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THE ORGANISATION AND CONTROL OF TRANSPORT IN THE FIELD.

By Captain ASTLEY TERRY, A.S.C.,
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Guernsey and Alderney District).*

Tuesday, May 24th, 1898.

Colonel LONSDALE HALE, late R.E., in the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN: I have great pleasure in introducing to you Captain Terry, of the Army Service Corps. The Council, while on the one hand they are very glad that you should hear in this Institution officers who can give us in their lectures the benefit of age and experience, on the other hand are very desirous of encouraging the younger generation of officers to come and put forward their views, because it is from the younger generation of the officers and not from the older generation that fresh views and fresh thoughts can be gathered. Therefore, on this occasion I have, as I say, special pleasure in introducing to you an officer of the younger generation.

LECTURE.

IN an interesting paper which appeared in the December number of the JOURNAL of this Institution, Colonel Mark Bell, R.E., claimed—and I think rightly claimed—the title of “The Fourth Arm” for the Royal Engineers.¹ I am firmly of opinion that the train of an army, with us the Army Service Corps, is of such vital importance in modern warfare as fully to entitle it to be called “The Fifth Arm.”

Although this name has suggested itself after the appearance of Colonel Bell's paper, the subject of which it treats is of maturer growth, the outcome, in fact, of some years' study of transport in the field.

It will not, I think, be denied that the difficulties of supply and transport in war have increased enormously in recent times; that is to say, the amount of *impedimenta* essential to the efficiency of an Army is proportionally much greater than it used to be. This fact, it seems to me, may be attributed to two main causes:—

- i. To the growth of science as applied to the art of war, which has not only replaced the rude weapons of our forefathers by others of complicated and delicate mechanism, but has so altered the methods of fighting as to render a modern campaign a far greater strain on the human machine than in the days when a stout heart and a strong arm were the only qualifications required of a soldier.

¹“The Fourth Arm.” By Colonel Mark S. Bell, V.C., C.B., R.E., A.D.C., p.s.c. (Commanding Royal Engineer, Western District), Fellow King's College, London.

- ii. To the spread of civilisation, which has reduced war to a great game in which certain fixed rules must not be violated, and which forbids armies to lay waste a country in which the inhabitants offer no resistance.¹ Our armies can no longer live from hand to mouth at the expense of a defenceless population. We can use the resources of a country, we can by purchase and by requisition take anything which is not absolutely indispensable for the immediate requirements of the inhabitants; but we may no longer treat the individual as an enemy to whom no mercy is to be shown merely because we happen to be fighting against his fellow-countrymen.

Much more is now demanded of the soldier than formerly; if not in actual bravery, at least in those qualities which make even a greater demand on his moral and physical condition. Therefore he must be well cared for and well fed, must be provided with hundreds of articles necessary to keep him efficient, must be nursed when sick, and must be treated, in fact, in a manner which to his predecessor of a couple of hundred years ago would have appeared positively luxurious.

I am speaking, of course, only of war as waged between civilised nations; and it will be convenient to state here the limits within which I propose to confine myself in this paper.

To begin with then, I am only going to consider the case of war with another great Power, in which the work of the Army Service Corps will necessarily be entirely different from what it is in our numerous "little wars," waged for the most part against savage foes, in trying climates, and necessitating special organisation to cope with special conditions. These "little wars" are of such frequent occurrence that a large number of the officers of the Army Service Corps have served in one or another of them, and it would be presumption on my part to attempt to theorise on a subject of which, from practical experience, others are so far better qualified to speak than I. The knowledge gained by the individual in such campaigns is of the utmost value; but the Army Service Corps as a body is not employed, and the subject therefore does not fall within the limits I have here set myself.

When we consider the case of a big war, however, matters are altogether different. Colonel Furse² says:—"The system of victualling entirely from the base, the only possible one in our small wars, is no school for the large supply operations of European warfare." We have not fought a European Power since the Crimea, and I fear the lessons to be learnt from a study of that campaign are of a negative character. We must go back then to Peninsular and Waterloo days for examples of the work of the train in war; but those days are long past, changes almost revolutionary in their character have taken place since; and consequently we find ourselves, to all intents and purposes, in the dark as to the course to be followed in

¹ Except in a friendly country when it is absolutely necessary to prevent the enemy obtaining supplies, as was the case before the Lines of Torres Vedras.

