjutors. Within the past decade great progress has been made in the way of practical reforms, but, to my mind, we have not yet reached the goal to be desired—the twofold goal, if I may use the term—of a more comprehensive and realistic system of training, and the acquisition of improved training-grounds.

In order to fill your minds with hope for the future, I have resolved upon the prosy expedient of asking you to have patience with me while I glance back retrospectively in an endeavour to give you some idea of what has been done in the past.

You mustn't take alarm and rush out of this theatre, to escape one of those awful inflictions to which so many lecturers are given, viz., "An Historical Sketch," if I refer to the year 1866. Well, that was the year during which I found myself, when a very young subaltern, a regimental instructor. Musketry was then the most irksome and the most thoroughly detested of all the duties of a soldier. It meant for me about eight hours daily for three months on the ranges while a thousand men fired ten shots each at an iron target—the officers, very few of whom knew or cared anything about it, being only too glad that I should do the work while they smoked or yawned in a tent. Musketry men were regarded as more or less harmless lunatics, and Hythe was generally known as "The Asylum." The reason was plain. The practical mind of the British officer told him that this dreary process was not the way to prepare their men for actual fighting. Moreover, the generals and commanding officers hated it, because, during the whole of the drill season, brigades and battalions were so attenuated owing to the progress of the annual course that such work became ineffective.

Naturally the crack shots, comparatively few in number, who won prizes year after year, were not adverse to the course, and even these could only shoot when perfect silence was kept by the squad, and the elements were propitious; but, in the majority of regiments, mediocrity was only aimed at, the men being only ambitious to get out of the third class to escape the consequent extra drills.

I say that the system of teaching our men to shoot at this time was not regarded as thoroughly *practical* by the huge majority of officers.

But few, if any, seemed inclined to say so. The generals and staff, I believe, regarded target shooting and all its concomitants as the uncanny machinations of Hythe and her particular monopoly, and thought it best to leave so technical a subject in the hands of the professed experts.

The campaign in Bohemia, at this time taking place, gave little help, by way of illustration, to those few who desired reforms. There was no question of shooting. A great strategical movement was crowned by tactical successes; for while the poor Austrian soldiers bungled away with their ramrods and caps, the Prussians mowed them down with the breech-loaders.

Every nation, England I think about last, came to the conclusion that the death-knell of the muzzle-loader had been sounded on the field of Sadowa. But little was really done in the British Army until four years later, on the outbreak of the Franco-German war in 1870, when the Snider-Enfield—a converted muzzle-loader—was adopted. This entailed, however, no important change in the *system of instruction*—the same everlasting ding-dong at the iron targets being thought sufficient preparation for the ordeal of battle.

I have never seen any reliable statistics of the “fire results” during the great struggle in 1870-71, but I have read and heard from both French and German officers engaged that the shooting was, as a rule, wild and ineffective, hundreds if not thousands of rounds having been expended without any results. As to what we now call fire discipline, there was none. I think I am right in saying that volley firing by sections, half companies, or companies were never attempted, for the simple reason that sufficient training had not been imparted to the men of sections and their leaders during peace. So both sides blazed away in a wild, unrestrained individual fire.

During the Russo-Turkish war some attempt was made to compute the results of the Turkish fire directed against the vast masses of Russians advancing up the Plevna heights. I think Colonel Fife-Cookson has written on the subject, and he was an eye-witness.

It was estimated that the Turkish infantry fire produced its maximum effect at 700 yards.¹

Here at least were found more bodies of fallen Russians than at longer and closer ranges, and here the attacking columns received their first serious check.

As the result of the experience gained by the three great wars above alluded to, no important change took place in the system of instruction in musketry in the British Army.

¹ From all accounts, the Turkish fire was “unaimed” fire—the men blazing away at the Russians haphazard as fast as they could load. Consequently, when the enemy were still at a distance the fire was comparatively steady; but as they approached, owing to the absence of all control, the shooting, instead of improving, became worse and worse.

Libraries might have been stocked with the works which appeared on strategy, tactics, and all subjects which may be called "the higher branches of the military art," but little or nothing was written on fire tactics, fire discipline, and rifle fire in general. I may mention here that Major Mayne's excellent work on "Fire Tactics" was published in 1884.

The reason would appear to be that it does not seem to have struck any witness to the fights, or any critic, that rifle fire influenced, in any material way, the issues. Success or failure was invariably accounted for by good or defective arrangements, or by the moral or physical superiority of one side or the other.

But the time was at hand when we were to have an eye-opener. Our unfortunate relationship with the Boers brought about hostilities, and, to the surprise of all the world, our brave young soldiers, *whose only training had been the ranges*, found themselves "not in it" against the quick, accurate, and deadly fire of their opponents.

I have no desire to harp on this unpleasant subject, but it must be admitted that our failure pointed to the necessity for an improved system of instruction and improved shooting ground.

Even *Mr. Punch* thought so. You may remember his cartoon of a burly Boer's inquiry of the Commander-in-Chief: "Does your Royal Highness require a rifle instructor?"

But, at any rate, nothing really drastic in the way of reform took place. We are ever too prone to forget our experiences, especially if the remembrance of them is unpleasant. So, after all the talk about the Boer shooting, the fault of our reverses was laid to the noble soldier who died upon Majuba Hill, and the subject dropped for the time being. At least, it would appear so, for when the '84 book saw the light, those who looked for great reforms were doomed to disappointment. The annual course was still tiresome and uninteresting, and although, as an inspector of musketry of a large district in India, it was my duty to see its provisions put in force, I confess I groaned over what appeared to me to be many of its shortcomings. Even the few new practices which had been introduced, and which were excellent in theory, were at many stations never properly worked, for the reason that commanding officers were supplied with no funds for the necessary apparatus. Consequently, the latter were always breaking down and incomplete, and I am sure my visits were looked upon with horror, as it was my duty to insist upon expenditure where no public funds were forthcoming.

