



Royal United Services Institution. Journal

Publication details, including instructions for
authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rusi19>

Some Suggestions as to the Better Training of Our Infantry

Major C. Arundel Barker ^a

^a 2nd Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers

Published online: 11 Sep 2009.

To cite this article: Major C. Arundel Barker (1886) Some Suggestions as to the Better Training of Our Infantry, Royal United Services Institution. Journal, 30:133, 175-198, DOI: [10.1080/03071848609416368](https://doi.org/10.1080/03071848609416368)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03071848609416368>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan,

sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Friday, February 12, 1886.

COLONEL SIR HUMLEY GRAHAM, BART., Vice-President, in the
Chair.

SOME SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE BETTER TRAINING OF OUR INFANTRY.

By Major C. ARUNDEL BARKER, 2nd Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers.

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, I have to introduce to you Major Arundel Barker, who is going to read a paper entitled "Some Suggestions as to the Better Training of our Infantry." Major Barker is an Officer of considerable regimental experience. This Institution always specially welcomes regimental Officers who speak upon questions connected with their own duties. It is, I believe, the first time that Major Barker has given us a lecture, but, having read it, I know that it is an interesting one.

THERE can be no doubt, that our present system of training our infantry soldiers, both at home and abroad, but more particularly in the former case, is considered very unsatisfactory by all Officers who take an interest in their profession.

Even granting that the system was everything that could be desired in the case of regiments at home—and it is those only that I propose to consider in this paper—there would exist grave difficulties in carrying it out.

In the first place, their establishment—except in the case of regiments shortly about to go abroad—is very small, and owing to the short service system they must contain a large proportion of recruits. When in addition to this it is remembered that they have to furnish large drafts every year to the battalion abroad, and that numbers are daily taken away for duty, regimental or garrison employ, and for the various classes of instruction which are so numerous now-a-days, it ceases to be a matter of surprise that there should be no men left to learn that preparation for the time of war which should in reality be the end and aim of our whole system.

It is a fact, that out of a regiment with an effective strength of over 600 I have seen a Commanding Officer's parade where the band was stronger than the whole of the rest of the parade, and where there were hardly as many privates as there were Officers.

Now, the objects which I propose to set before myself are:—1st, How are we to get a sufficient number of men to teach anything to? and, 2nd, What are we to teach them? on the old principle of "first catch your hare and then cook it."

Although the Military Prize Essays for 1885, published in the Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, do not refer directly to the depletion of regiments at home, yet indirectly they bear upon it in a very important manner. If the recommendations made by the majority of essayists are carried out—as undoubtedly they will be to a greater or less extent—the time for which a soldier engages to serve in India will be considerably extended, and therefore fewer men will be required each year to replace the loss occasioned by men who take their discharge or are transferred to the reserve. At present a regiment, whose linked battalion is in India, has annually to send out a draft of some 150 men, and the drain this causes upon a home strength of only 560 privates may easily be imagined.

If by extension of service in India this annual drain be reduced, regiments at home would, of course, have considerably more men left for drill purposes.

Again, a large number of men, especially in garrison towns, are taken away for guard duties, and when this is the case they are not, as a general rule, available for morning parade for two days in succession. The duties on guard are very easily learned, and it is not necessary that a man should go on guard once a week or oftener to keep up his recollection of them. There is no duty which a soldier dislikes so much or which tells in such an injurious manner on his health. It is quite certain that guard duty is one which contributes more than anything to lessen the popularity of the Army, and yet numbers of guards and sentries are mounted every day which could, without the slightest inconvenience, be abolished to-morrow. Cannot we take a lesson from civil life in this matter? Does a manufacturer, for instance, who has a large amount of valuable property lying in his yard post sentries over it? Not he! He considers he has taken ample precautions if the premises are locked up at night, and a watchman makes an occasional round. But not content with posting sentries over everything which can or cannot be taken away, we put whole guards in places where the work would easily be performed by at most two men. At every military hospital, for instance, is a guard. What for? The main reasons, as stated in the order board, are to prevent any improper articles from being passed in to the patients, and to keep the latter from leaving the premises. But round nearly every hospital is a high wall with a gate, where a single man on gate-duty would answer all purposes.

It may seem something like high treason to doubt the necessity of a barrack guard, but I think that an inlying picquet, occupying the guard-room at night, but allowed to go to bed, would fulfil all requirements, and would only take men from parade for one day instead of two.

The number of orderlies, too, which have to be furnished by a regiment appears excessive. In a large garrison town where there are several regiments I have known as many as twenty-five taken daily from one corps. In these days of frequent posts, telephones, &c., much of the work now done by orderlies might be relegated to them; and though Staff and Departmental Officers might be unwilling

at first to part with men who are a convenience in many ways, they would doubtless soon come to see that it was for the public advantage.

The gymnasium and great gun drill also often take a number of men away from parade. Would it not be possible so to arrange that these should be mainly carried on in the winter, and only in the afternoon or evening in summer, so that a Commanding Officer might, at any rate, have his men to himself for the whole morning in the drill season?

Winter is the time in which we get most of our recruits, and as much as possible of their preliminary training should be got through before the summer commences, but a great deal of time is often lost in bad weather owing to there being no covered place to drill them in. This difficulty could and ought to be met by having a drill-shed—it need not be an elaborate one—in every barracks.

Another plan for getting a respectable number of men together is not so much resorted to as it might be, *i.e.*, early morning parades. In the first place, one can have all the men about to go on guard, and, secondly, the orderlies, tailors, shoemakers, subordinate clerks, &c., who need not as a rule commence work very early in the day, and to whom, especially for those who have sedentary occupations, an early morning parade would only act as a freshener. But what makes a Commanding Officer hesitate to order these latter to attend parade is not so much the time they would be absent from their other duties, as the time they will take to clean their accoutrements afterwards.

By substituting brown leather for buff and adopting a button which does not require constant polishing, the waste of time incurred by the occupation aforesaid might be reduced by one-half.

Lastly, it is evident that the more simple and easily learned a recruit's drill can be made, the more quickly will he be able to take his place in the ranks, and the more time he will have available for practical training; but I will only touch on this subject here as I propose to go into it more fully later on.

Now, having tried to show how a certain amount of the raw material might be obtained, it remains to consider how it is to be worked up.

If any one who has taken the trouble to listen to the preceding remarks imagines that the object of all this is to turn out an ideally smart regiment, one that can advance in line like a wall, and execute all the most difficult manoeuvres in the "Field Exercise" to a hair's breadth, he is very much mistaken. The single aim I have set before myself is that to which I have alluded before, *viz.*, to make the soldier as efficient as possible in time of war, and in all that follows I have tried to keep this object steadily in view.

Not long ago appeared a small book entitled "The Fighting of the Future," by Captain, now Brevet-Major, Ian Hamilton, which strikes the keynote of what our system of training ought to be. There is no doubt whatever that he is perfectly right in his contention that a soldier who has been so trained to handle his rifle that he is perfectly confident that he can hit anything, whether stationary or moving, at a reasonable

distance, is worth half a dozen of our present ordinary rank-and-file. I would wish nothing better than to see the system of musketry training which Major Hamilton advocates adopted in its entirety; but it would be perfectly impossible to carry it out unless there were a rifle-range within easy distance of every military quarter in England. This means a very large expenditure of money which it would be hopeless to try to get out of the British taxpayer unless a sharp defeat sustained by our troops should bring home to him its necessity, so that for the present we must be content to hope for better things and make the most of what we have. There is a great difference between various stations as to their suitability for carrying on musketry instruction. At some the rifle-ranges are quite close to the barracks, and would permit of the men going out to shoot at any hour of the day; at others they can only be reached by a march of four or five miles or by rail. At the former places a more extended course of musketry, on the general lines laid down by Major Hamilton, might be provided for, with, of course, a larger allowance of ammunition, and these stations might be reserved for regiments first on the roster for foreign service.

Again, when on account of the paucity of troops in England—as during the late war in Egypt—or for other reasons, it is possible to choose between two stations, preference should be given to that which offers the greatest facilities for musketry instruction. It is impossible to turn out first-rate shots without plenty of practice on a range, but the introduction of Morris's tubes has opened a great future to the improvement of rifle shooting. Ranges for these may be made anywhere and at very small cost, and no barracks should be without them. A certain amount of ammunition, say 200 rounds per man, should also be provided by Government, for some men take no interest in rifle shooting, and they cannot be ordered to shoot with the Morris's tubes at their own expense. Practice with these tubes does not teach the soldier to make allowance for the wind, or to meet the recoil of his rifle, but these are not hard to learn, and I am persuaded that by their constant use the shooting of bad or indifferent shots might be improved fully 50 per cent. Moving, and appearing and disappearing targets can quite easily be arranged at very small expense, so that every description of shooting can be provided for.

