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Colonel M. Gosset Late Dorsetshire Regiment C.B.

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GENERAL SIR ARTHUR J. HERBERT, K.C.B., in the Chair.

BATTALION COMMAND.

By Colonel M. GOSSET, C.B. (late Dorsetshire Regiment).

THE position of the Commanding Officer of a battalion is of such importance that I feel an apology is hardly needed for my appearance at this Institution this evening, to give you my ideas. Not that I can boast of having anything novel to lay before you, but having now been thirty-five years in the Service, and having lately given up the command of a battalion, I thought that my experience might be of use to those who aspire to command, and that I might, at any rate, open up some questions of import to our Army at the present time.

I may say, to begin with, that the command of a battalion is in these days a much more difficult task than of old, simply because so much more is demanded of all ranks than formerly. Ever since the Crimean War, we have been slowly and, I hope, surely, advancing in a knowledge of our profession, and we are gradually teaching our young Officers and men that soldiering means something more than a good march past and rigid movements on the barrack square. Not that I despise work in the drill ground, for it is a part of disciplinary training which should never be relinquished, and there is a danger that in our reforms this might be lost sight of.

I will begin with the private soldier. In these days of talk, and a Press that is always on the look-out for something out of which to frame a smart newspaper article, a great deal is said and written about Tommy Atkins, and many will say, and have said, that he is not the man he was.

My experience of him is that he is not the man he was—only in the sense that, as a rule, he is a boy—but, taking him all round, he is every bit as good in quality, and, if treated properly, better in conduct, than of old.

So many able military men have pointed out the danger of a boy army, and so many regimental Officers shake their heads when they read post-prandial speeches cracking up the efficiency of the Army in England and its readiness for service, that it is merely going over well-trodden ground to allude to it.

Leaving out the regiments in India, in the Mediterranean, and elsewhere out of the United Kingdom, there is not the slightest doubt

in my mind that the majority of our home battalions are quite unfit for war, simply because they are composed of boys.

They have not the service to have had ingrained into their natures the value of discipline; they have not the age and service to ensure their making the most effective use of their rifle in the excitement of action; nor have they the age or service to enable them to withstand the hardships of a campaign, and in a fortnight half of them would be in hospital. The causes are well known:—under-age enlistment, deferred pay, which tempts a man to go at the expiration of his first period of service, and the emasculation of the home battalion to feed the linked battalion abroad.

We Englishmen never seem to be able to hit off the happy mean in our reforms. Because the old soldier of twenty years or more ago, that is, the man of from eighteen to twenty-one years' service, was broken down, as a rule, we make a *volte-face* and put in his place a boy of sixteen or seventeen years of age.

I, of course, am fully sensible of the value of a Reserve, but I am at a loss to see why a man should not be enlisted for ten or twelve years, which would enable him to go to the Reserve at twenty-eight or thirty years of age. It appears to be the period of enlistment best suited to our voluntary Army, and would be of immense value in raising the service value of our battalions, and, we may also say, our Reserve.

But, boy or man, the material of our Army is excellent, and I have left my battalion—which, by the way, is now composed of men principally of an age between twenty-three and twenty-five years—with the highest opinion of the British soldier. I am happily spared the pain I should feel of seeing some 300 or 400 of them go bodily to the Reserve, and their place taken by boys.

I will now turn to how a soldier should be dealt with. So much nonsense has been written of late about the wrongs of soldiers, that the outside world likely enough regards him as the most ill-used man under the sun; that he is bullied by his Officers, done in the eye in the matter of pay, and that his life is a burden to him.

I quite allow that the question of how he should be treated with as a member of a free nation is a very important one. But those who write so glibly in the papers view the matter from a civilian standpoint, and have often not the most elementary ideas of what discipline means, and how important it is, if we want to retain our old reputation in the field, that it should be maintained. There is one thing of which I am very certain, that insubordination in the Army, wherever it exists, is not caused by severity, but by either a mistaken clemency, or else a want of discrimination as to the degree of an offence.

I have seen cases in which a man who checked a non-commissioned officer received the same punishment as one who over-stayed his pass an hour or so; and what has been the consequence? Insubordination increased, and had finally to be stamped out by the most drastic measures. You cannot rule 800 men with rose-water. A man should know beforehand what to expect if he commits certain offences, and it is this knowledge that either increases or diminishes crime.

But it is not by punishment alone that men can be ruled. It is necessary for those who are not alive to any milder sort of argument; and these form a small minority in a battalion, but it is by considering the sentimental side of men's natures, and this I do not think is sufficiently thought of in dealing with men, good characters or bad. For instance, when a particular class of crime is common in a battalion, the ordinary stereotyped way of proceeding is for the Commanding Officer to issue a regimental order, couched in something like the following terms:—

"The Commanding Officer having remarked that the crime of doing so-and-so has become very common, he warns the battalion that any man offending in this respect in future will be severely punished."

Now this is all very well, but it shows a want of knowledge of human nature. History proves that you cannot deter men from crime by threats. Arnold, of Rugby, recognized this, and so did not the authorities at Sandhurst when I was a Cadet. Smoking was in those days a heinous offence—drinking was so, more correctly. We were threatened with severe punishment, and a system of espionage was established to find us out. What happened? It was considered a fine thing to smoke and drink, and all our efforts were directed to evade the spies and to indulge ourselves with bad tobacco and worse liquor.

I am pretty certain that if the Governor had assembled the cadets and made it a point of honour for the good name of the College to forego these vicious habits, I, for one, should not have learnt to smoke at fourteen, and considered myself a very fine fellow to run three miles to a public-house for the purpose of drinking rum shrub.

And so it is with men; they should know what punishment an offence will certainly entail, but threats are bad, and return on those who issue them. My experience is, and I have never found it to fail, that by appealing to the better feelings of men by a few chosen words on parade the evil will stop. The speaker must, of course, be believed in and have the good will of the men. If he has not, he has no right to be in the position he holds.