There was a slight re-action in favour of further reforms after the publication of the '84 book. The Commander-in-Chief, I understood, interested himself personally in the subject, which now began to attract the attention of persons of distinction and influence, and great things were expected of a promised new code of instructions.

Our system of drill and tactical exercises were already under the microscope of the military reformer, and musketry followed. So, as the result of the report of a committee, the '87 book was published. This showed the progress of enlightened ideas. Provision was made for additional practices, some of which, if properly carried out, were a great

improvement on the past ; but no funds were provided for better ranges and more perfect apparatus. Too many prizes were still given for individual shooting at a fixed mark, and not nearly enough for sectional practices which involved good drill and fire discipline.

In 1891, the Lee-Netford rifle was substituted for the Martini-Henry, and the following year new Musketry Regulations were issued. The field practices were enriched by the introduction of the "Section Attack" and "Rapid Volley Firing"—both of which necessitated attention to good drill and fire discipline, although, of course, the distances were always known to the men, and all was plain sailing. The most important enactment in this book was, that at least *half* the prize money granted should be given for sectional practices. In 1894, a new edition to the Musketry Regulations was issued, which shows further progressive steps towards practical training, while the last edition—that of 1896—is a further improvement on its predecessors, inasmuch as it contains some useful rules for instruction in fire discipline.

But we must not believe that we are yet provided with the best possible code of regulations.

Observation and common sense have so far prevailed, that it will be admitted on all hands that the last decade has seen considerable improvement in our "system" of instruction—apart altogether from the question of the efficacy of this rifle or that, or this cartridge or that—which are subjects in themselves. Much pedantry has been left behind, and the tendency has been towards practical efficiency.

Why, then, should we not hope for further progress during the next decade?

I am not vain enough to imagine that I am justified in claiming personally any credit for this progress, but it is now nine years since my pamphlet on "A More Complete Assimilation of our System of Instruction in Rifle Exercises and Fire Discipline to Active Service Conditions" was published, and, of which this lecture is the development, and the lines indicated therein have been followed with little deviation.

Before proceeding, however, to propose further changes of a minimum of individual practices, under our ordinary range practice conditions, and a maximum of individual firing at moving targets, or sectional practices at, if possible, unknown distances ; of such practices as would include marching, drill, and fire discipline, and of field firing, I should like to preface my proposals by two axioms, the soundness of which may be possibly disputed by advocates of the process by which the Queen's Prize is won.

1. That skill at shooting at a fixed mark, in any position, is no guarantee of accuracy at things in movement, or when the firer himself is in a hurry or, in fine, of being able to shoot well under active service conditions.
2. Conversely, that being able to shoot quickly and well at objects in movement, or when the firer is in a hurry or excited—in fact, the acquired habit of using mind, hand,

and eye in unison under something like service conditions
—is a fair guarantee of good shooting at a fixed mark under
range conditions.

The annual allowances of ammunition for each recruit and each
trained soldier is 200 rounds.

Let us see how these rounds are expended :—

In individual target practice	- - - -	63 rounds
In sectional practices, <i>i.e.</i> , volleys, rapid and deliberate; independent firing; and sectional attack	- - - - -	80 „

Thus, according to the tabulated course, he fires - 143 rounds

The remaining rounds are, handed over to the C.O. to be disposed
of in any way he may think fit, subject to the approval of the G.O.C.; but
company and battalion field firing must be executed when possible.

The recruit's course is naturally different from that of the trained
soldier, being more elementary, and is, I think, good as it stands,
although, perhaps, even more rounds might be expended on individual
firing at close ranges, so as to ground the recruit thoroughly in the use
of his rifle. Volleys, and two or three practical sectional practices,
should be included in the recruit's course.

Once a man becomes a trained soldier I would devote practically all
his shooting instruction in subsequent years to a variety of practices to
be carried on as under, as near as possible, active service conditions.

Thus my Table B would be something after this fashion :—

			Yards.	Rounds.
Individual—	1. Rapid individual	- - -	300	10
„	2. „ „	- - -	500	10
„	3. Moving targets	- - -	500 - 300	10
„	4. Vanishing targets	- - -	500 - 300	10
Sectional—	5. Independent	- - -	300	10
„	6. Moving targets	- - -	600 - 300	10
„	7. Vanishing targets	- - -	600 - 300	10
„	8. Volleys, deliberate	- - -	600	10
„	9. „ „	- - -	800	10
„	10. Rapid volleys	- - -	500	10
„	11. „ „	- - -	400	10
„	12. Running practice	- - -		10
„	13. Extended order practice	- - -		10
„	14. Section attack	- - -		20
„	15. Long range volleys	- - -		10
„	16. Company field firing	- - -		20
				180

It is not my intention to propose that the above practices should be
carried out obligatorily. By no means so. It is a step in the right
direction to give latitude to captains and commanding officers as to the
exact manner of expending rounds; but, unless the lines on which they

should act are pretty clearly indicated in the Regulations, diversities of opinion may lead to all sorts of departures from the spirit thereof. For example, I have heard more than one officer in high authority say that "bull's-eye" shooting, *i.e.*, individual shooting at a bull's-eye, was the only practice of the least use: that sectional practices were nonsense, and field firing a cruel waste of public money.