Nearly every change in musketry instruction of late years has been in the right direction; but regimental Officers—and they certainly ought to know best—are almost unanimously of opinion that the abolition of musketry instructors is a mistake. It is perfectly right and proper that Officers commanding companies should put their own men through the annual course of musketry, and most of those I am acquainted with, would not wish for anything else, but the want is much felt in regiments of an Officer whose business it is to look after the whole department of musketry instruction.

Under the present system, *vide* "Book of Musketry Instruction," the responsibility is divided between the Commanding Officer, the second in command, Officers commanding companies, and the Adjutant; but "what is everybody's business is nobody's business," and when

anything special has to be done, such as arranging rifle matches, or the selection of teams for rifle meetings, &c., there is no one who feels that he has any responsibility connected with it.

The special object of a Captain is to get his own company to shoot well, and it is not in accordance with human nature to expect him to take the same pains with casuals, who may, perhaps, belong to a company he is trying to beat, as with his own men; but the ambition of a musketry instructor is that the whole regiment should have a good figure of merit, and the casuals might safely be left in his charge. Besides which it is notorious that the training of non-commissioned officers and recruits, the supervision of markers, musketry fatigue parties, and care of ranges, are not as efficiently carried out under the new arrangements as they used to be. The way in which the figure of merit of a battalion is calculated, has varied so much in the last few years that it is difficult to compare the shooting of one year with that of another, but it is a matter of general opinion that the shooting of the majority of regiments has fallen off since the abolition of musketry instructors, and this too at a time when not to go forward, is to go backward.

I have placed musketry training first in the order of things to be taught to a soldier, and urged that our troops should be quartered, as far as possible, in places where every facility exists for carrying it out; but fortunately such places will generally be found best adapted to what comes next in importance, viz., his training in all duties in the field. For this purpose the barrack square, which is in many places the only provision, is almost worse than useless, for all the conditions are as different from what is likely to be met with in actual warfare as they well could be. Instead of practically unlimited space with every variety of ground, is a miserable plot, perhaps 200 yards long by 100 broad, level as a billiard-table, and inclosed by high walls.

If anything more than elementary drill is attempted, such as outpost duty or the drill of attack, the proper intervals have to be sacrificed, and Officers and men get into a cramped and finicking way of working. The fact is that for every 100 yards further that the rifle carries, we want a proportionate increase of space in our drill-grounds, and though 200 yards might have been quite sufficient for the Brown Bess, a mile and a half is not too much for the Henry-Martini.

It is much to be regretted that the Government has so few large spaces permanently at its disposal for camps of instruction. Aldershot and the Curragh are excellent in their way, but only a small proportion of our troops at home can be quartered in them. If additional camps were formed in places where they were most wanted, such as in the midland counties and the North of England or South of Scotland, many regiments now quartered in the heart of densely populated towns might be sent there, and the sale of the land on which the barracks stood would probably cover the cost of the purchase of such waste lands as are best suited for a camp, and of the erection of huts for troops upon them.

An incidental advantage of these camps would be that they would

afford increased opportunities for our militia and volunteers to work in connection with the regular troops.

The month's course of military training of soldiers instituted in 1883—which I may briefly state provides for instruction in attack and defence of positions, outposts, advance and rear guards, escorts, hasty entrenchments, duties in camp, the elements of military bridging, &c.,—is very useful, but unless large areas such as I have mentioned above are available, it cannot be properly carried out. Another thing which goes far to do away with its good effects is the ridiculously small number of men which a Captain frequently has at his disposal. How can outpost duty or the drill of attack be done properly with fifteen files? Yet that number is by no means uncommon. To remedy this, I would suggest that a whole wing of a regiment instead of one company should be struck off duty for a month, the company going through the annual course of musketry, and all duty men, orderlies, &c., being taken from the other half battalion, which might easily be done if some of the measures recommended in the early part of this paper, were adopted.

For the first week companies might be left to their own commanders, but for the remaining three they should be worked as much as possible together, under the command of the senior Major or Captain. In this manner there would be a sufficient number of men to furnish two parties to manœuvre against one another, and to carry out outpost duties, &c., in an intelligent manner.

No larger provision of tents or entrenching tools would be necessary, as the companies could use them in turn. It would be a great assistance to Officers when lecturing to their men, if a set of illustrations of hasty fortifications, knots for military bridging, &c., were provided for use in the lecture room.

Now, supposing that a regiment in which every available man was kept in the ranks, was quartered in a station close to a rifle range, and with plenty of open ground in the neighbourhood, how much time should be devoted to those barrack yard manœuvres which now form the principal serious occupation of the soldier? I emphatically say—and I am by no means the first to say it—as little as possible. They are only means to an end, and as long as that end is attained, the simpler the means the better. Besides which, a man who has always been accustomed to feel a comrade touching him on either side as in ordinary drill, is apt to lose confidence in himself when fighting in the loose order necessitated by the precision of modern firearms, and only constant practice in extended order will ever make him self-reliant. A certain amount of drill in close order is of course necessary for the line of march and for the preliminary movements of a battle; there are also certain exercises in the use of the rifle which are absolutely necessary, but the two principal books "published by authority" for infantry, contain a good deal which is of no practical use in time of war. As the soldier would have quite enough to keep him fully occupied in other ways, I propose to glance through the books above mentioned and try to find what might advantageously be omitted. We will begin with the smallest, the "Rifle Exercises."

Turning to this, we find the first thing taught is the "manual exercise." In the book before referred to, "The Fighting for the Future," Major Hamilton condemns, as it appears very justly, the first movement in this exercise, the "Present arms." He contends that it takes a long time to learn and is quite unnecessary, since if the "Shoulder" is good enough as a salute for a Captain or a subaltern, it is also good enough for Officers of superior rank, giving as an example, that in civil life a man makes no difference in his salute between a noble and a commoner.

No one will pretend that the "Present" is any use in war, and if we can do without it in peace, it is a pity to retain it at all.

The next thing we arrive at in the Rifle Exercise, is the Funeral Exercise, from which the "Reverse arms" and "Rest on your arms reversed" might easily be omitted without detracting anything from the solemnity of the occasion.

The 8th Section is "Preparing for cavalry," which it is thought might be left out as a separate exercise altogether. Bayonets can be fixed at any time, and the front rank now always kneels at the command to fire. Placing the butts of the rifles on the ground renders them useless for firing purposes for the time being, and though every writer on tactics, at the present day, demonstrates the impossibility of unbroken infantry being successfully attacked by cavalry, in this exercise it is assumed that cavalry will be able to approach so close that it will need a regular fence of bayonets to keep them off.

The following Section, No. 9, is the "Feu de Joie." Here again is an absolutely useless exercise which requires a great deal of practice, and therefore takes up time which could be much better employed. Firing volleys by companies from right to left and back again from left to right, would be quite as effective, and would require no additional training. Lastly, comes the Bayonet Exercise, which, though of very little use for the purpose for which it was originally intended, may perhaps be retained as a good gymnastic exercise, strengthening the arms and generally exercising all the muscles of the body.

In the same volume as the Rifle Exercises, is Musketry Instruction, but this certainly does not err on the side of containing unnecessary matter, and is, besides, in process of being rewritten, so we will now pass on to the Field Exercise. The first part of this book is devoted to those elementary movements which have to be learned by all recruits before they can take part in company or battalion drill, and there is very little here which can be omitted, but I think the balance step and the slow march are both superfluous. A man can be taught to walk properly without making him stand on one leg whilst he pokes out the other backwards and forwards, and the slow march is evidently not required for anything but show.

In company drill also there is not much to find fault with, as almost all the different movements would be useful on service, with the exception indeed of marching past, but this, in spite of the enormous amount of time wasted over it, can hardly be dispensed with, as it possesses certain advantages of its own, and is the cause of much innocent amusement to the British public.

Countermarching, now that ranks can be changed at will, ought to die a natural death.

In the formation of a company in extended order, are given no less than seventeen bugle sounds for as many different movements. These take a long time to learn, and indeed never are learned by men who have no ear for music. I speak feelingly on this subject, for after eighteen years' service I do not know them all now. But at page 211 it is expressly laid down that calls on the bugle are liable to be misunderstood, and should seldom be used except for purposes of drill, while at page 227 we are told that during the advance for the attack there should be no bugle sounds. The question is obvious, Why have them at all? And indeed I think that the principle of teaching men to do a thing one way at drill and another way before the enemy is a most dangerous one, and the very way to throw them into confusion at the critical moment. Some bugle sounds are useful for many purposes, and we could not well do without them, but I think that the following, *i.e.*, the Advance, Halt, Fire, Cease fire, Alarm, and Charge would be found sufficient.

It will probably be alleged that with the long distances between the extended line, supports, and reserves, it would be difficult to communicate a command to them all without bugle sounds, but this can be done perfectly well and in a far more soldier-like way by a system of signals, some of which are already given in the Field Exercise, and which only require to be supplemented by one or two more. I have never seen this system applied to a regiment, but I have worked a company with extended line supports and reserves in this manner, and found it answer admirably.