Yet another point on the subject of punishment. A man is brought up for drunkenness or some other offence, bearing on his arm three or four good-conduct badges. I think I am right in saying that the general tendency among Commanding Officers is to be lenient to him because he is so decorated. They think it will be hard on him to take away a badge and injure him as he is leaving the Service. Now, I do not altogether agree with the Officer who looked upon a number of good-conduct badges as the result of a long and successful career of crime, but it is often the case that an old soldier, who knows the ropes, answers his name at tattoo and goes to bed full of drink down to the Plimsoll mark, sleeps it off, and is seldom hauled up. My idea on this question has always been that, if a man bears on his arm these honourable distinctions, he should be what he is supposed to be, and that, if not, he is a walking lie. I therefore often took away a badge from a man of this kind, telling him at the same time that good-conduct badges are a test of good conduct, and that, if he

did not choose to live up to them, I was at loss to see why I should deal differently with him than with any other man. He seldom saw it in the same light.

There is one more point in dealing with men, which is, I think, often too little thought of. Men, as a rule, are well abused if they do wrong and do not get enough credit when they do well. Soldiers, of all other men, are peculiarly susceptible in this respect, and, although the ordinary Englishman is no lover of butter applied too thickly, he is keenly sensitive to a few well-spoken words of praise. With Irish soldiers, who are more impressionable, and who have always been difficult to manage in quarters, and are such fine fellows in war, this feeling is accentuated. Prince Kraft in one of his books mentions the case of a battalion having failed in an attack, and who were, in consequence, broken in spirit and downhearted. Seeing this, a General Officer rode up and said, "Bravo! You could not have done better." The effect was magical.

It struck me years ago how little was done to make the men acquainted with the history of their regiment.

There is hardly a regiment in the Service that has not a glorious record to boast of, and some are exceptionally fortunate. The battalion I had the honour to command can boast of having fought at Plassey under Lord Clive, at the four years Siege of Gibraltar, in India, in the West Indies, and in the Peninsula, where they took part in the glorious soldiers' battle of Albuera.

To remedy this want as far as I could, I wrote out and delivered a series of lectures, taking in the whole regimental history, illustrating the principal actions on the wall of a fives court, and showing what part the regiment took in them.

If enthusiasm is a measure of success, these lectures fulfilled their object, and by enforcing that the honour gained in so many wars could not have been attained without good discipline, self-denial, ready obedience, and pluck, I do not think I am wrong in saying that the knowledge gained by the men of their regimental history raised their tone, and I could afterwards observe a steady advance in good conduct.

I would commend this to Commanding Officers. There is always some Officer in a battalion capable of giving lectures of this sort, and, as an appeal to the higher feelings, they are most valuable. In fact, I would recommend for consideration whether it would not be for the general good of the Service that the regimental history should form part of the instruction of every recruit.

It is not necessary to remind you of the improvement that has taken place in the soldier's condition of late years. His barracks, his food, his health, his amusements, all have been carefully considered, and if he is not a happy man he ought to be. The danger appears to me that we may coddle him too much, and that Jeshurun may some day wax fat and kick. With all his good qualities, Tommy in peacetime is a very helpless and careless man as regards his own good, and has in many cases to be treated like a child. He comes of a thriftless class, and, while he accepts everything that is done for him, he does

but very little for himself. Take the important question of cooking, or even the quality of his rations. The majority of the men show a supreme indifference to the whole question, and take what is given them and say nothing, and it is only by constant supervision on the part of the Commanding Officer that the cooking is improved, and that the soldier is taught that it is an advantage to have meals well cooked and served.

As regards drink, the character of the nation must change before we can expect it to disappear from the Army. It is not more common in the Army than among the class from which a large proportion of our men are drawn, but a man in a red coat is more *en évidence* than a civilian when labouring under the effects of liquor.

A man was brought before me one day for drunkenness, and he argued that it was impossible that he could have been drunk, as he had only taken five pints.

But drunkenness has decreased in the Army, at least as far as my experience goes, and there is no doubt the graver forms of it can be kept in check, such as drunkenness on duty, on the line of march, &c. I always, as a rule, punished a man more heavily for being drunk in town than in quarters, for the reason that in town he was disgracing his regiment. As many Officers know, it is not an uncommon thing when a battalion is changing quarters for the men to take a glass, as they call it, with their chums who are being left behind, and the result is scenes at a railway station highly discreditable. I have always found that an appeal to the men on parade, a day or two before the move, has been quite sufficient to stop this; and, as a proof of confidence in the men, have left the canteen open till the last, and the result has been that the worst characters have kept sober. I remember in India on an occasion of this sort, when a Captain, addressing a notorious toper, praised his sobriety. "Lor, sir," was his jubilant remark, "I havn't been so sober for years!"

So much as regards the private soldier. I now move a step higher, and deal with the non-commissioned officers.

The conduct of the non-commissioned officers and the way they do their duty depend entirely upon the Commanding Officer and Officers commanding companies; in short, on the system of the battalion. Raise the tone of the non-commissioned officers in every way you can, show that you do not intend to have one law for them and another for the private, and at the same time back them up, so that they are not lowered in the eyes of those under them, and everything will generally go straight enough. The complaint, nowadays, is that the non-commissioned officers are very young, too young to properly control young soldiers just joined, and who have not fallen into the restraints of discipline. This is unavoidable, of course, as long as our present terms of enlistment remain as they are, and applies especially to the young battalions at home. Abroad, the non-commissioned officers have, as a rule, more service, and there is not so much to complain of under that head; at least I can speak from experience with my old battalion, and taking them all round we had a good and intelligent lot of sergeants and corporals. There is one

thing with reference to non-commissioned officers which I think is worth thinking about, and that is the question of marriage. Nowadays, no private soldier or corporal can marry under seven years' service, a wise rule enough considering the age of the men, and the result is there are but few married privates in a battalion. This, I may mention, is a drawback with reference to the washing of men's clothes, which has now often to be farmed out. But this is a minor disadvantage; what I wish to point out is that a large proportion of sergeants can marry, and this has its effect on discipline—I mean barrack-room discipline; and the keeping of order in the barrack-room (and discipline begins there) is often left to young corporals and lance-corporals who are afraid to exercise their authority, the danger being, that irregularities are liable to be winked at.