In addition to the above, battalion or brigade field firing should be a *sine quâ non* of the year's shooting training.

But you will say, gentlemen, Where is the ammunition to come from, seeing that practically all has now been accounted for? Well, being of a sanguine, perhaps even an optimistic, turn of mind, I am hopeful that in the immediate future a generous Government may allow twenty or thirty rounds in addition to the present allowance for that special purpose; and, if worst comes to worst, some of the Table B practices will have to be struck out. I consider the present allowance of ammunition inadequate to the end in view.

Thirty rounds per man is the minimum allowance for battalion or brigade field firing; if the thing is to be properly done, why fifty would be better.

I claim for my proposals the following advantages over the system of instruction which now obtains :—

1. That the whole of the practices take place under, more or less, active service conditions, as is the case with field and horse artillery.
2. That they involve, necessitate, and, in a measure, are the test of previous training in drill, fire discipline, and tactics.
3. That by substituting interesting realistic practices for the dreary and monotonous individual shooting, musketry may become more popular amongst soldiers of all ranks.
4. That, seeing that practically all the money for prizes, instead of being given to individuals, would be allotted to sections or half-companies it will result in a healthy rivalry amongst these units, the men of which will be drawn together to individually work for the common good, which is the aim and object of the section system.
5. That the British taxpayer may be able to feel that the large sums he is paying annually for ammunition is expended in the proper way—not for paper results, but in real good practical work conducted under conditions as similar as possible to those of action. -

I can quite foresee that grave objections will be raised to proposals so sweeping.

The individually good shot at a target will no longer, as heretofore, receive encouragement to excel, except, perhaps, at rifle meetings; he will have to shoot in the crowd, and shoot for the good of the section, receiving only his just proportion if successful.

Again, it will be urged the range difficulty, which is bad enough

where individual firing goes on, will be increased where more realistic and less carefully-aimed fire is necessitated.

I am quite aware of this ; but one of the aims and objects of this paper is to raise the question of the range difficulty. The future looks bright in this respect now that Government has allotted funds for the acquisition of improved ranges ; but I do hope that in their construction the necessities for all kinds of realistic practices will be kept in view, and money spent on the construction of really sound targets, representing infantry, cavalry, or guns ; at any rate, at all stations where considerable bodies of troops will have to be taught to shoot.

An immense amount of nonsense and exaggeration is being spread amongst a credulous country folk as to the range and destructive power of the new rifle by silly, and sometimes by designing, people, who hope to start up an opposition to ranges being maintained in certain localities to the end that the Government may be obliged to pay unreasonable sums.

If ranges are fairly well chosen as to position, background, etc., the danger from the Lee-Netford is little, if any, greater than with the Martini ; and, I fancy, few accidents have been recorded of late years, except to persons who found themselves on forbidden ground.

The artillery have been firing all kinds of missiles at Oakhampton at immense ranges for many years with almost absolute absence of accident to man, or even beast. I may here make a point of the fact that the whole of the rounds expended by the horse and field artillery at Oakhampton and elsewhere are fired under active service conditions.

It will be noted in the above paper that I have made no reference to the cavalry course of training, nor to revolver practices, both of which are capable of improvement, but to neither of which I propose to refer.

On the Militia course, however, there is something to be said. At present each man fires forty-five rounds—twenty individually and twenty-five in volleys—but all at fixed targets. There is consequently little or no exercise of fire discipline or training of section commanders, which are both much needed in our fine Militia force. I should suggest the issue of more rounds, and the third day's practice to be devoted entirely to sectional practices. The Militia course is, unquestionably, too much hurried through.

Again, this lecture would be incomplete without reference to the shooting training of the Volunteers, who have always shown so keen a desire to be up-to-date in all respects.

I am quite aware that, under their numerous difficulties, it requires great patience and energy on the part of the officers to get their men to do the qualifying class firing—viz., the firing of twenty-one shots, very indifferently, at a fixed target at 200 yards. But that something more than this is necessary, no keen Volunteer doubts for a moment.

As you are well aware, His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught has identified himself with the movement, which, under the title of the "Field Practice Association," has for its aim the encouragement of the Volunteers to accustom themselves to shoot in sections, half-companies,

etc.—in fact, to shoot under active service conditions. At the annual meeting of this association in February last, His Royal Highness said:—"There are many good shots amongst the Volunteer corps, but collective firing is generally very bad; and I consider it most important for the Volunteers, as well as for the Regular Army, that field practices should be gone in for more than it is at present, and that every encouragement should be given to collective firing."

In proof of the favourable opinions expressed by those brilliant individual shots at objects in motion—the Boers—H.R.H. quoted from a letter he had received from an officer in South Africa, in which the writer said that the Boers were believers in good sectional firing as better than individual, although under the widely separated conditions of their lives, to practise it would be impossible to them.

But to compare our Forces—Regular or Volunteer—with the Boers, is an absurdity.

We must be prepared for all kinds of fighting, whereas they only require to get together from the four winds at the summons of their chiefs, and use their rifles from behind the rocks or crowded up in a wagon laager; and their rough-and-tumble sort of organisation has so far proved to be suited to their needs.

Our Regular Army must be trained to meet, if necessary, the best troops in Europe, and no one can possibly deny that the Volunteer forces should be trained on lines *as similar as possible* to those of the Regular Army. To attain this end we must labour on, patiently and indefatigably.