Coming now to Battalion Drill (General Rules), I have no hesitation in saying [that the sooner mounted Officers cease to be employed in giving points the better. To begin with, we are told (page 106) that directly the battalion comes within range of the enemy's rifles they are to dismount, and I presume they will not be required to give points then.

In the second place, I have never observed that a regiment drilled by the Adjutant, or sergeant-major, drills worse than when there are mounted Officers, and indeed my experience is that they drill better without them. At brigade parades, mounted Officers are a continual nuisance, as they are always getting in the way and preventing the markers from seeing when they are covered.

With regard to the various battalion and brigade exercises contained in Parts III and IV, it is thought that all might be omitted which come under any of the following heads:—

1. Those which are of no practical use.
2. Those that can be done more simply another way.
3. Those which were originally intended to be carried out under fire, but which are now—owing to the precision and rapidity of modern firearms—quite out of the question.

Under the first head I have classed the following:—

(a.) All movements in half-column (page 133) double companies, and in direct echelon of companies (Part III, Sections 33 to 35).

Half columns are never used by any chance, and though double company formations take up a great deal of room in the Drill Book, surely two companies could, if necessary, act together without necessitating such movements as "Forming line to a flank from columns of double companies," and "Advancing in double fours from the centre."

The original intention of having battalions in echelon was to enable them to protect their own flanks, or the flank of the brigade, according to circumstances. This would now be effected by having a company or a battalion in attack formation on the flank to be protected. It may be occasionally desirable for brigades in the second line to have a battalion thrown back on a flank, but there does not appear to be any necessity for echelon of companies.

(b.) Most of the instructions regarding the colour party. Regiments are not now allowed to take their colours with them on service, and even in times of peace they are only taken out on very rare occasions; so it would be quite sufficient to lay down rules for the movements of the colour party in marching past and other purely show manoeuvres.

(c.) A battalion in line advancing in column from a central company (Section 23—2); and forming column on a central company (Section 25—2); changing front on the march (page 190).

All the above movements are apt to cause confusion, and are never used except for drill purposes.

(d.) A brigade changing front, the whole in echelon (Part IV, Section 16).

This manoeuvre to be carried out at all requires a perfectly flat and unbroken plain, and the chances of finding such a place on service are too remote to be taken into consideration.

Under the head of "Movements that can be done more simply another way," may, I think, be placed—

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| (a.) "Advance in column." | } Part III, Section |
| "Open to column: rear companies halt." | |

These can be done in both cases by "Opening to column from the rear company."

(b.) "Break into column to the right, or left" (Section 21—1, 2). Column can be formed from line much more quickly and simply by wheeling the companies to the right or left.

(c.) A battalion in column forming line by companies in succession to either flank (Section 27).

Line may be formed to either flank by simply wheeling to the right or left into line, and it cannot be a matter of great importance whether the order of the companies is inverted or not.

Lastly come those movements originally intended to be carried out under fire, but which are now quite out of the question. These are the most mischievous of all, for it is simply a case of teaching our men "How not to do it."

- (a.) Battalions in line relieving one another (Part III, Section 8).

It is now laid down as an axiom that troops once engaged cannot be relieved, but under what circumstances could it be necessary for

regiments to relieve each other in this formation unless they were engaged?

(b.) A battalion in line retiring from one flank in rear of the other, or from both flanks in rear of the centre (Part III, Section 24, and Part IV, Section 12).

In these movements part of the line is supposed to be covering the retreat of the other, but anything more clumsy cannot well be conceived. Imagine at the present day a battalion retiring under fire as above described. It would be a case of getting out of the frying pan into the fire, for instead of receiving the enemy's fire in line, which would be bad enough, it would be exposed to it in deep column, which would be infinitely worse.

(c.) Prolonging the line to either flank (page 161).

The object of this movement apparently was to withdraw troops in action from a part of the line where they were not wanted, and to transfer them under cover of the rest of the line to the other flank. If this were attempted now they would probably suffer very severely during the operation without being able to return the enemy's fire till they had gained the further flank.

(d.) A battalion in line forming square (Section 37) and forming square four deep (Section 38—2, 3). These formations are now admittedly only useful against savages, and even then square would never be formed from line, nor would a four-deep square be formed by the outward wheel of sections.

The only remaining portion of the Field Exercise on which I have any remarks to offer is Part VII, Miscellaneous Subjects.

The first thing here alluded to is the inspection of a battalion, which one would naturally think would lay down some sort of standard for a General to go by in ascertaining the fitness of a regiment for active service, but in the seven pages devoted to this most important subject, the only exercise alluded to which would be of the least use in time of war is the firing exercise.

Prince Hohenlohe, a very distinguished German Officer, has said that the way in which a battalion is habitually drilled depends entirely upon the character of the inspections.

If an inspecting Officer is content with marching past, bayonet and manual exercises, and a few antiquated manœuvres, Colonels of regiments will go on practising these *ad nauseam*, and will only devote an odd day or so to practical work. The "Inspection of a Battalion," as it now stands, seems to lend the stamp of authority to the method above mentioned, and it is thought that it might be rewritten with great advantage.

Section 14. "Guard Mounting and Trooping the Colour" is a relic of the ante-Crimean days when our troops had nothing better to do. It is happily hardly ever practised now, and might safely be relegated to the limbo of defunct ceremonies.

In the foregoing suggestions regarding the simplification of drill, there are probably many faults both of omission and commission, but it would be easy to appoint a committee of experienced Officers to settle these questions, and I have no doubt that their decision would be

very much in the same direction. Even were drill reduced to a minimum, it would in conjunction with musketry instruction and training in field duties afford ample occupation for the whole of the summer months, and the winter should be specially devoted to all those branches of a soldier's education which can be taught under cover. Shooting with Morris's tubes, school, the gymnasium, lectures on elementary tactics, &c., afford profitable occupation for wet days, whilst fine days are available for ordinary parades and route marching. This last might, I think, take place with advantage twice a week, once in marching order and once in drill order. It is not only good practice in marching but tends to keep the men in health.

I will now bring this paper to a conclusion, only remarking that I believe it is quite possible for our infantry as now constituted, to attain a much higher degree of efficiency at a very small increased cost, and I do not despair—if only military men will keep hammering at it long enough—of the country being brought to see that, in the long run, nothing can be falser economy than having to pay for indifference in time of peace by ruinous expenditure in time of war.

Lieutenant-General Lord CHELMSFORD, G.C.B.: Sir Lumley Graham and gentlemen, I think we must all admit there is a great deal of truth in the strictures Major Barker has passed upon our present system of drill and training, and there is a great deal that might be altered with considerable advantage to the Service. With regard to the paucity of men available for drill, there is no doubt that the present system is a terrible drawback to battalions at home. I do not see how it is to be got over so long as one battalion is to be made a feeder to another battalion abroad. I can only assure Major Barker, with regard to his lament over the number of guards and orderlies employed in our different garrisons, that I believe every General who has ever commanded a brigade at Aldershot, or at other camps, has done his best to reduce their numbers, but somehow or other there is a *non possumus* that crops up on every occasion, and no reduction is ever made. I hope Major Barker's paper may be useful in causing some remedy to be found for that very serious evil. With regard to musketry practice, the great object of our training ought to be to make our men shoot better. At the present moment the whole subject is under the consideration of the authorities at Aldershot, General Feilding being the President, and I am in great hopes that the practical men who are considering that subject will be able to devise a system of drill and musketry instruction which will enable us in the short space of time which the British soldier now is under his Captain's command, to improve his shooting and make him a really efficient soldier on active service. With regard to the Drill Book, no doubt at the present moment it does contain a number of manœuvres which are certainly not necessary for active service; but, as one of the old school, I must remind Major Barker, and those young Officers who are anxious to go ahead into the attack formation almost before the recruits really know their right hand from their left, that it is a very important matter to teach men good steady drill first. It is the foundation upon which everything else is built up. If you neglect that and go into that loose system of drill which I know a great many advocate, impatient, and very naturally impatient, of the old Frederick the Great precision which used to be our standard of high efficiency, I quite admit that you may arrive at getting your men to move very rapidly, and bring them up to the higher part of drill instruction in a manner which will apparently in peace-time be satisfactory enough; but if those men are trained during peace-time in a loose manner you will find when we come to active service that they will not move, and will not be as reliable on the move in open formations as they would have been if more attention had been paid to them in the closer formations. You must recollect that our boast in the old Peninsular War was that our men could always advance and attack in line. The

French never could do that. Why? No doubt the character of the individual soldier had something to say in it, but I believe it was a great deal due to the different system of drill. The French habitually drilled loosely, and when you saw them marching or manœuvring, although they got over the ground quickly, they did so at the expense of all steadiness and precision, and in a manner totally opposite to our mode of proceeding. You must remember the attack formation at the present moment requires exactly the same amount of precision and steadiness as did the advance in line of former days. It is in fact much more difficult, and requires thoroughly trained men who have confidence in themselves and in their leaders. I may be doing Major Barker injustice in imagining for one moment that he wants to do away with steady drill altogether, but as one of those who have been brought up under the old system, but who at the same time has always worked the new system with perfect confidence, I would wish to take this opportunity of most earnestly deprecating the idea that by teaching ordinary drill loosely and hastily, good results can be obtained. With regard to inspections, I quite admit the system might be much improved. Too much stress is laid upon marching past, and consequently too much time is given up to practising it. I should like to see an order issued forbidding Commanding Officers of regiments to practise marching past at their ordinary drill parades. At the inspection a march past would then become a test of the manner in which the battalion had been instructed in the ordinary drill manœuvres. There is no doubt that our Drill Book needs revising, and that it contains a good deal which is of little advantage in the training of our soldiers for active service. When, however, as is so generally the case, there is merely a barrack square to drill our men in, variety in steady drill manœuvres becomes almost a necessity, as to go on grinding away at the same movements is very monotonous and distasteful to all ranks. I trust that the authorities will consider the subject matter of this paper, and that some benefit may accrue from the discussion of it in this theatre.