With battalions of young soldiers this is a serious question, and I think it worth the consideration of the authorities whether the regulations as to the marriage of sergeants should not be amended. I am not one of those who run down the non-commissioned officers of the present day. They are better educated than those of former days, and it depends in a great measure what the system of the battalion is whether they turn out well or not. Those who complain of them most probably think that as soon as they get the lance stripe they will educate themselves, and are astonished that they are not like ready-made clothes, fit for work at once.

As regards the Officers, I see but little change in the class of gentlemen who join now from those of old days. Young Officers who join are generally quite ready to learn, and it depends entirely on the Commanding Officer whether they are properly taught or not. There is no doubt, if they are not made and encouraged to study, several of them will let it slide. And this is quite natural. Officers are well received wherever they go—they have every incitement unless properly controlled to make their duty subservient to their pleasures, and it is very much to the credit of our Officers that they have, as a rule, a strong sense of duty. The manner in which this sense is fostered and applied depends on the Commanding Officer and on the Captains of companies.

In old days, as all men of any service will well remember, the whole business of a regiment was in the hands of the Commanding Officer and the Adjutant—the Captains were nowhere. They had no encouragement to act on their own responsibility, and the consequence was that they looked to the Commanding Officer for everything. Some men are so constituted that they will accept responsibility in all circumstances, but many are not, and I am certain that if a Commanding Officer wants his battalion to be in good order, he must insist on everyone doing his own work and not look to anyone else to do it for him. A Commanding Officer's and Adjutant's battalion is bad. A Commanding Officer should not be like the Minister in the "Mikado," a man holding a plurality of offices, but should act on the principle of "Divide and govern."

I have always regarded this principle of decentralization as one of the most important questions relating to command, and in carrying

it out have found that Captains of companies soon learn to take a higher view of their duties, and by accepting responsibility themselves have exacted a proper share from those under them. There is no doubt that Officers not so trained are apt when they get command of a battalion to be always referring questions to the General in command which they ought to settle themselves, and there is often a tendency among General Officers to encourage this instead of refusing to interfere. The same may be said with reference to work in the field. If enough latitude is not given to Officers commanding companies, and they are always interfered with, they won't act independently, and I have seen many a well-conceived little manoeuvre fall through from want of initiative on the part of junior Officers; and who has not seen a Commanding Officer make his battalion look foolish by want of this sense of responsibility and an appreciation of the situation on a field day?

I hope I may be excused criticizing Officers of a rank higher than my own, but the fault in our regimental training of a Commanding Officer vesting everything in himself, and not giving enough responsibility to subordinates, has often been the cause of undue interference with battalions both in quarters and the field—with the result that a sensitive Commanding Officer is apt to be in a perpetual state of irritation, and a nervous one to tremble when he sees a cocked hat, and to be almost servile to an A.D.C.

The regulations of late years as to company training, musketry, &c., all tend to train all ranks to accepting responsibility with good results, but I fear there are still some Commanding Officers who cannot resist the temptation of trying to do everything themselves. They may have their battalion in capital order, but they do not leave enough behind them, and there is always a darger of the whole fabric falling to pieces.

At the same time, the Commanding Officer of a battalion is the life and soul of it—he must have his eye on everything, know everyone's wants, and never imagine, because he has established a good system, that it will keep going without a perpetual greasing of the wheels. I excused myself some time ago from attending some entertainment, by saying I had work to do; a lady at once said, "A Commanding Officer has nothing to do: he has only to issue orders." This is the popular idea, no doubt, and it is as easy to issue an order as it is to write out a cheque; but it may not always be cashed. Our friend Mr. Pecksniff remarked: "If England expects every man to do his duty, she is very much mistaken;" and he showed his knowledge of mankind. There is always somebody who wants gentle persuasion or otherwise to do his duty, and orders, however sensible, often fall through from want of the supervision necessary to have them properly carried out. I think it was Lieutenant May, of the German Army, writing of the War of 1870-71, who pointed out that the men composing an attacking force were to be divided into three classes. The first class were the bravest and best—who led the way; the second those that only wanted a lead to go on; and the third those who had always an eye over their shoulder with a view to going back. So it

is in the matter of duty, and it is the third category who have to be spurred on.

Having dealt generally with the various ranks that make up a battalion, I will go on to the important subject of education. After I began to write this paper, I came across a lecture delivered in this Institution last year by Major Ker Fox, on the Training of Cavalry; and in the discussion that followed, General Sir Charles Shute, who presided, alluded in forcible terms to the system in our Army of detaching Officers from their battalions for acquiring knowledge.

I do not myself see how this is to be entirely avoided until we have advanced considerably in knowledge; but I have long been of opinion that the regiment or battalion should be the school of instruction for all ranks. I do not mean to say that every Commanding Officer or every Captain is capable of becoming a good instructor; but there is generally in a battalion some Officer who has the knowledge and aptitude for the work: and anyone who has instructed Officers or men will tell you that he himself learns as he instructs. If we want to make a real advance, the battalion must become its own school, and the schooling should be gradual from the time an Officer or man enters the Service. There may be some who think that the time has not arrived for this reform. Judging from my own experience I think it has, and I should hail with pleasure when the order is issued to do away with garrison instructions and adopt regimental instruction in their place. It is a melancholy thought, that in order to enable an Officer to pass for promotion to a higher grade it should be necessary to detach him from his battalion to go through a system of cram. I know of nothing more calculated to disgust an Officer with subjects with which he should be well acquainted. Nowadays, many Officers commanding battalions are S.C. men, and could easily direct the instruction of all ranks theoretically and practically.