I would propose, therefore, a modified course for the Volunteers, more comprehensive than the present, more rounds being fired, at least half of which should be in sectional practices. I cannot say what can be done in this direction. It will depend upon how such ideas as mine are accepted. I can say what was done last summer by a company of the Galloway Rifles just after my annual inspection. It is located at a little place called New Galloway in Kirkcudbrightshire. Lord Minto offered a prize on the lines of the "Evelyn Wood," viz., for company teams of Regulars or Volunteers of twenty-four men, to march eleven miles in three hours and shoot in attack formation, marks being allotted not only for shooting but for marching, drill, and fire discipline.¹

The prize fell to the section of the new Galloway company after only a few days' preparation, and under the difficulties experienced by all country corps.

Should it be judged wise to insist on more sectional practices, I feel sure that a strong effort will be made by all good corps to rise to the necessity. But there must be no uncertain sound about the order. In some cases, I think, the following plan might be adopted, although only where at least one really good range is available. It is obligatory that each corps should undergo, at least, three battalion drills before the

¹ The Hythe Report just issued foreshadows improvements which, I hope, will be carried out during the forthcoming year.

annual inspection. Now, could it not be arranged that two should be considered sufficient, on condition that the battalion should assemble once for a day's realistic shooting? If properly arranged, this work could be completed in a couple of hours, and would combine the benefit of a drill with that of a useful instruction in fire discipline and section leadership.

In my own district where the corps are much scattered and every company has its own little range there will be difficulties; but I intend to try and bring the arrangement about, this inspection season.¹

The Volunteers are becoming, day by day, more and more imbued with the true military spirit—the spirit of discipline—and the keen ones—and they are in the majority—have for their aim and ambition to do real soldiers' work as far as possible. I am not out of sympathy with the professional match-shooter, he generally trains himself for his task; but, half-a-dozen crack shots do not make a good shooting regiment, especially if the crack shots are only crack shots while lying in the prone position at a known range and at a fixed target.

I have a great admiration for the Queen's Sixty. They come through the ordeal, are undoubtedly fine fellows, and probably there is a general impression that they would make short work of any number of Soudanese "fuzzy wuzzies" or Burmese Dacoits. But it by no means follows that this would be the case, as they have never previously rehearsed the work of shooting quickly, steadily, individually, or in volleys, under conditions which would be necessitated in combating a moving and agile enemy in a Burmese jungle or amongst the thorn-bushes of the Soudan.

A very acute lady once accompanied me to Wimbledon when I was shooting in the Army Eight, many years ago now. After watching the shooting generally, more especially that for the Queen's Prize, and having commented on the queer ways of Wimbledon men, she said, "Is all this supposed to be practice for real battle?" I replied that undoubtedly this was the *raison d'être* of the Meeting. "Because," she pursued, "I can't help thinking that were they to shoot like this in battle, an alert enemy would kill them all while they were engaged in taking aim."

I thought little of the remark at the time, but since then its force has often made itself manifest.

I have no hesitation in saying that I hope to see the day when the second stage of Her Majesty's Prize will be devoted entirely to moving and vanishing figures of men; to shooting at dummies impelled forwards and backwards, and to other devices calculated to develop the genius of true marksmanship.

The Queen's Sixty would then be sixty of the best shots in England, and the winner of the great prize would be a host in himself against any enemy—black or white, civilised or savage.

I hope that this subject generally may attract the attention of those keen soldiers, the Volunteers of Great Britain, and that they may think

¹ This has been done with excellent results.

my suggestions worth considering in a practical, sanguine, and resolute spirit ; for I feel that none amongst them would rest satisfied in the belief that he was a good target shot alone, and unprepared by practice and forethought to shoot under service conditions.

To shoot well at a fixed target requires nerve, patience, and coolness—all estimable qualities in a soldier; but to shoot well in action is to have acquired the sportsman's instinct. If individually, the mind, the hand, and the eye must have become habituated to work in unison—the rapid calculation of chances and the rough estimation of distances ; while in sections or larger bodies these qualities will still be indispensable, order and discipline will play their useful part by controlling and subordinating the efforts of each to the effort of the whole.

These remarks bring my paper to a close. I am deeply sensible of its incompleteness and of its other demerits ; but it is the result of my experience and the expression of deeply-rooted convictions.

One is always being told nowadays that to propose any change in Army affairs which entails expense is useless, as the Treasury is deaf to the cry of the War Office. This may have been so, but I hope is so no longer. (See the Army Estimates of the year.) John Bull is not a fool ; his education in military affairs has improved under the able tuition of those best entitled to tell him the truth, viz., the chiefs who have led his Armies to victory ; and he is no longer stingy as heretofore. So, having now spent vast sums on a new rifle—the most perfect on earth—he is not likely to, nor will he, refuse the money for improved ranges, practice-grounds, and appliances, by the acquisition of which alone its excellence can be developed to the uttermost.

As Lord Roberts remarked the other day, "Our Army is small : let it be thoroughly trained."

My belief is that in future wars, battles will not be won so much in consequence of the possession of this rifle or that, but as a consequence of the skill displayed in its use. At present, all rifles of the first order are exquisite beyond the most sanguine dreams of those who fought and won our battles with the Brown Bess, *but no Army has ever yet appeared in the field who could use them properly*. Should an Army strong in courage and enthusiasm, and composed of skilled shots, appear one day upon some European battle-field certain it is, that the effect of its infantry fire will be astonishing, and will more than compensate for inferiority of numbers, and even a lack of manœuvring power.