Colonel DAVIES, Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General, Southern District: I am sure we are all much indebted to my friend Major Barker for bringing this very interesting subject before our notice in the excellent lecture he has just given us. On a great many points I quite agree with him, though on some I do not quite agree. With regard to the unsatisfactory state of the present training of the British soldier, I think we must be all perfectly agreed. The gallant Chairman will correct me if I state what is wrong, but I believe that our men get less training than in any of the Continental armies. This can never be improved till the financial authorities at the War Office and the House of Commons itself recognize the fact that more money must be laid out before we can possibly give men the extra training they require. Of course we are desirous to get the men as much off duty as possible, and to see them in the ranks. No doubt in these days of short service it is of the greatest importance that none of the men should ever be out of the ranks, if possible, on field days. I think the guards might be cut down, and I look upon sentries, though no doubt very ornamental, as, generally speaking, very useless, and, I believe, instead of having the regular sentry as we do now, if we had flying sentries, our barracks, hospitals, and magazines would be far more safe than they are at present with a sentry who is obliged to take up his post in one place and is not able to move. There is one way in which they may get more men in the field with the battalions, and that is by arranging for all the public duties to be done by one battalion each day, instead of having a certain number of men taken out of all the battalions, which is the usual plan. Of course the shooting, too, is most important, but there again we are in the very greatest difficulty in this country, because it is almost impossible to get good ranges. I do not agree entirely with Major Barker about wishing to see the musketry instructor revived; I think it is far better that the company should be trained by its own Officers, and I am quite sure that if the musketry instructor be revived it will all fall into his hands, and we shall have the old system, which certainly was not a good one. With regard to the training that came into vogue in 1893, I believe the idea was excellent, but I do not think it was ever fairly and properly carried out throughout the Army. In the first place, the first arrangement was telling the Captains to begin drilling their recruits from the beginning, putting them through the goose step. We know very

well there are very few company Officers in the least suited to this work, and I should have been very sorry if, when I was commanding a battalion, I had found my company Officers devoting themselves to the duties of drill corporals. We know we are fortunate if we have two or three good drill sergeants or corporals in a battalion, and that then the drill of the recruits will be far better carried out under the Adjutant by these sergeants or corporals than in any other way. And I think before the men are handed over to the Captains to train they should be considered perfect in the use of their arms and in the close order drill; then the Captains are the people who, under the eye of the Commanding Officer, should carry out the further instruction of the soldier in musketry, extended order drill, outpost duty, &c. Major Barker says it is better to strike off half a battalion instead of a company. That is not going far enough. In larger stations I see no reason why a battalion should not be struck off duty, because its instruction, to my mind, should be carried on entirely under the eye of the Commanding Officer, who should be out every day, and all day, seeing what his Captains are doing, not interfering with their training, but giving them every assistance he can by suggesting schemes to work upon, and pointing out any mistakes he may think they make, and taking care that the whole battalion is trained on the same system. I think if that could be carried out there would be a great deal of good work done, which I am afraid has not been the case hitherto. Of course, as Major Barker has remarked, in most places in England there is a great difficulty in getting ground, and he suggested that the barracks should be sold and camps formed. I do not think this would be possible, you cannot do away with barracks in their present places, but I think that if the War Office would allow a little money to be spent, arrangements might be made to come to with the farmers, who would, after harvest, for a small payment, allow men occasionally to work over their ground, and a great deal of useful instruction might be gained in that way. Major Barker deprecates too much barrack-yard drill. We may have too much, but we may have a great deal too little, and he will find if he attempts to take men out and to place outposts, or work in extended order over rough ground, before they have been carefully drilled on a parade ground, they will not do their work efficiently. I know many think that you can take your men out to some extended position and place your outposts at once; if you do, you will find the young soldier will scarcely know the meaning of outpost duty, and will when on sentry very likely face the wrong way. You must work them beforehand in the barrack-yard. With regard to inspections, I think nothing can be more utterly absurd than the inspections of the present day. They do not test the efficiency of the battalion in the least. Many a battalion that has the best report from the General at an inspection may be one of the most inefficient in the Army, because they can do nothing but march past, and are not practised in the more important parts of their duty. With regard to striking out a number of the manœuvres from the Field Exercise Book, as Major Barker proposed, I do not think I quite agree with him. I am not going *serialim* through all those that he has mentioned, but I think most of them should be retained. I think it is necessary that a battalion should be able to be manœuvred in any position in which it may be placed. One thing is a little lost sight of, and that is that the English Army cannot be trained quite in the same way that a Continental army is trained, and for this reason, that a Continental army is not likely to fight against any but an European nation, and therefore they must fight in extended order; but that is not the case with the English Army, we have a great deal of savage warfare, and anybody who thought of attacking Arabs or Zulus in attack formation would commit a great folly, and would court disaster; therefore we must go on with steady drill, and shoulder to shoulder line, because in fact we have more fighting with savages than we are likely to have with European nations. I think the tendency of the lectures delivered at this Institution has been sometimes rather to lead people to believe that we need not have steady drill, and that we may rush on anyhow. That is quite a mistake, as Lord Chelmsford has said. There is nothing that requires more careful drill than the attack formation, in which it is of the utmost importance that the men should keep their direction and distances; if they go struggling all over the place, what a mess you will get into if you are attacking with a large body of men. Of course, with a battalion working by itself, if you do get half as much

extension again as you ought to have it makes no difference; but if you are a part of a Division or Corps d'Armée, and a battalion takes up 100 paces more than it ought to do, what is to become of those next you? You will get into the greatest possible confusion. With regard to the bugle sounds, I have suffered like Major Barker. I do not know them all: I know a certain number, quite enough. There is a little difficulty though about signals. I am a great advocate for signals, and I have worked them a great deal, and have found them most useful on outpost duty; but a Captain cannot signal to his fighting line, because they have their backs turned and won't see his signals, and now that we extend half a company in front and half a company in support, I do not think there will be any difficulty in the Captain giving his commands to all his men if he will put himself in the proper place, not placing himself close in the fighting line, which ought to be under the command of a subaltern and the section leaders, where he can see nothing, but by taking up a central position between his fighting line and support, where he can exercise control over the whole of his company, I think he would then have no difficulty in giving his orders. Therefore I think we may do without bugle sounds, and I do not think the signals are of very much use in the extended order.

Colonel MONCRIEFF (Scots Guards): Sir Lunley Graham and gentlemen, I do not wish to trespass upon your time by going through this lecture *seriatim*, as I think that after what Lord Chelmsford and Colonel Davies have said it has been very well criticized. The only thing I wish to say is, what perhaps some of you may not know, that at present the Commanding Engineer in London is preparing some screens which are an adaptation of those used in Belgium for ranges, and they will soon be put up at Wormwood Scrubs, and it is hoped prevent the bullets going into the convict prison. If these screens turn out a success it appears to me we shall be able to have ranges almost anywhere. A few yards in front of the firing point there is a screen with a longitudinal aperture of about 10 inches. Through that space the man firing can see the top and bottom of the target, and by that means quite sufficiently to miss the target as easily as he ever did before; still if he touches the top of the lower edge of the aperture the bullet is deflected upwards on to an iron plate and falls harmlessly to the ground; if it hits the top edge of the aperture it is deflected downwards, and so cannot get away to the front or side. I think with that improvement the musketry instruction difficulty will be practically overcome. With regard to what Colonel Davies said as to working your companies, I had some experience in that in winter time some years ago. I found that the Rev. E. W. Warre, now Head-Master at Eton, was able to take his Eton boys over almost any of the farms about the country, and with his help I took my battalion to ground we had never thought of being permitted to use. We occupied miles of undulating grass land and did no harm to it at all. The 1st Life Guards provided the cavalry for both sides, and the Eton boys fought against my battalion. It appears to me that this might be done anywhere: it only wants perhaps a friendly visit on the part of the Commanding Officer to the farmer, and as far as I could ascertain in those parts the farmers were only too glad to welcome the soldiers at that time of the year, when they were under proper control. I am quite certain that public-spirited farmers at the proper time of the year will cheerfully co-operate with Commanding Officers, and will thus materially assist in the training of our soldiers.