² "Military Transport." By Lieut.-Col. George Armand Furse, D.A.Q.M.G.

the future. It is true that we can derive much valuable information from studying the campaigns of other countries, notably that of 1870-71. But apart from the fact that the war between France and Germany is fast becoming ancient history, we have to remember that our transport and supply organisation necessarily differs from the German in several particulars. Hence, we must base our methods to a great extent on theory, and endeavour by constant study to arrive at the truth.

In the second place, I am not now concerned with the various kinds of transport which fall outside the control of the Army Service Corps proper. I mean transport by railway, by river, by canal, or by sea. The consideration of these would take far too long to be adequately discussed in the time at my disposal this afternoon.

Again, transport in the field may roughly be divided into two parts, usually known for the sake of convenience as First Line and Second Line. The work of the latter is carried on well in rear of the army, safe from any attack by the enemy, and in great part at least by civilians under proper supervision. This again falls outside the scope of my paper.

It is the first line of transport, then, that I call the "Fifth Arm," and it is of this part only that I propose to speak this afternoon.

There is happily no need to insist on the fifth arm being entirely a military body; the necessity for this is now universally admitted for the following reasons, viz.:—

- i. Strict discipline is absolutely necessary, and cannot be properly maintained among civilians.
- ii. The commander of an army must have the same absolute control over the transport as he has over the other arms.
- iii. A sudden panic is less likely to occur, and if it should it can be more easily checked.

But to my mind there is a more important point still, and I cannot do better than again quote Colonel Furse. He says:—"A military transport has the further advantage of securing a reserve of trained men in the hour of need (with us a point of considerable importance). Here we have in place of a source of weakness an accession of strength which often we cannot otherwise easily procure. In place of having to guard and protect a host of helpless followers, if we can secure nothing else but their own defence and that of the animals and material under their charge, dispensing with numerous guards which can be more effectively employed elsewhere, and which our small armies can spare with great difficulty, something will be gained."

This brings me at once to a question of the first importance, viz.:—Is the Army Service Corps as at present constituted capable of self-defence?

To find the answer to this question it is only necessary to take up the mobilisation tables,¹ and look at the strength of a company on service,²

¹ See "Manual for Field Service, Army Service Corps."

² It will be noticed that the companies vary in strength according to the nature of their duties.

or rather at the proportion of men to horses. It becomes at once apparent that the number of spare men¹ is quite inadequate to defend those employed as drivers, who cannot possibly be taken away from their animals to assist in repelling an attack. Moreover, it must be remembered that all the men shown as privates are butchers, bakers, or clerks, who will of course be required for their own special duties, and who cannot be employed as fighting men, because, firstly, they are widely distributed, and, secondly, because casualties amongst them would speedily reduce their numbers below the minimum required, and so seriously cripple the resources of the Army. We must therefore take the numbers of the transport men only. The 1st Army Corps requires 16 companies, which give a total of 1,922 drivers, and 3,270 draught horses. If we allow one driver to every two animals (a low estimate, because there are a certain number of one-horse vehicles and pack animals) we find there are just 287 spare men. Again, for a certain line of communications there are 5 companies allotted,² which give a total of 615 drivers and 1,000 horses; that is, 115 spare men. So that altogether 21 companies on a war footing only produce in round numbers some 400 spare men, an average of 19 men per company; or put in another way, the proportion of spare men to the total strength of a company is on an average about one in six. On a peace footing the proportion is about two in three, which is better; and yet, as every officer commanding a company knows, the number of spare men allowed barely suffices to carry on the ordinary routine duties in barracks! We may safely assume therefore that the 19 spare men per company is the minimum number that will be required in war for carrying out the necessary duties, and that they will not be available for fighting. It does not matter how many companies or parts of companies may be united in any one convoy,³ the relative proportion of spare men to drivers will remain practically unaltered.

But, it may be asked, is it necessary or even advisable that the Army Service Corps should be able to defend itself; and if so, to what extent? Would it not be better to entrust its defence entirely to the other arms? At present, if peace manœuvres are any guide, the last question will have to be answered in the affirmative; but this, I take it, is because the companies are not strong enough to conduct their own defence.⁴ As a general rule the attack and defence of convoys is but little practised, presumably because it is considered that the other arms can be more profitably employed; and hence the fact that in nine cases out of ten—I speak so far as my own experience goes—the Army Service Corps is declared neutral, and therefore derives no benefit from the

¹ All the transport men of an Army Service Corps company are trained as drivers. I use the term "spare men" to denote those who are not in charge of animals.