Surely the British Army could be made the best shooting Army in the world, as it is voluntary with long colour service, and composed of natural shots.

To this end all our efforts should be directed with untiring zeal, and for its attainment no expense or trouble should be spared. It is the pith and marrow of modern soldiering. We have only to foster and encourage the natural sportman's instinct, which is, I conceive, a prominent characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race, and we shall succeed.

The fire of a skilled infantry will, in the future, be terrible indeed ; with smokeless, noiseless power, with rapid firing, flat trajectory rifles, it

must be all-destroying. Surely it will be more than verifying the words of the world's greatest military genius, expressed in his exile, as the experience of a hundred fights, fought a century before modern arms of precision had ten-fold intensified its effect :—

“Fire is everything,” says Napoleon, “the rest is of small account.”

Colonel VERNOR CHATER (Commanding 25th Regimental District) :—I have very few remarks to offer, as I thoroughly agree with the lecturer in everything he has said. He has told us that we cannot be too particular about the individual shooting of recruits. We ought to work them up in every way by giving them more rounds, and improving the prizes for shooting at a fixed mark; but, that once being done, I cannot conceive anything better than the suggestion of Colonel Browne as to a course for drilled soldiers. As far as Volunteers are concerned, I may be allowed to say a few words. My district adjoins that of Colonel Browne, and I was chief umpire last year at that very competition in which the Galloway Rifles won, and which reflected great credit on them. They beat the two teams of Regulars, and fifteen other teams of Volunteers. I think that what Colonel Browne suggests as to the country companies, especially, having practice on the ranges as part of their inspection, is not very difficult. In fact, last year, in the case of two of my Volunteer battalions of the Border Brigade, I inspected them by companies at their ranges in marching order, etc., and, after inspecting the drilling, I made them all fire by sections at unknown distances. The consequence was that they practised at it, and expended a good deal of ammunition before the inspection, and over 90 per cent. of the men were exercised in sectional firing under my own eye. I think it would be a very good thing if that were made compulsory for all inspections. The inspecting officer could see them practising at the ranges. I think that, instead of firing the few class-firing rounds that most corps are content with, the minimum amount of seventy rounds, to make an effective soldier and earn the effective grant, should be made compulsory, twenty of which rounds should at least be in sectional volleys.

Lieut.-Colonel J. G. COCKBURN CURTIS (late Oxfordshire Light Infantry) :—I think everyone who has heard the lecture must agree generally with the view which Colonel Browne has enunciated—namely, that the soldier should be trained to a greater extent in peace-time to shoot under the disturbing conditions of war. One of the disturbing conditions which one can reproduce easily, is to make the soldier run before he fires. Perhaps that expedient is not resorted to as often as it might be. It has been my duty, as Assistant-Adjutant in the Bombay Army, to have frequently to remark on schemes and suggestions submitted, in order to make the shooting of the Army more practical. The great stumbling-block I have always found in the way is the question of disposing of the prizes. As a rule, it is thought the prizes always encourage excellence. On the other hand, the most advanced educators of the day consider that prizes produce many mischievous effects in schools. Now, Colonel Browne suggests that all the money for prizes, instead of being given to individuals, should be allotted to sections or half-companies, to encourage them to shoot well in collective or war practices. But when prizes are given for war practices it is everyone's interest to find a way of firing under the easiest circumstances, and to ignore such disturbing conditions as exist in war. Further, in prize competitions each competing body must carry out rigidly identical conditions, so the element of surprise or variety cannot be introduced by the director of the exercise.

Lieut.-Colonel Sir JAMES DE HOGHTON, Bart. (4th Bn. Lincolnshire Regiment) :—I rise to make a few remarks with regard to the Militia, as no Militia officer has yet ventured to speak. As I belong to the Militia, perhaps you will allow me to