Colonel G. P. EVELYN: Perhaps like my old brother Officer, Lord Chelmsford, I may be considered one of the old school when I regret that the tendency at present is to do away almost entirely with what I consider very important, steady drill, by rushing our recruits and young soldiers into extended formations and also by carrying on our musketry and target practice in the same harum-scarum way. We let our men fire at enormous ranges before they are able to hit at short ones. We seem also to forget two very important facts: that the object of the soldier in action is not to fire away an enormous number of rounds, but to place one round successfully. If every man who went into action could only place one shot effectively he would do more than his share of injury to the enemy; but we load our men with cartridges; we let them fire at enormous ranges, though we know their fire is perfectly ineffective; and, strange as it may be, there can be little doubt I fear that on service our infantry fire is less effective now, less destructive to an advancing

enemy, than it used to be in the days of muzzle-loaders. I think that is very much due to the action of the smoke caused by rapid firing, and also to a fact which is usually overlooked, namely, that rifles are masked if men are not in good order. If your line has intervals in some places and is crowded many deep in others, a great many of the rifles become useless because the men mask each other's fire. That shows the enormous importance of steady drill. I look upon it that if men are taught to use their arms properly, to understand the use of their sights, to bring the rifles well to the shoulder, and to keep their proper place and space in the ranks, they shoot quite effectively enough for soldiers of the line, and probably better than if they had been all marksmen who could win prizes at shooting competitions but had not done plenty of drill. Firing at long ranges and quick firing are the two things that destroy the efficiency of our infantry. Those are the two points we have chiefly to consider. I was glad to hear the last speaker express the opinion that our authorized formation of attack, of which we have heard so much of late years, is utterly useless before the charge of an uncivilized force; but I venture to remark that it has taken us some time to find that out; we did not know it at Isandlana; we did not know it at Maiwand; we did not know it at Ahmed Khel. In the latter action I think we put ourselves in the order of attack according to the book with our firing line, our supports and reserves. We were going to attack the enemy in his entrenchment position, but the enemy not understanding our game took into his head to attack first. Down they came on us; we had to reinforce our firing line with the supports and then with the reserves; our companies, battalions, and brigades were intermixed, and instead of having a good line to oppose them we had a line ten deep in some places, and with large intervals in other places, and utterly unable to manœuvre. The attack was thrown back with extreme difficulty, and it was very near ending in a catastrophe. That was entirely due to our applying to savage warfare principles which may probably be sometimes applicable to regular warfare, but which are quite unsuited to repelling hordes of Afghans, Zulus, or other savages. That having been discovered I hope we shall not make the mistake in future. I must say that we ought to fire at short ranges and not at long ranges, and I believe the great bulk of our practice should be at small targets at short ranges. If we kept to that we should no longer have the great difficulty we have at present in finding ranges in this thickly populated country. The system of screens, though well known in Italy, Switzerland, and all over Europe, has never yet been adopted by us, and foreigners look with surprise and wonder, as I know by what they have said to me, at the cool way in which we fire at Wimbledon. They see a thousand ladies and gentlemen within a few yards of the line of bullets, and they say that alone sufficiently shows them the extraordinary steadiness and nerve that must be possessed by our Volunteers. They would be afraid to trust foreigners or their own people to shoot under such circumstances—which indeed does look extremely dangerous. I believe any man who can put nine bullets out of ten into a target the size of the crown of a man's hat at 120 yards shoots quite well enough for any purpose whatever, and all the long-range shooting that we hear of occasionally as being useful, as for instance the case which occurred in the Franco-German War, was none of it aimed fire. I believe that in the few instances that long-range firing is useful on service it will be found to be an aimless fire, merely to deluge the ground with bullets without any special aim. Short ranges and small targets should be our plan, and steady drill, and by all means never mix up companies and battalions in the attack. Troops should be kept in close formation as long as they are not within the enemy's sight. When extended they suffer much more from random, long-range fire.

Lieut.-Colonel Rt. Hon. J. H. A. MACDONALD: Sir Lumley Graham and gentlemen, it would not be possible for me to use language of exaggeration in expressing my feeling of great satisfaction at hearing an Army Officer deliver in this theatre such a lecture as we have heard to-day. And I feel that in saying that I am expressing not only the opinion of myself as a Volunteer, but the opinion of the great body of Volunteers who, though many of them may be very bad judges of such subjects, have at least the advantage of being able to look at such matters as amateurs, and therefore free from the fetters of preconceived notions. It fills us with delight to find that within the British Army itself is rising up a call, a strong call, and a

well-expressed call, for things for which the critic has for the last 20 years been persistently endeavouring to obtain a hearing. I think you, Sir, have long held that many things in our Drill Book ought to be simplified, and, above all, there is one thing you have pleaded for, which I am sure if it is pleaded for in the right sense must ultimately obtain success, viz., that men when they are moved should not move by mechanical touch without the aid of the eye, but should invariably move with an interval, and exercise their judgment and their intelligence, and acquire the habit of moving correctly, though moving with an interval. And I must say that I think there is a use of words in reference to drill as between what is called "loose drill" and "steady drill" which is entirely erroneous and misleading. The suggestion that if you begin to drill and drill always with an interval, your drill must therefore for that reason be loose drill is I consider a great mistake.¹ Now let us see what necessarily must happen in every war in which a civilized country may now be engaged. It necessarily happens that if two civilized nations are opposed to one another in war with the weapons we now have, that the one which has to approach the other must approach the other for at least a mile and a half in an order with intervals between the men. That is the condition of combat up to the moment when you are ready to charge at full speed and to take the position. Every man who has to cross that mile and a half must do so with only the eye as a guide, with the assistance of course of the supernumerary rank to prevent general drift. Now the means by which we shall prevent confusion caused by drift and the line getting too thin at one place and too thick at another, and thus prevent one regiment overlapping another and taking up its ground—an evil referred to by Colonel Evelyn—is by training men persistently and constantly at marching and doubling with an interval between the files, and teaching them to observe that interval correctly. I maintain that is what you require to do in your barrack-yard by the most exact and steady drill, but if you put the men together with their elbows rubbing one another, and teach them to march in that way, you are not only giving them no aid to learn the mode in which they must pass the fire zone, but you are on the contrary introducing a principle which is absolutely inconsistent with what they have to do on service. The principle of marching with touch is for the express purpose of preventing the men exercising any intelligence as regards interval—preventing the men using the eye at all—every man being in fault in the ranks when he is out of touch. His business is to find his man if he loses him by feeling for him. We all know that that is not what he does when on service. We know if you were to teach men no steady drill but that of marching by touch, that you would not be teaching them the mode of movement used in war. The moment you get to Aldershot, or the moment men are put into a ship to go out to war, from that moment to the day when they come home, they never do march by touch. I have seen battalion after battalion pass me at Aldershot marching in column, and the men do not march by touch; they march as men of sense always would by keeping reasonably near, but every man having freedom to clear himself of the obstructions before him, and having freedom to use his lungs, which he cannot possibly have with his arms close by his side. The natural action of swinging the arm in walking is not an action of a mechanical nature for the purpose of helping the body forward—we all know that it cannot do that; the action of the arms is perfectly involuntary, and is the means Nature provides for keeping up the circulation in the arms. If a man holds his hand hanging straight down, the whole of the veins of that hand immediately swell up and the hand becomes uncomfortable. If he swings his hand two or three times without raising it at all the blood resumes its proper circulation and relief and comfort are the result. In the old days it was perhaps advisable to sacrifice some of the advantages of following the natural course for the purpose of obtaining what you then wished to obtain; you wished to present the appearance to your enemy of a wall that nothing could throw down, and which also moved like a wall, and as it advanced was so solid that it would push down—morally and even physically push

¹ "Loose" in the sense of "irregular" or "inexact," is to be shunned as ruinous. The word should never be used as it is ambiguous. "Open" would be much better.—J. H. A. JI.