There are, of course, great drawbacks in the matter of practical instruction in tactics, &c., in hot climates during a considerable portion of the year; but we might carry out a great deal more instruction, and more particularly of the Officers and non-commissioned officers, than we do now.

I would commend to the notice of Commanding Officers the interchangeable war-game maps of Lieutenant Sharpe, 3rd Middlesex R.V. I had them in use for three years, and, during the summer months in Malta and Egypt, worked out small schemes, which brought in map-reading, the issue of orders, the working of reconnoitring and strong patrols, and outpost work. Both Officers and non-commissioned officers took much interest in these schemes, and no doubt a good deal of knowledge was gained; while, as a preparation for the annual company training, it is useful.

As regards non-commissioned officers, the more you can educate them in the practical part of their profession the better: and that this is recognized is shown by the recent orders as regards their examination for promotion, and placing the preparations for these examinations in the hands of the Captains. This and the company training,

honestly and intelligently carried out, ought to advance them considerably in knowledge. The tendency is for non-commissioned officers (as also in the case of Officers) to get a parrot-like knowledge of the book, and to be utterly abroad in the field. Many of them, when lance-corporals, show great intelligence; but often promotion seems to dwarf their intellect. Whether this is the result of the narrowing tendency of barrack routine I do not know: but it is the case, and I have often been surprised by the utter absence of "nous" and intelligence (on the ground) shown by good men. Company training has done a great deal to improve our non-commissioned officers, and, as time goes on, we shall get much better work out of them.

As regards the annual training of companies, I latterly had two companies training at the same time, in order that a good deal of the tactical work could be carried out with opposing forces under some special idea, and so made as like as possible to what would really happen on service. The varied ground round Cairo is particularly suited for minor tactics, and much interest was shown by all ranks in the work, simply because they had very little to imagine.

To tell Tommy Atkins that a certain position is occupied by an enemy when it is not, conveys but little to his mind; but let him see some helmets showing over a trench, or a wreath of smoke, and the report of a rifle, and he realizes the situation at once. It, of course, depends on the quarter a battalion happens to be in whether there are facilities for practical tactics; but I know from experience that, if a Commanding Officer will take the trouble to visit the farmers in England, they will, as a rule, allow troops to manœuvre over their land, and will turn out with their families to see.

With regard to the private soldiers, I may be thought somewhat of a heretic when I say that the tendency nowadays is not to teach him too little, but too much; or rather, I might say, that we are apt to lose sight of certain essentials which make the good service soldier, while we stuff him with a good deal that may well be left alone.

No one is more convinced of the value of the annual training of men by their own Officers than I am, and I have always taken a great interest in it, and have striven to make it as practical as possible; but, as far as the private is concerned, I would use the shears and cut down a good deal of it. Four weeks is too long to keep men at instruction, they weary of it; and, moreover, it is only in England where we can afford to give so much time. In hot climates, where all the practical instruction of a battalion has to be carried out during a period of six months or less, the course has to be curtailed, and I have found that fourteen days of good, steady, practical work is very nearly, if not quite, enough for a company.

The Queen's Regulations lay down that, when practicable, infantry should go through a short course of instruction in field works, which includes modelling, indoor tracing, making siege parallels, field redoubts, &c. It is impossible to give Tommy Atkins anything but the most rudimentary knowledge of all this; and it has often made me sad to see him patting the superior slope of a model fort which has been traced out and made without any governing tactical idea,

and in a position where no one on service would place a fort. Teach Officers and non-commissioned officers how to do these things, if you like, but let Tommy Atkins be taught simply how to dig without breaking the handles of his pick and shovel.

I have said above that we are apt to lose sight of certain essentials in our strivings to make Tommy a Jack-of-all-trades. These essentials are—1st. Discipline. 2nd. The power of marching long distances well. 3rd. The power of shooting well.

1. No military man requires to be reminded of the value of discipline. It is the first thing and everything, for without it you can do nothing. I have already alluded to it, and I would add that it can be fostered best by inculcating a feeling of honour throughout every rank, and a sentiment that it is the duty of every individual to strive to maintain the good name of the corps.

2. As regards marching. Good marching means that men are able to stand hard work, and get alongside an enemy in good form.

Our physical training has always, as a rule, tended more to strengthen a man's arms than his legs, whereas the latter are more important of the two, for it is the soldier's power of movement that is everything in war. This power is not to be gained by a route march once a week. As far as my experience goes, the only way to attain it is to have running drill extending over some months. During my command, I had running drill every morning for three or four months in the winter, beginning with short distances, until the men could get over 1,000 or 1,200 yards, carrying their rifles without distress. It is the only way to make men march well, and also to make their boots easy. A man's boot gets into shape in the action of running, and if they are kept soft by dubbing—a pot of which I made part of the soldier's kit—they can do anything. In Egypt, where we had long field days in the desert, some miles from the barracks, I found that the men could do a long day's work, and come home singing at the end at a swinging pace.