refer first to the paragraph in the lecture dealing with that subject. The lecturer advocates increasing the number of rounds allotted to the Militia. Perhaps Colonel Browne has not spent much time with a Militia battalion, otherwise I think he would agree with me and with a great many Militia officers that, if anything, we have too many rounds now—not too many rounds to instruct the soldier to shoot, but too many in proportion to the very small time at our disposal; and not only on account of the small time at our disposal, but also on account of the conditions under which we work. We are hurried; it is a scramble from beginning to end. If you increase the rounds, you increase the scramble, and you decrease the efficiency of the teaching. One way in which we might improve the shooting of the Militia is to do what was done a few years ago in the Regulars—that is, to abolish the musketry instructor. I do not know whether there are any musketry instructors here; I do not mean any offence to them, but my argument is simply this: at present the musketry instructor goes on the range at six o'clock in the morning, and comes off at about four or five o'clock in the afternoon. Now, no individual can keep up his energy during a long period like that—probably in the hottest time of the year. He does the musketry while the company officer sits down, or at all events feels that he is not responsible for the work. I suggest doing away with the musketry instructor, and making the Militia officers do their work. Why should not a Militia captain be able to train his men as efficiently as a Line captain? If that were done, you would do away with one cause of the difficulty. You would not have a single man from one end of the month to the other, or from one end of the day to the other, on the range, but you would have an officer interested in the shooting by his own men. At present it is in the hands of one individual, who must naturally get sick of it. I have not always been a Militiaman: I served in the Line twenty-one years, and I was connected with musketry nearly the whole of that time—as an assistant-instructor, as a regimental-instructor, and as a captain-instructor, and also D.A.A.G. at the School of Musketry, Hythe. I quite agree with Colonel Browne in his remarks; but he rather disguises the question of shooting at Bisley. I am fond of shooting, but I never decline to speak out my thoughts, and to say that I consider Bisley one of the great enemies to the progress of musketry in the Army. Our men fire there under conditions which never obtain on service, and they gradually get the impression that if they have not favourable conditions, if they do not know the range, if it is a cloudy day, and there is a changing light, they cannot shoot. It also produces this effect, that the men consider, that if they are not amongst the prize-winners of the great shows, they are of no use as soldiers. I do not think that is right; I am certain it is wrong. I am certain that in practice the well-trained man, the ordinary shot of the battalion, in action is every bit as useful and good as is the "marksman." I have tried it practically; I have taken sections of marksmen and tried them against sections of ordinary shots in the field under service conditions. The difference is nothing, or there may, perhaps, be a slight difference on one side or on the other. With regard to Colonel Browne's scheme, I agree with it to a great extent but not entirely. I am for reducing the number of individual rounds, and increasing the amount of sectional practice. That is quite right; but in the scheme we have had brought before us I think there is more or less blemish, and that for this reason: the object of our individual practice is to teach the soldier what sight is required for the distance at which he fires. In this scheme there is no provision for that. If a man knows that his rifle is, say, 50 yards under-sighted or over-sighted at a range of 600 yards, he will know what it will be at 700, or 900, or 1,000 yards, as the sights are graduated by machinery. In this scheme there is no provision made for it. Then, again, though a soldier might know that his rifle is properly or improperly sighted at one part of the globe, say at the sea level, then if he has no firing in individual practice at a fixed target and suddenly finds himself shooting, say, in the hills in India, at an altitude of 5,000 feet, he will know nothing about the sighting of his rifle. That

is only a detail, but it occurred to me on hearing the lecture read. Then there is another point which struck me as rather peculiar. Many of you must have read the excellent book written by Captain Mayne, R.E., on *Fire Tactics*. A considerable portion of the book is devoted to the theory of attaining good practical results in a simple and practical manner, that is to say, using one sight, what is called a fixed sight, and aiming at the ground line. The book was published many years ago, but the principle was not recognised. At last it has been recognised, and I think there is great value in it, because it shows a man how he can produce good effects in the field in the simplest way, without everlastingly thinking, "What range am I at?" and "What part of the enemy do I fire at?" Now he knows that within a certain distance he uses one sight, he fires at one spot, and produces a good result. I think that is quite sound. The odd part of it is, that the soldier is never taught that as an *individual*. You ought to teach a man individually what you want him to do collectively in a section. I should like to mention a curious circumstance in regard to that. When the Lee-Netford rifle was first brought out, there was a practice called the "Individual attack," which consisted in firing a certain number of rounds at unknown distances between 550 and 200 yards, always advancing or retiring, the target being 4 feet high. It was found that the percentage of hits was invariably extremely high, and many of the men got the highest possible score, showing that there was a simple and effective method by which a man could do what he wanted—hit the object he was firing at, without bothering about sights or distances, and using one sight only. Now, that practice was cut out, for this reason, that it was found too easy. It always struck me as being extraordinarily illogical that, having shown a soldier how he can do without effort that which he is wanted to do, you immediately say he is not to do it any more. I think that is a blemish in our course at present. There is another point which the lecturer touched upon, and which he might have made much stronger; I refer to the question of ranges. That is a very important question. You know how many ranges have been closed all over the country. For what reason? I do not think anyone in this theatre can say why they should be closed. The official answer is that the Lee-Netford carries much farther than the Martini-Henry; that ranges which are safe with the Martini-Henry are no longer safe with the Lee-Netford. I believe that a great injury has been done to all classes of soldiers—Regulars, Militia, and Volunteers—by this indiscriminate and useless closing of ranges. It is useless, for the simple reason that there is practically no difference in the ranges of the two rifles. There has been an erroneous impression on the subject, which has done a lot of mischief. The range of the Lee-Netford is about two miles, or a trifle over; the range of the Martini-Henry is about two miles, or a little under: the difference is only the difference between Tweedle-Dum and Tweedle-Dee. It is a pity, it is a shame, that so much difficulty should be placed, without cause, in the way of our efforts to improve musketry in the Army. I think that if those in authority really knew the facts of the case the grievance might be remedied.

Colonel COCKBURN CURTIS :—On the subject of accidents behind ranges, the great point in which the Lee-Netford rifle differs from the Martini-Henry is, that the longer bullets ricochet more widely right and left. The Americans dig a long gentle incline leading up to the platform on which the targets are placed. The incline is terminated by a steeply sloping bank, which catches many ricochets. The earth thus obtained is used for the stop butt.