down—that which was in front of it. You cannot produce that result now; your wall must be carried forward in bits and put together at the last moment. It is impossible for you to cross the fire-swept zone as a wall, and therefore the sooner you abandon the idea of working as a permanent wall at any time the better. Now let us see how we begin with a recruit when we take him into the barrack-yard. The first time we move him about we always put him in order with intervals, and we practise him in marching about the yard with the intervals, making him keep his proper distance from the man on his right—if it is by the right, and from the man on his left, if it is by the left. We do that, I suppose, in order better to observe his movements, but at all events we begin operations by making him move with an interval from the man next him, and we do succeed in obtaining accurate movement with interval. Under the conditions of modern warfare for what purpose do we then change our mode and teach him to move touching the elbow of another man? I think it is inconceivable that men can be in any circumstances where they are to move in which there is the least reason why they should touch one another at all. The thing you want now, whether your soldier is ill or well trained, is for him to be able to cover with considerable speed a distance of a mile and a half, and you must leave every man's body so free that his action in covering that distance shall be a natural and not an artificial one. Now having got your recruit and begun to drill him in an order with an interval, you still put him afterwards into rank with touch. We have made some progress in giving a man liberty to move naturally. Forty or fifty years ago he was only allowed 20 inches in the ranks, he was afterwards allowed 22 inches, and now we allow him 24 inches. But what do we do? We drill him about in those 24 inches for half an hour or an hour, and then we suddenly tell him we are going to do the business of attack! and what do we tell him then? That he is to have touch no longer, even while he is standing in the ranks, but is to occupy 30 inches of front. Therefore the moment you suggest to the soldier that he is going in for business you at once practically confess to him that what you have told him about rubbing elbows and keeping his eyes fixed to the front has nothing to do with the business in which he is to be really engaged. Again, I beg to be understood that in speaking against touch I say nothing against steady drill—quite the contrary; but I say that, as in former days, the spirit of the combat was consistent with and made touch a necessity; the spirit of the combat has now absolutely departed from that arrangement—of the men standing by their elbows touching—and has entirely gone over to that part of the soldier's work which is done without touch; therefore I say as the spirit of the combat is out of that touch style altogether, let us get rid of it altogether, and let all the training we put our men to be a training in which our constant aim shall be steady drill, but a steady drill which shall train them thoroughly to that they have to do in modern warfare, namely, to move with an interval between them. A great part of our drill has been carried on not realizing that this change has taken place, and therefore our two classes of drill come to be absolutely separate things. That should not be so. I rather think the sound principle of drill would be to a constant transition in the course of the same drill from strict drill—that is, work done with the most absolute regularity that can be got—dressing, and everything of the kind—to the action drill, in which you do not study dressing, but endeavour to work according to the circumstances of the ground, and to work with greater freedom under the control and direction as distinct from the word of command of the Officers. It is the wearisomeness of the long hour, perpetually doing things in a stiff formation, which is unsuitable to modern warfare; that is the objection to our general parade drill; whereas if the parade and the practical were, so to speak, interspersed one with the other, using words of caution, indicate the transition from one to the other—giving the word “Action Drill,” and then for a quarter of an hour going on without any attention to dressing, points, &c., but rather pointing out how inaccuracies have arisen, and the way in which they are to be avoided in the future; then giving the caution—“Parade Drill,” and moving your men about for another quarter of an hour, with dressing, points, and every minuteness and strictness of form you please—would not this be an enormous improvement? But the things in which extra smartness should be exacted should be restricted. I happen at present to be living where

I have a view of one of our barrack-yards. Now I think that we have gone too far in the matter of looking for smartness in things to which it should not apply. I saw this morning a whole battalion engaged a whole half hour in listening to the words—"Stand at ease," and "As you were." I do not mind hearing the words "Stand at ease." I think if they were used oftener during drill, and really meant what they express, it would be an improvement. To a lady who had never seen military parade, the words "Stand at ease" would at once suggest that the people addressed were to be allowed a little freedom and relaxation, but instead of that, so determined were our forefathers that everything that was done by a soldier should be as stiff and wooden as possible, that the "Stand at ease" has come to be a part of our exercise in which we do not cause the men to stand at ease, on the contrary, put them in a fixed position, and have had to invent another word, "Stand easy," in order to give the relaxation which the words stand at ease would seem to imply.¹

The CHAIRMAN: Will you allow me to remind you of the rule of this Institution? I am sorry to say you have already considerably exceeded your time. What you have been telling us is very interesting, but there are a good many other gentlemen who wish to speak.

Colonel the Hon. PAUL MEIBURN, C.B. (Scots Guards): I speak, Sir, as one neither of the old school nor of the new, but if there is one branch of our forces which will suffer by Officers in the regular Army speaking out too openly and freely about what they consider now to be necessary, namely, "loose drill," to the detriment to a great extent of steady drill, I think that branch of our forces will be the Volunteers. I am not one of those who are always anxious to quote the armies that we should look upon as a pattern, and deservedly, but at any rate I know Sir Lumley Graham will agree with me, that if we are to look at any army for what is good in matters of drill, it is the German Army; and believe me, good as they may be at their loose drill, there is no army which pays so much attention to steady drill. If, as a fencer, I think of the trouble that I take with my fencing, and think how very few of the complicated movements I learn in my lessons I am likely to put into practice, still I feel certain that the more trouble I take with my lesson, the more trouble I take to make myself a thoroughly steady close fencer, the better it will be for me when I fence. So it is with drill. I feel quite convinced that when you think of the number of hours that a battalion is drilled in the German Army, and of the comparatively few hours we drill in our English Army, seeing that we have our men at least three years, and they have their men at most three years—surely we are not expecting our men to learn too much, when we say that they must be able to do their steady drill, and also be able to do their loose drill. But our present difficulty is, and it always has been so, is this—our recruits do not come together at the same time of the year. In the German Army you have a regular routine. They join in the middle of October. You hand the men over to your sergeant, your sergeant to the Lieutenant, the Lieutenant to the Captain, the Captain to the Colonel of the battalion, the Colonel of the battalion to the Colonel of the regiment; then the Brigadier takes them, then the General of the Division. Then comes loose drill. Now observe, there has not been one atom of loose drill mixed up with the steady drill. The men from October to May have received instruction in steady drill. In May the Captain of the company takes his men in hand, and here is what I urge very strongly, namely, that if you choose to have your field training for a battalion all together, for mercy's sake be careful the

¹ Had I not been most properly stopped for trespassing the rule as to time, what I wished to say would have prevented my giving a false impression, which my friend Colonel Trotter said good-naturedly he was sure I did not mean to give. I had no intention of suggesting that the Guards took a long time to learn the "Stand at ease," but only of indicating that the original intention of these words had been lost in the effort to make *everything* like clockwork, and that the Guards' drill-sergeants in setting up drill, had to struggle as hard at "one," "two" at the "stand at ease," as if it had been an important order.—J. H. A. M.

Commanding Officer and the Adjutant do not take away the company from the Captain. There is the secret. From the beginning of May until the beginning of August, you can give your Captain his company, and you say as Commanding Officer, "You are responsible that these men learn their loose drill, that they learn outpost duty, that they know all the varied work that will take place in the manœuvres, and if I find any company of any battalion not thoroughly well up in this work during manœuvre time, I shall take remarkably good care that you, the Captain of the company, suffer for it." If you want all your units of battalions to be thoroughly good and efficient, that is the system and no other. In Germany after the manœuvre month of August and September, the soldiers of the third year return to their homes. There you have a thoroughly clear system, you do not have that at Aldershot. Company training is knocked on the head for a march past; by all means have your march past at the proper time, but do not let us in the middle of the training of a Division, brigade, company, or battalion, all of a sudden have to knock the whole system on the head, in order to have two or three days' practice for marching past, preparatory to some review, inspection, or large field-day. I thoroughly agree with Lord Chelmsford that every good battalion ought to march past. I think that any battalion ought to be able to do the steady drill and march past, and also ought to be able to do loose drill without the slightest trouble. I think one should not interfere with the other, but I do most cordially hope that Volunteers, who have hard enough work, goodness knows, to turn out their men as well as they do, will think most earnestly before ever they consider that loose drill is to take the place of steady drill. I think if we can get our Volunteers and Militia to do their steady drill well, we shall have done uncommonly well.

The CHAIRMAN: I should like to hear the opinions of any working regimental Officer present.

Major FAWKES, Royal Irish Fusiliers: I have only one suggestion to make, and that is that in garrison towns like Portsmouth, where there are companies of two or three different regiments struck off duty for instruction at the same time, they might combine for manœuvring, especially in the latter part of the course. I tried this myself at Portsmouth one year and it answered very well, and gave an interest to the men which would otherwise have been wanting. Failing this, which perhaps could not always be carried out, and in places where there is only one kept, two companies ought to be exercised together *at least*. Major Barker truly says, it is often necessary to manœuvre one half-company against the other, which is useless for instruction. I throw this out merely as a suggestion that occurs to me.

Captain H. O. BOXER (London Rifle Brigade): May I be permitted as a Volunteer Officer to make just one remark with reference to what Colonel Paul Methuen has just said, when he asked us to confine our attention to steady drill? In saying that it appears to me that he has by no means contradicted what my friend Colonel Macdonald has been urging, for I distinctly understood Colonel Macdonald to say that there was no difficulty whatever about having steady drill, but steady drill without touch. It appears to me that that is the whole matter at issue—can we or can we not do loose order drill steadily? If Colonel Methuen, or any other practical soldier, says that we cannot, then we must take into consideration the necessity of going on with drill with touch, but speaking with considerable experience, extending over 23 years as a Volunteer, I maintain that it is possible, especially with such men as we have in the ranks of the Volunteers, to have a thoroughly steady drill without touch. I will yield to no man in my belief in the necessity for steady drill; I am also certain it is necessary that drill should be drilled into the men; men in the ranks must be made to a great extent to drill like machines, they will not lose the necessary intelligence for field manœuvres, but will be all the better for it. But what I want to know is this—why is it impossible to drill them like machines in loose formation, instead of in close formation?