² Exclusive of one dépôt company.

³ I use the term "convoy" not in its usually restricted sense, but to express any portion of the first line of transport.

⁴ There are 34 drivers and 13 pairs of animals in a transport company on a peace footing.

tactical lessons of the manœuvres. Another reason for this is doubtless the increased comfort conferred on the troops generally by their supplies reaching camp in good time without let or hindrance.

I submit that all this is a great mistake, because it is not what would happen in war when in contact with the enemy. Our system, during manœuvres, of operating from standing camps must bear the chief blame, though this, no doubt, is owing to the necessity for cutting down expenses; and, moreover, the peace strength of the Army Service Corps is so small that unless the plan of standing camps be adhered to the number of troops engaged would have to be considerably reduced. The truth of the matter is, that on peace manœuvres the Army Service Corps is not employed as the train of an army in the field, but that all its energies are devoted to keeping the troops supplied with the actual necessities they require, quite irrespective of tactical considerations. It will scarcely, I think, be maintained that this is the best possible training for war.

Peace manœuvres, then, cannot be considered a safe guide; as a matter of fact there are weighty reasons why the Army Service Corps *should* be numerically strong enough to undertake its own defence. They are :—

- i. The commander of an army will not have to make elaborate arrangements for the safety of his supplies, and will thereby be saved much trouble and anxiety. It is true that his lines of communication will still require troops of the other arms for their defence, but the numbers of such troops will be capable of considerable reduction.
- ii. No men need be taken from the fighting line to march with the baggage and supply columns, and consequently the efficiency of the Army will be considerably increased.
- iii. The escorts being composed of drivers will be far more useful than infantry soldiers possessing no knowledge of horses; and the convoys will be homogeneous, which in itself is a great advantage.

Now, to what extent should transport of the first line be capable of self-defence? As I understand the matter, the troops told off to protect a convoy will be divided into two bodies. One, the most numerous, composed of infantry, cavalry, and, as a rule, artillery (a miniature army) will manœuvre at some distance—two or three miles, probably—from the convoy; and will form in fact a covering screen, through which the enemy should not be able to penetrate. This body, for want of a better name, I call the convoy “guard.” The second body, which I call the convoy “escort,” will march with the convoy, and will consist chiefly of infantry, with a small party of cavalry as scouts. The escort should be capable of beating off any parties of the enemy that may elude the guard; and, as we have seen, should consist entirely of men of the Army Service Corps. Wherever in the course of this paper I speak of the defence of a convoy, it must be understood that I refer only to the convoy escort, and not to

the convoy guard; for with the latter the fifth arm has really nothing to do.

We have now arrived at two definite conclusions:—

- i. That convoys in war cannot (as the Army Service Corps is at present constituted) defend themselves.
- ii. That within certain limits they ought to be able to do so.

The further question at once arises:—How is this desirable result to be brought about?

Three main conditions must be satisfied, viz.:—

- i. The number of spare, *i.e.*, fighting men, must be sufficient.
- ii. These men must be at least as well armed as the enemy; and
- iii. They must be properly trained in peace.

To determine the numbers required to carry out a certain fixed undertaking is by no means easy; but when the conditions are ever-varying, as in the present case, the difficulty of arriving at a positive conclusion is enormously increased. Peace manœuvres, as we have seen, are no safe guide: examples taken from actual warfare are not much better, because the strength of the escort must necessarily vary according to the nature of the country and the proximity, strength, and character of the enemy. It is not to be expected that England will maintain in peace, even including reservists, the maximum number of spare men which military history tells us has been, and so may be again, required to protect a convoy. Therefore the escort must, in special cases, be augmented by the other arms. But, on the other hand, the nation may reasonably be asked to furnish more than the bare minimum; in order that, as a general rule, the numbers may be adequate without additional aid.