Colonel MCKÉRRELL, R.M. (1st Vol. Bn. Royal Scots Fusiliers):—I have not much to say on this subject, but one or two remarks have been made in the discussion to which I may venture to refer. As a member of the Council of the National Rifle Association, I must say that I heard with some astonishment what was said by a distinguished officer on my left with reference to Bisley. If what he says is correct, we are altogether on the wrong tack—and we have been on the wrong tack for nearly forty years. I may

claim, Sir, that we are on the right tack. Before you can teach a man to shoot a moving object, or an object that is jumping about, or objects at unknown distances, you must first make him master his weapon at fixed distances and at standing objects; otherwise you are trying to teach a man to run before he can walk. The National Rifle Association has to teach the rifle-shooting section of the populace how to use its rifles at fixed targets and at known distances, because it would be utterly impossible to carry out competitions in any other way, when you have to deal with between 2,000 and 3,000 competitors at a meeting extending over ten or twelve days. If you really had to test the powers of 12, or 20, or even 100, crack shots, it might be possible, after letting them commence at fixed distances and known ranges, with fixed targets, to give them a certain number of tests at moving, advancing, and disappearing targets at known and unknown distances. But it is impossible to do that when you are dealing with a large number of competitors. With regard to the Militia, as a member of the Council of the N.R.A., I regret that we see so few of them at Bisley. A few come as range-officers, but I do not remember ever having met a Militiaman as a competitor.¹ Why do not the officers set an example to their men and come forward? Prizes are given by the Association, which are open to all branches of Her Majesty's forces. The duty of the National Rifle Association—the duty for which it was founded—is not only to give permanency to the Volunteer force, but to encourage rifle-shooting throughout the whole of Her Majesty's dominions. That is what I maintain the Council ought to do, and that is what it has done. With reference to what has been said as to the shooting of Volunteers, I may perhaps be allowed to make a remark upon it, as an officer commanding a battalion. The difficulty is this: In the Regular Service you order the men to shoot, and they have to do it. In the case of the Volunteers, we have to ask them to do it; it is a voluntary service, and you cannot enforce obedience, you can only induce the men to shoot. Everyone who knows anything about Volunteers will bear me out in that you can only use moral suasion, moral force—anything beyond that is out of our power. It is with great difficulty that we get the men to go through the minimum course in order to enable us to earn the capitation grant. The commanding officer's first object must naturally be to keep the finances of his battalion in a healthy condition, and to do that he must earn the capitation grant with the least expenditure. It is often difficult to make both ends meet. If we are to give men more musketry we must have more money and more cartridges, and that adds considerably to the expense, and is a serious drain upon the resources of a battalion. Then, again, if the Government wants us to do more in the way of shooting, it should give us increased capitation grants, especially with the view to excellence in the use of the rifle. Then it would be worth a commanding officer's while to sacrifice a great deal in order to obtain an addition to the capitation grant. These things depend upon the Government. With regard to the junior force, it does not do for us to cry out; we must do the best we can with what is given us. With regard to ranges, I agree with what has been said, that it was a regular bogey idea that the Lee-Metford was more dangerous than the Martini-Henry. As a matter of fact, the small bore (the old match rifle), which was used many years ago in the great matches, carried further than any others, yet there was no accident. I believe the reason is this: The idea was that the new rifle was far more deadly, and the result was that people who had long tolerated ranges jumped at the opportunity of kicking up a row about them and getting them considered unsafe. The ranges

¹ This appears to be a mistake, as a considerable number of the officers and permanent staff of the Militia annually compete at Bisley. Their names are to be found, not only in the competition for the United Services Challenge Cup, and in the Regular and Volunteer Officers' Match, but amongst the prize-winners in the Association Cup, Albert, Army and Navy Challenge Cup, General Eyre's Army Prize, Holland, and Imperial, and Revolver.—Ep.

have been examined in the county with which I am connected, and one or two of them have been condemned. But it does not matter so much there, because there are others which are equally good. Many regiments, however, instead of having ranges at their doors, have to go 10, 20, or 30 miles before they can fire a shot. If the Government wish the Volunteers to be as skilful in the use of the rifle as the bowmen were with their implements in the Middle Ages, they must give us ranges, and find us more money and more cartridges.

Colonel E. C. BROWNE, in reply, said :—I have very few remarks to make. I may be permitted to refer for a moment to what was said by Sir James de Hoghton with regard to the Militia. Of course, the whole course is, as it is done at present, a very hurried affair. The only way to get more shooting is to sacrifice, to a certain extent, the time given to battalion drills, and the question is, Will commanding officers ever consent to do this? I propose that a day should be given up entirely to sectional shooting, which means a three days', rather than two days', course. I think this change could be effected with beneficial results. Many of the men are old soldiers, and require little drill to steady them for battalion work on parade. Most commanding officers wish to make their regiments as smart as possible for the time of inspection, regarding shooting as a secondary consideration, which appears to me to be an evil. One speaker, in pleading the cause of individual shooting, said that the men are not taught to sight their rifles properly in sectional shooting. He is under a misapprehension. The men are taught to do so thoroughly, individually and collectively, and under service conditions.

The CHAIRMAN (General Sir Richard Harrison, K.C.B., C.M.G., R.E.):—Ladies and Gentlemen, You will look to me, no doubt, to say a few words in conclusion. We have heard this afternoon a very well-thought-out lecture by Colonel Browne, who has evidently studied his subject, and we have had what may be called a representative discussion, officers having given us their opinions on the subject—officers fully qualified to speak—belonging to all branches of the Service. I do not think I need say much in reference to what these gentlemen have said in the course of the discussion. I know full well the difficulty that the Militia have to encounter. I have inspected them over and over again, and I have gone very thoroughly with commanding officers into the whole question of their training, and have tried to impress upon the authorities that it is quite impossible to make bricks without straw. The same thing, to a certain extent, may be said in regard to Volunteers. Turning for a few moments to the lecture we have heard,—on first reading its title, which speaks of the instruction of our soldiers to shoot under active conditions of service, one naturally feels that soldiers should *always* be taught to shoot as they would shoot in war. But when one analyses the question a little, and considers what are the conditions under which a raw recruit is turned into a trained soldier, one arrives at the conclusion that there are two phases of instruction, and particularly of musketry instruction. This has been alluded to by one or two speakers. You must first teach a recruit to *use his rifle*. He has got to understand how it is formed and how it is sighted, how to put it to his shoulder, how to fire it off, and how to hit a standing mark. And when you have taught the recruit, you have to teach the partially-trained soldier the practical use of his rifle. Now, when you have to deal with this man, who is not quite efficient enough to take the field, the man whom I should like to call the second-class soldier, the instruction cannot, to my mind, be too practical. I hold entirely with the view expressed by Colonel Browne that every endeavour within the bounds of possibility should be made to give the semi-trained soldier a thoroughly practical instruction in musketry. The lecturer alluded to the instruction of the Field Artillery at Okehampton. I should like to enlarge a little upon that, if you will allow me. The artillery, very wisely in my opinion, have got hold of Okehampton and have stuck to it; and by the help of the officers with whom they were associated in the Western District they have made an exceedingly good and useful