Colonel TORREN, Grenadier Guards: My friend Colonel Macdonald said, I believe, that it took the Guards half an hour to stand easy. I know he did not mean it. At the same time I must remark that I believe the Guards are known to practise steady drill more than any regiment in the Service. I am told practice is better than theory. Now at the Battle of Abu Klea the Guards Camel Corps were certainly in close order, when they stood extremely steady; perhaps if they had not stood quite so

steady the Camel Corps would not have returned to tell the tale. I certainly advocate steady drill as well as open order drill, but I think we must begin with steady drill first, and practise the open order drill afterwards.

Mr. GRAHAM WILMOT-BROOKE, 2nd V.B. The Queen's Own (Royal West Kent) Regiment: With regard to this steady drill with intervals, we had practical experiments of that kind in our battalion in two companies. It was found that the open, or loose drill, as it was generally practised in Volunteer battalions, certainly did unsteady the men, and the men who were very steady in close order were very unsteady the moment loose order began. We therefore tried drilling in a steady manner with accurately kept intervals, and the result was that the drill in extended order in attack formation really became as steady as the ordinary close order drill by touch. The men were drilled in a large drill hall, with intervals very accurately kept, and they soon marched as carefully with intervals, and by eye, as they had before done by touch. The difference in the fire discipline, and everything connected with attack formation, and moving in extended order, was very marked indeed. I am sure there must be a great deal in this system of drill capable of development.

Captain TULLY, late 28th Middlesex Rifle Volunteers: It is with a little diffidence that I rise to say anything, because the subject brought forward in the lecture has been almost fully covered by the various speakers, and I take it for granted that unless something fresh may be considered, someone more experienced than myself in these subjects had better address the meeting. I wish, however, to mention one point, as to which perhaps I have a special knowledge, and also to point out something that struck me in the course of the discussion, and with regard to shooting. Colonel Evelyn said he considered steady drill to be the first necessity of shooting. We shall later on in the session have a lecture here on the new military arm, and that arm will perhaps be fully discussed. I should otherwise, perhaps, have gone into more details, giving my views about the Martini-Henry, and spoken of the various points connected with shooting, because I think they would bear very materially on the question at issue. My deliberate opinion is that it is not possible to teach the soldier to shoot accurately with any amount of drill with the present Martini-Henry rifle. I remember very well my first experiment with a herd of antelopes. These deer were the first living objects I had ever shot at. I took an accurate position, and sighted the rifle very carefully; I missed every shot for the first ten shots, although the deer ran straight at me, and passed by me 70 yards off. That is my personal experience, since which I have been very dubious about the advantage of theoretical musketry instruction. What we want is a rifle which can be readily raised to the shoulder. If a man is to be practised continually at short ranges he must have an unlimited supply of ammunition, and he must be taught not to bring the whole of his muzzle and the whole of the foresight into the line of sight, and to do that it is absolutely necessary that the stock should be brought rapidly to the shoulder. Every Officer who has shot big game or birds will know that he has his gun fitted to his shoulder, just as his clothes are fitted to it; the stock of the rifle must be made so that it fits him, then he raises his gun up and hits the bird. But let any Officer in the Army take the Henry-Martini rifle, with a hair-trigger if he likes, and see how long it will take him to "draw a bead" on any bird or animal of any kind. I believe that, take it altogether, the lecturer and the speakers are very much in accord, and also that Colonel Macdonald and Colonel Methuen are very much in accord. I apprehend Colonel Macdonald to mean that it takes more continuous practice to make a man drill well in loose order than in close order, and that a man must be a far better drill to drill in loose order than to keep his "touch." I apprehend the lecturer to be desirous of knocking out a number of useless formations, which will give more time to practise steady drill, and more time to practise those items of loose drill which are absolutely essential to the modern order of battle. It appears to me, therefore, that there is not much issue joined, either between the various speakers or the lecturer, and I confess that with my friend Colonel Macdonald, and Captain Boyes, I have an extreme belief in the value of loose drill as interpreted by those two Officers, and I believe it will make the soldier much better at steady drill if you put him back to it, than if you practise him at steady drill and then only for a change rush him into a loose formation.

The CHAIRMAN: I have been very much interested by this lecture. The chief point of it, and a very valuable point I think, is that Major Barker seeks (what we all wish, no doubt) to make the Army a really efficient body for war purposes. No doubt that was at one time rather left out of sight in this country. During the long European peace the Army at home had become rather a parade army, though it had during that very period a lot of fighting to do in out-of-the-way places; but things are different now, though some relics of these days of torpor still remain. Major Barker's suggestions, or the greater part of them, are very valuable towards making the Army even still more of a fighting army than it is. He spoke of the small number of men available for drill in battalions on the reduced establishment, that is to say, the great majority of the battalions at home. The different classes of remedies that he has proposed all seem to me to be good in their way. First of all, the extension of service for men in India; that will tend indirectly to produce the result he wishes, namely, to give us more men for training at home, and that I hope is a change that will be carried out. It is an idea that seems to be generally approved of. Then as to the reduction of guards and orderlies. Really I think there is a superstition about guards. It is thought to be necessary to have a guard here, there, and everywhere, and as the lecturer and others have said, in many cases flying sentries, or small patrols, would do the work much better, with less detriment to the men and with a great economy of labour. A very small number of men would then be kept away from drill by duties of this description. Then as to orderlies; the amount of orderlies that there used to be, and I believe still are taken from corps in garrison towns and camps, is something distressing to Commanding Officers who are always called upon to send their best men to act in this capacity, and these are temporarily lost to them. This question was gone into some years ago at Berlin. They wanted as many men as possible in the German Army for training, and they established a system of communication by telephones or telegraph between the different barracks and military departments, so that almost all the work of messengers was done in that way, at a great economy of labour.

Colonel METHUEN: You do not see one orderly in the War Office there.

The CHAIRMAN: It is done by a system of electric communication.

Colonel METHUEN: There are one or two old soldiers there.

The CHAIRMAN: The German authorities understand the necessity of economizing labour as much as possible.

Colonel DAVIES: In the Southern District telephones are used now in all the barracks and forts.

The CHAIRMAN: I hope it has the effect of doing away with a number of orderlies.

Colonel DAVIES: We never send men out as orderlies.

The CHAIRMAN: I see them in London a good deal. You must have a certain number of orderlies in the Staff Offices and departments. I should think that this is an opening to use discharged soldiers for that purpose. A great number of unemployed reserve and discharged soldiers would be very glad to get any work of this sort, and I think you might find a good many men of that class who would be very useful for this purpose. All these things would tend to help Major Barker's object of getting as many men for drill and instruction as possible. With regard to company instruction, I think there is no doubt that it is the foundation of all solid military training, and that Captains should be allowed, as they are in the German Army (as Colonel Methuen pointed out) to have their companies to themselves, without interference for a certain time every year to work them up. Carried still further, Commanding Officers of battalions ought to have their battalions to themselves for a certain time afterwards to work them up, and they should not be constantly interfered with, as they are too often in this country, by General Officers' parades, which interrupt the regular order of regimental training. In the German Army the training of the different units from lowest to highest is carried out in a regular succession, and one of the great wants in our Army is this methodical system of training, carried out in a regular course without interruption. I have always been of opinion, as some of my hearers may know, that we might gain a great deal in every way by adopting the four-company system in our battalion