I suggest that, as a tentative measure, the proportion of men to draught horses in a transport company on a peace footing be fixed at two to one. This would necessitate adding 18 men to each company, that is a total of 612 additional men to the Corps.¹ Not a very extravagant demand surely, now that the Army is being increased, and it is remembered how weak the Corps is at present even for its duties in peace. "The conduct of convoys, and the formations to assume in case of attack, require to be carefully understood by all officers"; so Colonel Furze; and unless each company is brought up to at least the strength I have suggested, it will be impossible to practise in peace the duties which will be required in war. The number of officers too must be considerably augmented. Colonel Ward² says:—The estimate of establishment [for a line of communication] now given is calculated on a very liberal scale, and will, as a rule, on account of the scarcity of officers, be considerably reduced. That is to say, our organisation for war exists on paper only, or can only be maintained by drawing from other

¹ There are 34 Service Transport Companies.

² "Army Service Corps Duties." By Lieut.-Colonel E. W. D. Ward, C.B., D.A.A.G. Home District.

branches of the Service officers who can have had little, if any, previous training in transport duties; and at a time, too, when their regiments can least spare them. There is another strong argument in favour of increasing the number of men in a company on a peace footing. It is that the present peace establishment is so small compared with the war establishment, that on mobilisation a company would be literally "swamped" with reservists—strangers to their officers and to each other; and this at the very time cohesion and mutual confidence would be most needed.

The proportion of two men to a horse would, on a war footing, be in excess of normal requirements, and might, therefore, I think, be reduced to one man to a horse. This would give the 21 companies required for the 1st Army Corps and line of communication 4,270 drivers instead of only 2,537, the present establishment. Of these, 2,135 would be spare men, an average of about 100 per company; allowing, that is, one driver to every pair of animals.¹ This is a large increase, it is true, but surely not too large when we remember that our 21 companies would in column of route extend for at least nine miles! Of course, so long a convoy on a single road would be highly improbable; but in any case the proportion of fighting men to drivers would remain constant. A company would, roughly speaking, occupy from 500 to 1,000 yards on the march; and surely something under 100 men, a single company of infantry in fact, cannot be considered an unnecessarily strong escort, especially when allowance is made for casualties.²

I assume, of course, that the number of non-commissioned officers would be increased in due proportion—I consider the present establishment proportionally too small—so that there would be sufficient for scouting, and no cavalry would be needed. Hence, under ordinary circumstances, the train would be perfectly capable of looking after itself; and any possible jealousy between it and the other arms would be avoided.

We will suppose, then, that our transport has got the men required for its defence; and the next point to be considered is obviously how these men are to be armed, and how trained. At present the dismounted or supply men of the Army Service Corps are armed with carbine and sword-bayonet, the mounted or transport men with the carbine only. The fact that they are armed at all points to the supposition that they may, under certain conditions, be called upon to fight; and surely it is our duty to see that they shall be at least as well armed as any enemy whom they may be likely to encounter. This is not the case however: other things being equal, a man with a carbine is at the mercy of a man with a rifle, because the latter can keep out of the effective range of the former, on whom he can fire with impunity. More, once the enemy gets to close quarters, the transport man is at his mercy, having no weapon to

¹ As I have already stated, this is a low estimate; besides, many of the spare men would certainly be required for other duties. Probably, therefore, the number actually available would not exceed 70, if so many.

² I have purposely omitted all reference to artificers and batmen, because they would be available for fighting if required.

oppose to the bayonet except the butt-end of his carbine. I do not seek to belittle the carbine, it is an excellent weapon in its way; but no matter how straight it may shoot up to a given distance, it is valueless if its range be insufficient to reach the enemy. Clearly, therefore, the men of the Army Service Corps should be armed with rifle and bayonet. At first sight it may appear somewhat incongruous to arm mounted men with rifles, but this is not really so; it is simply a matter of custom. Moreover, we must recollect that the transport men of the Corps are not "mounted" in the ordinary sense of the word. Certainly the drivers ride their animals, but the spare men sit on the wagons. The present short "knife" bayonet would not interfere with a man on horseback in the least; and undoubtedly it is equally important for the transport man to be able to defend himself at close quarters, as it is for the supply man to be able to do so. At present the drivers are supposed to carry their carbines slung across the shoulder. I say "supposed," because the carbine in this position is exceedingly uncomfortable, especially when moving at the trot; and consequently except when marching to attention, the drivers invariably hand their weapons to the men on the wagons. These last carry the carbine in an upright position between the knees, in which manner a rifle could be held with equal facility. We see therefore that the only difficulty in substituting the rifle for the carbine would be to decide on how the former should be carried by the men in charge of animals. To sling it over the shoulder would be inadvisable for the reasons just given, and a bucket would be in the way. Personally I should like to see the mounted men's rifles carried under the floating raves of the wagons to which their horses are harnessed, one on each side. I cannot conceive any possible occasion in which a driver could want his rifle on the instant; in fact, I rather doubt his requiring it at all, his duty in case of an attack being to take care of his animals. In any case, the fire of a mounted man is never very effective. As the escort of a convoy must act as infantry, the spare men would have to march on foot; indeed, there would be no room for the great majority of them on the wagons. The present "knee" boot would therefore have to go; and as it is most desirable that the drivers and the escort should be interchangeable, I would give all ranks a field-boot, which personally I have always found equally comfortable for walking or riding, besides possessing the additional merit of being easy to take off and put on. I have known men sleep in their wet "knee" boots rather than face the painful struggle in the morning of having to get into them again. Spurs should be treated in the same way as leg-guards are now, *i.e.*, only worn when on horseback.