range there. I speak under correction in the presence of a very distinguished artillery officer, but, to my mind, they have almost revolutionised the Horse and Field Artillery of this country by the exceedingly practical use they have made of that magnificent range at Dartmoor. In this case also there are two phases. The gunner who fires at Okehampton has been taught, as a recruit, the use of his gun. He has been taught the various phases of action before he actually puts his teaching into practice on that rough ground at Okehampton, and there is another thing I should like to mention in connection with that range, which is, that the artillery have put the whole instruction at Okehampton for the Horse and Field Artillery under the School of Gunnery at Shoeburyness. And what is the result of that action? Surely that regard is paid not only to material, not only to horses, not only to gun-carriages, but to having a really practical course of instruction in gunnery, which is the essence of the whole thing. What I am driving at is this: the artillery, by having a central authority to look after gunnery and to control it, have established an exceedingly valuable school at Okehampton. And it seems to me that the infantry require something of the same sort. At present we have, in the infantry, a signalling school at Aldershot, a musketry school at Hythe, a field-work school at Chatham, a gymnastic school at Aldershot, and a tactical school nowhere at all. Now, all these schools that I have mentioned (except the last one) are striving to improve the British infantry. But there is no guiding head to say how much shall be done in one direction and how much in the other. If there were some central school to control all these various branches in military training, I am certain that all other schools (the musketry one, perhaps, more than any) would be much more efficient, and more advanced than they are at the present day. Of course, one of the great difficulties in the way of practical musketry instruction that we have to encounter is the want of ranges, which has been already alluded to. The Government have now taken this matter up. And I hope there will be no longer any delay about it, but that there will be good ranges in every district, so that, as far as *ranges* are concerned, musketry instruction may be carried on as if before the enemy. This has been done to a certain extent already. The lecturer alluded to the practical exercises carried on in the North of England. In the Home District, where there are greater difficulties, but where we have an exceedingly energetic General Officer (who is usually present on these occasions, but whom I do not now see in the room), they have had some very practical exercises in musketry. Only last week I was acting as umpire at Bisley, and during the greater part of the day I was watching the squads, who marched, in marching order, from near London to Bisley, and then went through an attack in as practical a manner as possible. In one of these tactical exercises the "Telegraph" Cup was won by a section of Volunteers. Another cup was won by a section of a regiment of Militia. Yet all our Guards' battalions sent sections to compete for them. I think there is no fear but that all branches of the Service, if they only get sufficient opportunity, will avail themselves of it, and will very much improve. There is one other instance that I should like to mention—the practical exercise that has been carried out in the West, close to the scene of the artillery practice at Okehampton. In the years from 1891 to 1894 there was carried out every year in the Western District what I may call a real practical musketry exercise. It was not, I am sorry to say, visited by any of the high authorities (I wish it had been). It was under no central authority—as I think it ought to have been—and some of the papers, which I think did not know much about it, rather ridiculed the way in which the exercises were carried out. For myself, I think it was one of the most practical I ever saw, and I believe that all the officers who took part in it were of the same opinion. The exercise was carried out by four battalions of infantry, made up as for war; three batteries of Field Artillery, a company of Engineers, a company of the Army Service Corps, a detachment of the Medical Staff, and so on. They marched, under service conditions, from Plymouth to Okehampton, which took

them three or four days. An enemy consisting, of course, of dummies was placed in position among the Dartmoor Hills by a staff of umpires. The attacking force was formed up in column in the morning; the advanced guard then cleared the ground with scouts, and drove in the enemy's outposts, so that a reconnaissance could be made of the position. That was the first firing exercise. The reconnaissance was then made, and the artillery were brought into action and opened fire on the main position. The infantry, under cover of that fire, moved up in readiness for the main attack. The infantry then delivered the main attack. The enemy were supposed to have retreated, and they were pursued by the infantry, and it was discovered that they had taken shelter behind a small redoubt. The artillery were then brought up again and shelled the redoubt. Then there was the final advance of the infantry and the storming of the redoubt. I will not give you any more details. The attack took five hours. It was an exceedingly practical one, and was more like war than anything I have ever seen carried out anywhere. If the Government will only give us ranges, one certainly in every district, to enable us to have practical exercises, either like the one I have described in the Western District, or at all events like those carried out already in the North of England or in connection with the Home District, I cannot help thinking that we shall have eventually a very much more practical course of musketry than we have at present, and that the views of the lecturer as expressed this afternoon, will be carried out to the full. With these few words, I will ask you to give a sincere vote of thanks to Colonel Browne for his lecture, and also to thank the officers who have taken part in the discussion.