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CORRESPONDENCE.

THE TRAINING OF MILITIA ARTILLERY.

To the Editor of the JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL UNITED SERVICE INSTITUTION.

SIR,—With your permission I should like to briefly support Captain Bird's remarks in your issue of December last on Colonel Legard's lecture on the above subject.

Captain Bird points out the great difficulty Garrison Artillery companies have in maintaining their own requirements in the matter of specialists, especially at home.

After 12 years' experience in command of a company, and as a Lieut.-Colonel R.G.A., I can most fully endorse what he says.

When, in 1890, the system of prize firing was altered in the R.G.A., and it was arranged that batteries, as they were called in those days, should compete as a whole, it was at once realised that success would depend in a great measure on the training of the gun layers, of which each battery had to keep up 16 out of a total strength, exclusive of casualties, of about 150.

Well can I remember the infinite trouble taken to train those layers, and the hours passed by my officers and myself on the sighting steps checking their work by the alternative sights. The result, after some months' training, was, roughly speaking, as follows:—Three or four men were more or less perfect, four more were good layers, half-a-dozen only fairly reliable, while the last two or three vacancies could not be satisfactorily filled up at all.

A really perfect layer, either at a Q.F. or heavy gun, is as hard to make as a crack game shot.

Units at home have the same difficulty in keeping up their establishments of depression range and position finding specialists; it was some years after the introduction of these instruments before the requisite number of trained men could be found. Home companies have often to send many of their specialists abroad every trooping season, to fill up units at a foreign station.

In September, 1902, a company at Sheerness, which had to man 8 Q.F. guns, was left after the autumn reliefs had been found with but two qualified gun layers. How on earth, under such circumstances, could Militia battalions be supplied with specialists from affiliated R.G.A. companies?

Colonel Legard is, in my opinion, absolutely right in suggesting that in the brief period of training they undergo, Militia regiments cannot provide their own specialists, but though the authorities can, with a stroke of the pen, alter the R.G.A. company establishment of specialists from 25 to 50, as Colonel Legard proposes, to find them is a very different pair of shoes. If a company, 150 strong, can find 25 capable specialists, you may take it that 300 men will be required to find 50.

Another point is, that specialists, especially gun-layers, ought, to get good results, to practice regularly with the rest of the detachment. Man is not a mere machine.

The whole question bristles with difficulties. The formation of District Establishments, in 1891, was an attempt to solve it; but this scheme was based on the supposition that there was no such thing as *esprit de corps*, and that a gunner would do anything for 3d. a day extra. The idea, of course, was to form a small body of specialists at each fort, who would remain there permanently and work for whatever unit came to man it. Men, however, would not leave their companies to become no man's children, as they called it, and it was only after considerable modifications of the original orders were introduced that these District Establishments could be formed at all. My own experience is that they have been a failure from first to last.

Perhaps the easiest way of providing the Militia with specialists would be to post them like sergeants to regiments as part of the permanent staff. This would cost money, but bricks cannot be made without straw, and as gunnery becomes more and more scientific, more and more money will have to be spent on the *personnel* affected.

As regards Militia *versus* Volunteer training, as alluded to in Captain Bird's concluding remarks, if a Volunteer regiment has access all the year round to the works it mans on service, I quite agree with that officer, and, under such circumstances, and given a liberal allowance of practice ammunition, I do not think it impossible for the corps to find many of its own specialists.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

P. SALTMARSH,
 Colonel, late R.A.

Daresbury House, York.
 17th February, 1907.

NAVAL AND MILITARY CALENDAR.

FEBRUARY, 1907.

- 5th (T.) H.M.S. "Hyacinth", completed to full complement for service in East Indies.
- 8th (F.) 3rd Bn. Northumberland Fusiliers left South Africa for England in the "Braemar Castle," to be disbanded.
- 12th (T.) Stranding of the French Second-class Cruiser "Jean Bart" off Pedra de Galhe, West Coast of Africa.
- 13th (W.) 1st Bn. Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers left Ireland for Crete in the "Sicilia."
- 14th (Th.) 3rd Bn. Royal Warwickshire Regt. } arrived in England from South
1st Bn. Norfolk Regt. } Africa in the "Soudan."
- 19th (T.) H.M.S. "Hyacinth" left Chatham for East Indies.
- " " H.M.S. "Queen" arrived at Plymouth from Mediterranean.
- 22nd (F.) The Army Estimates were published, showing a decrease of £2,036,000
- 24th (S.) 1st Bn. Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers arrived in Crete from Ireland in the "Sicilia."
- 25th (M.) 2nd Bn. Royal Sussex Regiment left Crete for Ireland in the "Sicilia."
- 26th (T.) H.M. The King conferred the G.C.B. upon H.H. Prince Henry of the Netherlands for his services in connection with saving life at the wreck of the "Berlin."