I will touch very briefly on the question of training. The men should be taught the bayonet exercise, and should be put through the same annual course of musketry (with perhaps certain modifications) as the infantry. This could easily be done, as the number of spare men in a company being increased by eighteen would enable the course to be fired by half-companies without interrupting the ordinary transport duties. Skirmishing should be practised, and great attention paid to fire discipline. The magazine rifle would be an unnecessarily complicated

weapon to put into the hands of three-years' men with a great deal to learn in that short time; I should prefer the Metford-Martini rifle and the Dum-Dum bullet. I am not aware that such a weapon has yet been made, but it could be very easily and cheaply called into existence. I should also like to see a couple of machine guns attached to each company. They would always be useful, especially to stop a sudden rush, or to defend the corners of a laager.

There is one thing more needed to make the train thoroughly efficient, and that is facility for signalling. A few signallers disposed along a convoy on the march will be found extremely useful, and will save much wear and tear of horseflesh. Even with our small convoys on peace manœuvres I have experienced the want of a few signallers; in the case of a big convoy and an active enemy their value would be largely increased. Silence on the line of march is often essential. Colonel Furse says:—"In all cases where noise may point out to the enemy the whereabouts of a convoy, silence should be enjoined, and the drivers should be forbidden to sing, shout, or even to crack their whips." Yet this is the very time when communication between the head and tail of the column will be most needed, and horsemen trotting backwards and forwards are certainly not conducive to silence, while bugle calls will be out of the question. Cyclists will be useful, but their presence will not make up for the absence of signallers. Sometimes, too, a small party of the Royal Engineers will be required to mend roads or repair bridges, and even occasionally to superintend the construction of hasty field defences.

We have now to consider the command of convoys in war. In the case of a convoy being entirely composed—as we have seen it ought to be composed—of the Army Service Corps, no question of command will arise, for it would be assumed by the senior officer present as a matter of course. But suppose, as at present would be the case, that the escort consists of troops of the other arms; what then? The senior officer, of course, to whatever branch of the Service he may belong, will doubtless be the reply. Certainly; but that is not the point. The question is, Should the senior officer be the officer commanding the Army Service Corps—the officer, that is, who is responsible for the safety and well-being of the convoy—or should he belong to the fighting portion of the mixed force, to whom the defence of the convoy is entrusted? Colonel Furse says:—"The officer commanding the escort and convoy should be one; any officers marching with it, though of superior rank, should have no authority to interfere with his command." In other words, the officer commanding the convoy should command the escort also, for it is not to be supposed that the senior transport officer is to be superseded by an officer of another arm, who would necessarily lack the requisite knowledge and experience of transport matters. Nor can there be any doubt but that Colonel Furse is right. The escort is part of the convoy, not the convoy part of the escort; the convenience of the escort, the pace at which it moves, the direction it follows, and the situation and duration of halts,—all are subordinate to the movements of the convoy. The escort