As regards the third attainment, "shooting," a great deal has been written and said. Good shooting at a target is not difficult to attain; and it steadily improves as the men grow older. All that is wanted is that all ranks, beginning with the Commanding Officer, should take the interest in it that so important a part of a soldier's training deserves. When once the spirit is infused into a battalion, every man does his best, and the older the soldier the better he shoots, as a rule, provided he does not suffer from any visual defect. This is an argument in favour of older soldiers. Ask Officers who have commanded companies of young men during some of our small wars, and they will tell you of many cases of wild and useless firing. Instruction in the use of the rifle should not cease with the annual course, but should always be going on. I made it a rule never to have a battalion parade without firing volleys by sections, always directing the aim at some point, generally oblique to the front of the line. As a lesson in fire discipline, and in teaching Officers and non-commissioned officers to give good words of command, and to attend to the adjustment of the sights, &c., it was very useful, and the result was

that, even if the individual firing during the annual course was not so good as it might have been, the volley firing, both ordinary and rapid, was very good.

I do not think the practice of volley firing on parade can be carried too far, as it accustoms the hand and eye to work together, and in war-time men so trained would probably wait for the word of command from pure habit; and, with very young soldiers such as compose so many of our battalions, the exercise is absolutely necessary.

There is one question with reference to individual shooting which might, in my opinion, well be seriously considered. It is, that every company has a few men who, either from defective sight, stupidity, or any other cause, remain 3rd-class shots all their service. Notwithstanding this they go through the same course as the rest of the company. If a man cannot make a decent score up to 400 yards, it seems absurd to allow him to fire at the longer distances. He should be made to fire at the short distances until he gains something like a decent score.

A 3rd-class shot is an ineffective soldier, and one very good regulation is not to allow men of this class to hold any position such as an Officer's servant, mess waiter, canteen waiter, &c., or to be put on any other regiment or garrison employ, until they get out of the 3rd class. I found it had the effect of making bad shots take pains and improve, simply because they got extra parades, and their comrades ridiculed them. It also gave marksmen and 1st-class shots a higher sense of their position in the battalion.

I think also that we do not, as a rule, consider sufficiently the value of the field practices. They are the test of what a company is worth individually and collectively, and I should like to see more stress laid on their importance.

As regards battalions making very high scores in the individual practices, I am a sceptic. There is likely to be a tendency to maintain the position of being a good shooting battalion by hook or by crook. I do not know which are the battalions on the top of the list, so I am not casting any aspersions, but I am sure, in my own mind, that while it is possible for a battalion of old soldiers to hold a high place, it is not possible for them to retain it when 200 or 300 of them go to the Reserve, and their place is filled by boys. It can be regained of course if the instruction and the spirit of the men is good, but only gradually.

With the introduction of the new rifle, our shooting ought to improve, for there is no doubt that one cause of bad shooting with the Martini-Henry is the kick.

I have seen men at bathing parades with their shoulders black and blue, and there are many men who have to put a pad to their shoulders to obviate it. It will be said that this is the result of bad position in firing. I do not think so; for I know many first-rate shots, Officers and men, who suffer in this way. It depends on their build.

I have often thought that, supposing you gave a man 100 rounds before starting to attack a position, he would hardly be able to put

the Henry-Martini to his shoulder at all when he reached the effective distances, and when independent firing began, would most likely fire from his hip.

As a rider to the question of the instruction of men, I would mention that last summer I found myself in a railway carriage with a serjeant, and, in answer to certain questions I put to him with reference to the recruiting of his battalion, he said, "Our three-years men are now so bothered with drill, training, and perpetual work that it has the worst effect upon recruiting. They long for the day when they can take their discharge, and they go to their villages carrying with them a feeling of disgust for the Service."

This shows that with our voluntary Army, particularly with men who enlist for so short a term as three years, we may debar men from joining the ranks from *trop de zèle*.

It was Sir Cornewall Lewis who said that men in these days do a great deal too much, and I think the tendency is, with regard to the private, to try and grow corn on uncultured ground. Educate the Officers and non-commissioned officers as high as you can, especially at a time when their minds are most receptive, but go judiciously with Tommy, who is apt to ask why he is being humbugged about, and to resent it.

In bringing what I have to say to a conclusion, I should like to add one or two general remarks.

In the first place, I would say that, while our Army has made great strides in many ways, I, as a regimental Officer, have never been able thoroughly to fall in with some of the changes in the last two decades. The old regimental system had its faults, and as a matter of policy with reference to recruiting, the linking of battalions may have been necessary, but it has its bad side in creating a feeling of unrest, and in loosening the old ties of *camaraderie* that existed in old days between Officers and men. This has been increased by the short service system, by the frequent changes among Officers caused by transfer on promotion, by the method of officering the Indian Staff Corps, &c. In fact, in our Service we are always robbing Peter to pay Paul. I do not say that in such a complex system as ours it is to be altogether avoided, but the perpetual change that goes on affects the Army injuriously, and, moreover, touches up the pocket of the taxpayer.

The only advantage it seems to me to possess is that it infuses new blood in a battalion, and even that is not always wanted. I hope the day is not far distant when regimental numbers will be restored. It requires a man of more than ordinary intellect to remember the long titles now in use, and for war they are absolutely impracticable. I believe the clerks in the War Office have still, after ten years, to put the old numbers opposite the titles in their books, in order to avoid mistakes, and as for the outside world, titles are all vanity and vexation of spirit.

Another reform I should hail with pleasure is that when an Officer has completed his period of Staff service, the regulation with reference to his going back to regimental work should be rigidly

enforced. Nothing does a battalion more good, if he is a good soldier, and does not look on regimental work as *infra dig.*, and as regards himself, he learns an immense deal which is of the greatest use to him and the Army when he reverts again to Staff duties. Officers who pass the greater part of their service on the Staff lose their touch with the soldier, do not know what he is capable of, and when they get to high commands may have to learn at his expense. I would also suggest that Officers who go to the Staff College should be seconded, and when they have finished their courses should always return to regimental life for a season as supernumeraries. Without it they cannot keep abreast of the work. It would be of advantage to them, and, as regards a battalion, it is hard to deprive it in these days of such an important Officer as a Captain for $2\frac{1}{2}$ years without filling up his place.