organizations, and there are a great many arguments to my mind in its favour, which I won't trouble you with now. This is not the time to give them. But there is one argument that applies specially to this question which I may mention, and that is, that by having the battalion divided into four companies instead of into eight, you give the Captain double the number of men to make use of; therefore, when a company is kept off duty for training the Captain will always be sure of having a fair number of men to work with. I think that is one of the many arguments in favour of a system adopted by every army on the Continent; but I am sorry to know that it is distasteful to the higher authorities of our Army, and I will say nothing more about it on this occasion. Within the last two or three years a great impulse has been given to company training, which had before been at a low ebb, many excellent orders on the subject having been issued, but it is difficult to carry out those orders in the great majority of the battalions at home on account of their weakness. If the companies were stronger—as I wish them to be, double their present strength—without increasing the establishment of the Army, it would give much greater facility for carrying out the very excellent orders referred to. I am persuaded that you cannot have a thoroughly efficient infantry regiment unless the companies have complete training by their own company Officers. With regard to the simplification of drill, most people admit that it is advisable. There is a great difference of opinion as to the amount of mere drill that is required; I am one of those who wish for less drill and more instruction. I quite believe that absolute steadiness is required; I would have steadiness not only in the mere drill but in every part of a soldier's training. I have sometimes remarked that when companies extend in skirmishing order it seems to be thought that all steadiness may cease. The men are allowed to play about and laugh. That ought not to be. Soldiers ought to be quite as steady when in extended order as when in close order, and I am persuaded that this is a very great point to insist upon. I am inclined very much to agree with Colonel Macdonald,—whom I was very sorry to interrupt, but it was only in consequence of the pressure of time—I was very much interested by his remarks, the more so because I have just said I am inclined to agree with them. I long ago thought that the system of drilling at intervals (in extended order, in fact) was an excellent one, and that if a soldier were thoroughly, not loosely, trained from the very first to work in extended order he would move much more steadily and efficiently before the enemy. There were other gentlemen who supported that view also, but I am aware that there is a very strong feeling against it. I am afraid I shall be thought a great revolutionist in the Army generally for advocating such a thing, and I am bound to say that the German Army, which we look upon as the first army of the day, in war is very strict indeed about these steady movements. When I was at Versailles in the middle of the siege, I saw the German troops off duty, those who were not in the trenches, actually drilling at what we call irreverently the “goose step,” and at what to my mind is very absurd, namely, their prancing parade march, just as if they had been in garrison at home. The snow was on the ground, and I saw them all out by squads at the stiff drill. The next day they would probably be in the trenches, either fighting or prepared to fight. So that it is only fair to bear in mind that German soldiers, who are certainly the most successful of the day, lay a very great stress upon this stiff drill, and it is stiff drill with a vengeance in the preparatory stage. Still, for all this, I should like to see the system advocated by Colonel Macdonald, and I may add by myself years ago, tried fairly. I believe myself that it would be successful. I will not go into any of the points the lecturer spoke about as to the sections in the “Field Exercise” that he would recommend to be abolished or else modified. I think that is a question in which the able Officer now Adjutant-General of the Army quite sympathizes with Major Barker, as I have heard him in this theatre several times express very strongly his opinion that there was a great deal of unpractical matter in the “Field Exercise” book, even since its frequent amendments, which ought to be taken out of it, and I think we may be quite sure that that subject will be looked into carefully and speedily. It will, I hope, be submitted to a Committee of experienced Officers, amongst whom I think there ought to be a large infusion of regimental Officers. With regard to musketry instruction, which is also now under consideration, I always was of opinion when I

was a regimental Officer that the musketry instructor was a person who ought to be done away with, and I welcomed the change when he was done away with, because I always thought he was a thorn in the side of a good Captain, and that he was a dangerous encouragement to a less good Captain to neglect his work, or slur over it. It is very difficult to prevent an official of that sort from interfering with the instruction of companies. But it is possible that there may be room for a musketry instructor in a battalion for the purpose of doing all that sort of work alluded to by the lecturer which is beyond the province of the company Officer; but if the musketry instructor be re-established, all I hope is that he will be strictly forbidden to interfere in any way with the company musketry instruction, or even to be present at it. The most important branch of musketry instruction has been carried out very little in our Army until quite of late years, and that is what we call field firing, what the Germans call "war firing." That is the most important practice of all, and it is only of late years that we have taken to it at all, and even now it is not carried out very completely. It is a most important practice, because it not only teaches men to fire under the conditions most nearly approaching to those of active service, but it also teaches that most important thing of all, fire discipline, and teaches Officers and non-commissioned officers in the noise and excitement of action to handle men, and how and when to employ all the different sorts of firing that should be resorted to under various circumstances, therefore it is practically most important both to men and Officers, and I think the want of that training is the chief reason of the comparative inefficiency of our firing since our troops have been armed with the breech-loader. There is one great difficulty in carrying out a system of field firing in this country, and that is the want of proper ranges. I was happy to hear from Colonel Moncrieff that with regard to the ranges for ordinary target practice that difficulty at least is in a way to be overcome, but that does not do away with the difficulty for field firing. You want a very extensive piece of ground for that purpose, and there are very few places in this country where we have ranges fit for field firing. It would be an advantage if the Government would buy some pieces of ground on the moors in the north of England and in the midland counties, so as to give us one or more other Aldershots, not for troops to be moved out of the towns to be constantly quartered there, as the lecturer suggests, but to be used at certain seasons for this very purpose of field firing, and for other training. I know there is very great difficulty, that a great deal of money must be spent to give us proper ranges, but I do not think that it is money that will be refused by the nation if we can bring it home to our fellow citizens that it is bad and dangerous economy in these days to deny our infantry of the standing Army, Militia, and Volunteer force the means of making themselves thoroughly acquainted with the use of their weapons. The concluding remarks of the lecturer I thought very good, they quite chime in with what I feel myself with regard to General Officers' inspections, and Lord Chelmsford, who no doubt has inspected a good many regiments, quite agreed with the lecturer that the system of inspection as laid down by authority was not what it should be. As long as you have a system of inspection which goes very little beyond the merely ornamental part of military training you won't have the more important practical part thoroughly attended to. The lecturer alluded to some remarks made by Prince Hohenlohe, a very distinguished Officer in the German Army, on that very subject. He published a book upon infantry, of which I translated certain portions, which appeared in our Journal. He well sums up this question of inspections by saying, "A corps will certainly be trained so as to fit it for the sort of inspection which it will have to undergo." This is certainly the case, and if you want an army fit for war, make your inspections so as to go carefully into all that is important in warfare; if you want an army for show, go in merely for marching past and such like. I think that the British nation will prefer the former sort of army, and I have no doubt that with the material which we have in men and Officers we can obtain an army second to none in warlike efficiency if we go the right way to work. In the discussion there was a good deal said about the comparative merits of loose and steady drill. I think those terms are misapplied, "loose" and "steady." I do not think there ought to be such a thing as "loose" drill at all, all drill ought to be steady. But I think the lecturer was misunderstood by some of the speakers. I did not understand him for a

moment to mean that steady drill was to be neglected, he spoke of that as the means to the end. Steady drill is the means to arrive at the end which is warlike efficiency, but you may sacrifice the end to the means, and that is what we have done, in fact, a great deal in bygone times, and that is what the lecturer wishes to avoid, but he will speak for himself. I will not occupy your time further, but will ask the lecturer to reply to the remarks that have been made by the various speakers.

Major BARKER: I was very glad to hear the Chairman, and also Captain Tully, recognize that I did not belong to the school of those who wanted to have no drill at all. I think if anyone takes the trouble to read my paper carefully, he will see that I do not advocate less drill, but more drill. I am certainly an advocate of more drill than is actually carried on in the British Army at present, and as a means to that end I want to get all the men I can, and then to drill them as often as I can. Lord Chelmsford in his remarks said that we used to have more steady drill in line, and that we generally beat the French in that formation. That was all well and good as long as the line was the fighting formation. Of course, the more we had of advance in line and shoulder to shoulder the better, but now we do not fight in that formation; that is the question that goes to the very root of the matter. We fight in extended order, therefore I say, have as much extended order as possible. Of course you must have close drill to a certain extent, but have a great deal more drill in extended order than we have now. Colonel Davies says we must remember we have a great deal of savage fighting to do. So we have; but then again I wish to remark that it is not upon fighting savages that our honour and existence as a great nation will ever depend. Our honour and existence as a great nation may depend some day on the way in which we fight, and that fighting will not be in close order. I must say my sympathies are with Colonel Macdonald, but it required a certain amount of moral courage for an Officer in my position to come forward with a lot of revolutionary proposals, and I must say I was afraid to touch on that question. I did not like putting my views in opposition to those of a large number of very experienced Officers. Then again, it is an excellent thing for a Captain to have his men to himself. I wish he could have them a great deal more to himself; but what is the good of fifteen files to a Captain, what can he do? He can only do very elementary things. How can you do outposts with pickets, and sentries, and supports, and reserves, and all the rest of it, with fifteen files? How can you manoeuvre seven and a half files against the other seven and a half? It cannot be done; the whole thing is impossible. And lastly, as regards the musketry instruction. I do not want to see the musketry instructor with any one's company. I would not allow him within half a mile of a company, but I do want to see a musketry instructor looking after recruits, and ranges, and all that sort of thing. It is no doubt good for young Officers to make them put through squads of recruits; it is good for the Officers, but it is not good for the recruits. I was at Hythe two years ago, and I am sorry to say I have forgotten a good deal of what I learnt there already. It is impossible to do your work thoroughly without doing it constantly. A man just told off to take a squad of recruits and put them through musketry forgets a lot of the little things he learnt at Hythe: he is more or less inexperienced, and cannot do it so well as a man who is always doing it. It is just the same as the question of the corporal instructor of recruits. A corporal instructor can do it better than an Officer, because he is always doing it. In the same way a musketry instructor, or an Assistant Adjutant for musketry, can put recruits through musketry a great deal better than an Officer who is just told off for the duty. I am sure I am extremely flattered at the way in which my lecture has been received. I did not expect very much sympathy, I expected, on the other hand, a good deal of opposition, and it has, on the whole, been quite the contrary. I will conclude by thanking you for your kindness.

The CHAIRMAN: I am sure you will allow me to present, in your name, a vote of thanks to the lecturer for his very interesting and able lecture, and to the various gentlemen who have joined in the discussion.