I am conscious that there is much that I have stated which is already met by the regulations of the Service, and have been dealt with by abler men than myself. All I hope is that the practical experience of a Commanding Officer in carrying out the regulations may be of some value.

Lieutenant-Colonel DE BERNIERE (Worcester Regiment): It is with some diffidence I speak on this subject, but having had the honour of commanding a battalion now for some eighteen months, I should like to thank the lecturer very much for his most interesting and very instructive lecture. I agree entirely with what he has said with respect to the discipline of a battalion; particularly with regard to the punishment of the men, so that when an offender comes before his Commanding Officer he may almost be able to punish himself, that is to say, he knows exactly how his particular offence is invariably dealt with. Again, as to good-conduct men, I always try to impress on my men, that an offender coming before me, and bearing on his arm a good-conduct badge, must not think for a moment that he can trade on his record, or that he can possibly expect to be let off because he has it. I think the men thoroughly understand now that good-conduct badges should mean influence and example in the battalion. I must say that I should like to have my recruits sent to me straight on enlistment. Brigade depôts are valuable as recruiting centres, but the recruit should come at once to his future Commanding Officer to be improved physically and trained professionally. I try to get my men well seasoned after I receive them; to feed them well, work them well, and teach them the use of their limbs. As one means to this end, I have started a coffee shop in my barracks, and I have found it a most useful institution, inasmuch that the young soldier feels contented and comfortable when he finds in his barracks what formerly could only be got outside. To accomplish this end also, there is a credit system, and a man can have a pint of beer with his supper, if he so wishes. The Commander of the Forces in Ireland, visiting us at Limerick last November, expressed approval of the coffee shop arrangements. With regard to non-commissioned officers, I must say I am satisfied with mine. Besides my sergeants' mess I have a corporals' room, which I find answers very well indeed—not a corporals' mess, but simply a room. It gives the corporals a status and position in the regiment; they, of course, dine in the barrack room, but this gives them a room for themselves where they can read and work. The lecturer spoke of the chain of responsibility, the responsibility not being on one man's shoulders, but going through the battalions from the top to the bottom; each one knowing that, whatever department or show he has to run, he is entirely responsible for it to the Commanding Officer. I am sure we shall all admit that this inculcates self-reliance, judgment, and common sense; and junior Officers are thus daily being trained for command, by acting independently, and not referring every single thing. Again, as to the manœuvres that the lecturer spoke about and the civility

of farmers, I must say that the farmers in our part of the country round Limerick are, as a rule, most considerate. We always go out once a week, cavalry, artillery, and infantry, and have some tactical exercises. The farmers are very civil and allow us to go over their ground, and manœuvre about in every possible way. These manœuvres are everything for the men; they improve their individual intelligence, and keenness and interest are plain all round. Young soldiers go out at eight, or half-past, come back at two or three, and not a man falls out, for the interest carries them through, the interest which would be wanting in the ordinary route march. I always try to impress upon every one that, from the Commanding Officer to the youngest recruit and smallest drummer boy, where all meet on one platform, each one is feeling that on *me* depends the good name, the practical efficiency, and smartness of the battalion. This fully realized all round, then you have the *ideal* regiment.

Lieut.-Colonel W. T. DOONER (RI. Inniskilling Fus.): Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I only rise to say how thoroughly I agree with almost everything that Colonel Gosset has said in his very excellent lecture. I think there cannot be two opinions as to whether it is better to try and rule men by appealing to their sentiments; by speaking to them of their country, their patriotism, their regiment, call it what you will, than to endeavour to rule them by either threats or punishment. I quite agree with what Colonel Gosset has said on that point. I fear the regulated time allotted to each speaker would run out if I were to mention all the subjects which he has alluded to and on which we are all probably of one opinion; I will, therefore, go at once to one or two little points, not for a moment to differ with him, but to mention that, as he has commanded a battalion abroad, and as I have the honour of commanding a battalion at home, all the suggestions he has made are not sometimes practicable on home service. Take, for instance, what has been said with regard to garrison instruction and doing away with it. I quite agree with what Colonel Gosset has said, but let me tell you what my experience was. I started a system of instruction the moment I could, in order to prevent, if possible, the Officers of my battalion having to go away to those classes of instruction, and also because I quite agree with the lecturer that it is more or less a reflection on Commanding Officers if those under them have to go elsewhere to learn their profession. I therefore started classes twice a week, and my hope was that I should have been able to make the whole of the Officers go up for examination together; I found, however, after I had got through one subject with the greatest difficulty, that I had to give up my idea in despair. The Officers that I could catch one day I could not catch the next. What with District Court-Martials, with boards, and all garrison duties that they had to perform, they were taken away from my instruction, and I was going over and over the subject, and at last I had to give it up. There is also another point with regard to that garrison instruction which should be mentioned; I think it would be, perhaps, a little hard to expect everyone, I mean all Commanding Officers, to be quite prepared to answer all the questions which are given, until the examinations become a little more practical. For instance, an Officer rushed into me some time ago after an examination had taken place, saying, "Oh, tell me, have I made a mistake in this question?" The question was to draw the scale of a kilometre to a decimetre. Now, I think there is no use when you come to think of it, in asking any Officer such a question as that: because, when could they ever possibly be required to draw the scale of a kilometre to a decimetre? We know the French, when they make a map or plan, always put the representative fraction on it, and that question was put, I fear, in order, more or less, to make the Officers in the hurry of an examination get nervous and bewildered. In another examination, the question was asked, "Comparative to one inch to a mile, draw a scale of Russian versts." Now, if the Crimea were to come over again, of course we all know we would try and get maps of the country we were fighting in, in every possible way; we would go into the first houses we came to until we succeeded in getting one; and having got it, we know perfectly well, in the country in question maps will not have their scales expressed in that peculiar way; they will have the representative fraction given; I only mention those two questions which occur to me just to show the lecturer that there are considerable difficulties in attempting to carry out all the instructions that would be necessary

to enable Officers to pass their examinations. There is one thing Colonel Gosset states in which I differ a little, and I rejoice that I get the opportunity here of mentioning it. He says that Irishmen are very impressionable. I quite agree with him that they are; but then, when he says that they are always more difficult to manage in quarters than other people, in my opinion there is a mistake there; I know it is the opinion all through the Army, but I think there is a little error in it. An Irishman, take him on the points that the lecturer mentions, his country or his regiment, &c., and there is no man more ready or more willing to keep up the credit of both; that is what my experience has been. I find what Colonel Gosset says, namely, mentioning on parade a few things like that has a most wonderful effect; and as for severity of punishment and threats, except in the worst cases, as Colonel Gosset says, they are better avoided. There is one subject that has not been dealt with by the lecturer, viz., the question of bad characters, and what is best to do with them. I think that Commanding Officers, and I hope there are many such Officers here, ought to make up their minds that they will not discharge any man as either incorrigible or worthless, or with disgrace, I may call it, unless there is some very serious cause for so doing. I think that by discharging these men we only pass them on to other regiments. The State will not allow us to mark the men in any way, so as to prevent their re-enlisting; and I think if all Commanding Officers were to make up their minds that they would not discharge any of these men, if they had the bad luck to get one or two, until the men in question had at least served five or six years, and, therefore, would not be able to enlist again, it would be very advantageous: because any approving Officer, when a man has had five or six years' service, will probably be able to spot him as having previously served in the Army. If he is a young fellow who has previously served who tries to enlist, these men come in such a way, dressed in old clothes, and they imitate civilians of that class of life so well, that I myself, having enlisted hundreds of men in the last two years, know of two cases in which I have been taken in, that is, that the men had served before. I take the greatest trouble, but still I have been done in that way; it is most difficult to be certain on this point of men having previously served. At Portsmouth there is a custom that we Commanding Officers have to take what they call the details for three months in turn, and so the recruits enlisted for all the regiments round about pass through our hands during the time mentioned. I therefore have had some little experience of this question of enlistment, and I know that in two cases, probably there were more, I have been, so to speak, done by these bad characters. Every ship that comes home from India brings some eighteen or twenty of these men. They are brought up suddenly into your guard room, and they are all then turned adrift into this country to do the greatest harm to the Service, and also to find themselves, I fear, shortly afterwards in some regiment. I therefore think that if we did not discharge these men until they were a little older and have more deferred pay to lose, it would be better. With regard to what Colonel Gosset said about the military training, there cannot, I think, be two opinions. It is a great deal too long, and the annoying part of it is that actually the Commanding Officer is not considered, I suppose, capable or able to instruct his regiment, and he has the pleasure of seeing his companies going out, and almost losing in some cases four weeks of their valuable time—the summer is not very long—two companies are taken away from him the whole summer, one for musketry, and one for this military training. If you take the state of any regiment and investigate it, you will find a Commanding Officer is not then left with more than 100 or 120 men for the duties; and thus I go on parade, and have to content myself with drilling some four companies of perhaps fourteen or fifteen files in single rank. I hope that point that the lecturer has brought to our notice will be well thought about and considered by those in authority, because I quite agree with him that the men do not like it. They tire of it, they do not care for being what they call "humbugged about," and it is a little hard on the Commanding Officers. I do not know whether Colonel Gosset found it so in Egypt, and whether he was able to get more men in his battalion than I am, but the consequence of the present regulation is, that the men are taken away from us during the whole summer, and the Commanding Officer is unable to carry out much valuable instruction and work that he would perhaps wish to inaugurate and accomplish.

Colonel M. GOSSET, C.B. : With reference to the remarks made by Colonel De Berniere and Colonel Dooner, it is a great pleasure to me to find that they agree with me in the main points in my paper. There are one or two questions which they have alluded to which I think are important. Colonel De Berniere spoke about the corporals' room. Two or three years ago there was an order issued to establish corporals' messes, which meant to say that you took the corporals away from the barrack rooms for their meals. I, for one, opposed that strongly, because you want men of authority in the barrack rooms. The sergeants' mess naturally takes the sergeants away, and if you have a corporals' mess, which includes lance-corporals, the men's rooms are left entirely without anybody of any position to overlook them. I do not think we have reached that advanced stage of culture which will allow us to deprive the barrack rooms of the corporals. But a corporals' room, if properly carried out, raises the status of the corporal and gives him a more elevated idea of his position. My object was to prevent the corporals and men drinking together, and I made my corporals' room as comfortable as I possibly could. They had their music and dance meetings, &c., and it is no doubt a very excellent institution in a battalion. There is a great deal, I quite allow, in what Colonel Dooner said as to my idea of doing away with garrison instruction. That is a question which I, of course, judge according to what I have seen in my own surroundings, and, having been abroad some time, I may not be able to deal with the matter from every point of view, but, judging from my own corps and from what I have seen, I think that by gradually instructing the Officers as they join and establishing a school in the regiment, the necessary instruction which would enable an Officer to pass for his promotion may be got through. I have not said so in my lecture, but what I really had in my mind was that, when musketry assumed such an important position in the British Army as it did after the Crimean War, musketry instructors were appointed. After a time, it was found that they could be done away with, and they very properly were done away with. Now, I think if it is not found that you can instruct the regiment at present (and I think it is quite possible you could not, for the reasons given by Colonel Dooner), in the way which I should like to see done—why not have a regimental instructor just in the same way as you had the old musketry instructor? As I say, a man learns as he instructs, and it would not be a very costly appointment. I do think that you might prepare Officers for their examination in the battalion. The regimental instructor would be under the Commanding Officer and controlled by him, and under well-considered regulations, I think it would be a decided advantage. I confess, myself, I could not answer a good many of the examination questions that are put to Officers who have gone through a course of garrison instruction, and if they brought to me such conundrums as they did to Colonel Dooner—I am glad to say that nobody ever consulted me to that extent—I should have shied at them as he did. Colonel Dooner has the honour of being an Irishman, and, therefore, I hope he has not taken any offence at the remarks that I have made about his countrymen. But I always had an idea from seeing Irish regiments that they are very impressionable and very much open to sentiment, and, as a rule, difficult to manage in quarters. I think it is the very impressionability which makes the difficulty, and what I wanted to point out is that they are more open to a good word than anybody else. The fault an Englishman often commits when he is commanding Irishmen is that he is too downright with them, and does not take sufficiently into account the sentimental side of their nature. One important question has been raised as to the discharge of bad characters, and I must say I do not agree with Colonel Dooner in what he has said on the subject. For many years, as most of us who are old soldiers remember, the Horse Guards fought against discharging men of bad character with ignominy, and the reason given was that it was encouraging men to behave badly in order to get out of the Service. There is a good deal in that argument, but I must say the change that has come over us of late years, in allowing an Officer commanding a battalion to recommend bad characters to be discharged, is a good move; I always exercised it to the full, and believed in it thoroughly. Colonel Dooner's argument appears to be this, that the men merely go out of one regiment to get into another. I daresay he is perfectly right in some cases. He suggests that they should remain five or six years in the regiment, and

that there would then be less chance of their re-enlisting. Now, what is the use of allowing a man of excessively bad character to exert a bad influence in a battalion, amongst a lot of boys, for five or six years?

Colonel DOONER: I did not refer to men of excessively bad character.

Colonel GOSSET: I cannot help thinking the rule now is a good one, and I should be very sorry to see it curtailed in any way. I think it should be left to the Commanding Officer entirely to judge the question himself. Without doubt it is a bad thing for the young men who join to have alongside them scoundrels who will never make good soldiers and who spend the best part of their service as defaulters or in prison. It is better to get rid of them and have done with them altogether.

The CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, I think that I have seldom heard a lecture with which I could find so little to cavil. There is scarcely a sentence with which I do not agree. In fact, amongst those who have spoken, there are only some very trifling differences of opinion. The points referred to are discharges with ignominy; the Irish; and garrison classes. Now, with regard to Irishmen, Englishmen, and Scotchmen, there is no doubt that they require to be treated in different ways. I remember, many years ago, when I was a young man, my Commanding Officer instructing me in my duties, when I was going on detachment, said, "Treat men of various nationalities in different ways. Let an Irishman talk as much as he likes, let him stand up before you, and say whatever he likes, then give him his punishment, and he will say, 'Thank your honour.' With a Scotchman, give him the law; read to him the Articles of War, the regulations, and he will be perfectly satisfied. With an Englishman, on the contrary, give him his punishment and say nothing." That was the advice which was given to me, and it was one which I followed, and I found it, generally speaking, successful. With regard to discharges with ignominy, I agree with Colonel Gosset that it is a great pity to keep a bad character in a regiment; he is sure to corrupt the young soldiers and lead them astray. If you turn him out, he may enlist in another regiment, and they will soon find him out, and get rid of him. Men do not now like being turned out of a regiment, as they lose their deferred pay. In former days, when the authorities made great objections to men being turned out of regiments, they did not lose any pay, and they did not mind it. Therefore, I think the authorities are quite right in authorizing the Commanding Officers to get rid of bad characters; in fact, I would let them turn out any man whom they could not manage. With regard to garrison classes, I think a modified scheme might be brought about, so as to avoid so many Officers being absent at garrison classes. If there were a Board of Commanding Officers assembled in a garrison, and they set the questions to the candidates, the Officers could be educated in their regiments; but if the questions be set by persons who have not always practical knowledge, the questions become too theoretical, and to be able to answer correctly, Officers must attend garrison classes. There is one point on which I do not agree with Colonel Gosset, but on this point the majority of the audience was evidently quite in accord with the lecturer, as directly he said, "Let us return to our old numbers," everyone applauded. Will any one get up and be good enough to state how it is to be done? Regiments were linked, they were joined together; one was called the 52nd, the other the 43rd. Was a man to change his number every time he changed his battalion; was a man, when he is transferred, to change his uniform as he did formerly? I was on the Committee that recommended the change, and though I disliked it uncommonly, still as long as linked regiments continued, as long as the same principle of organization which existed was maintained, I do not see how the change could be avoided. It has been proposed, and in my opinion the plan would answer, e.g., to re-number the regiments, giving both battalions the numbers of the regimental depôts. That would simplify the question, but I am afraid that would not be popular, because, for instance, battalions whose numbers were changed would grumble, the 52nd would not like to be called the 2nd Batt. 43rd.

Colonel DOONER: I believe there would be very few objections.

Colonel GOSSET: My idea was that you should not revert to your old numbers, but that it should be the Brigade Depot number. From a practical point of view you would want a number in place of a title.

The CHAIRMAN: In that I perfectly agree. I know the difficulty of long titles. Now, gentlemen, I think you will all agree with me in thanking Colonel Gosset for the most instructive and most interesting lecture that I have heard for a long time. It is practical to the end, and there is scarcely a sentence in it with which anyone can disagree. I beg to return Colonel Gosset our very best thanks.

General Lord CHELMSFORD, G.C.B.: Will you allow me a few words, to say how very much I regret that I was prevented by public business from presiding on this occasion? My feelings are very much relieved by finding that my place has been so much better taken than I should have done it myself, by my friend Sir Arthur Herbert. At the same time I may say that this is a subject in which I take the deepest interest. I am not going to discuss the lecture at all, but I read it, and read it carefully, and I endorse every single word that Sir Arthur Herbert has said about the great value of that lecture.