is there to fight if necessary, but it must avoid an engagement if it possibly can. The active-defensive may, it is true, be employed when an action is absolutely unavoidable, both to remove the fighting from the immediate vicinity of the convoy, as well as to avoid the feeling of inferiority which a merely passive defence would engender among the troops engaged. The officer commanding the convoy may, if he choose, when it comes to a fight, entrust the actual defence to the officer commanding the escort; but there must be no question as to the right of the former to control the formation and regulate the movements of the whole. There is always the danger of the officer commanding the escort, if he be given free scope, forgetting his true rôle, and seeking to subordinate the requirements of the convoy to the more brilliant but extremely dangerous achievement of fighting a miniature battle on his own account. It is painful to reflect that peace manœuvres are again at fault in this important matter; whenever I have found myself in charge of a convoy, large or small, the officer commanding the escort has invariably been my senior; and no doubt others can tell the same tale. It cannot be too strongly urged that unless we practise in peace what we shall have to do in war, disaster will follow. Why we do not invariably do so is a mystery to me, because the organisation of the Army Service Corps points unmistakably to the exercise of military command by its officers. The Corps was changed from a Department to a Regiment because the former organisation worked unsatisfactorily; the officers have precisely the same examinations to pass for promotion as their brethren of the Line;¹ majors are examined in tactics before being promoted to lieutenant-colonelcies; in fact, the intention of the military authorities is plainly that, in the general efficiency of its officers, the Army Service Corps shall be on a level with the other combatant branches of the Service.

The two chief objections to my suggestions for a self-protected train will be, I expect:—

- i. Increased expense.
- ii. An increase of non-fighting troops with an army in the field.

With regard to the first of these objections, I have shown that my suggestions, if carried out, need only add some 600 men to the peace establishment of the Army Service Corps—not a very serious burden surely, in view of the great advantages claimed for the scheme. As to the second objection, the spare men of the train would only be non-fighting in the same way as an escort of the other arms would be; and as they would set free at least as many men as they themselves number, it is difficult to see how the objection can be sustained. If the commander of a body of troops in the field—be it an army corps or be it a brigade—were asked which he would rather have, a train which could protect itself, or one which would require an escort of the other arms to ensure its safety, I do not believe he would hesitate to choose the former; and if I am right in my belief, there is no need to argue the matter farther.

¹ Besides having to qualify in their own special subjects.

What will probably strike most people when considering the subject of transport in the field, is the exceedingly complex state of our existing organisation. What with regimental transport, supply columns, bearer companies, bakery columns, field hospitals, and transport for the staffs of the various units; not to mention the further sub-division of the first line into what is always necessary, and what is occasionally required; it appears as if we were almost inviting disorder and consequent disaster. The confusion in rear of a battle-field is necessarily great whether the battle has been lost or won, and therefore we must endeavour, by every means in our power, not to add to this confusion more than we can possibly help. At present, the officer commanding an Army Service Corps company would see his company split up from the moment he joined the field army, and half his men and horses he probably would not see from the beginning of a campaign to the end. From no point of view can this be considered satisfactory; but at the same time it is most difficult to suggest other arrangements. The absolute necessity of the Supply and Transport "services" being under one control is now universally acknowledged; but while fully admitting the overwhelming advantages of such an organisation, it must be owned that from a purely transport point of view, it does not tend to simplify matters. But if the Army Service Corps could transfer to other shoulders the burden of transport duties outside its own particular sphere, so as to have to deal exclusively with supplies, that would indeed be a step in the right direction. Colonel Furse remarks:—"In advocating that the transport of an army should form a branch of the commissariat, we must make an exception with regard to regimental and medical transport." The former, as we know, is kept distinct, though it, as Colonel Ward well remarks, "when not required for work with the unit, will always be available for general transport duty." But the latter is at present provided by the Army Service Corps; yet, to again quote Colonel Furse, "the importance of a separate transport for this department cannot be over-rated." The transport duties of the Army Medical Staff differ quite as much from those of the Army Service Corps, as do the latter from those of the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers, who have their own transport.

It is not my present intention to discuss the question as to whether the Geneva Cross will or will not protect officers and men of the Army Service Corps employed with the Medical Department on the battle-field. The matter was not very long ago argued in the columns of the daily papers, without however resulting in any positive conclusion being arrived at. Certainly the question should be settled definitely once and for all, not merely by the expression of an opinion on the part of the Government of this country, but by the unanimous decision of the other Powers. The results of uncertainty in a big war could not be otherwise than deplorable.

Personally I should like to see the question settled so far as England is concerned in another way, a way which would at the same time greatly simplify the duties of the Army Service Corps, and that is by training a proportion of non-commissioned officers and men of the Medical Staff

Corps in transport duties, in the same manner as infantry transport is trained, by attaching them for a given period to the Army Service Corps. Then on the outbreak of war the Medical Department would draw the necessary equipment from mobilisation stores, and obtain its horses either from Army Service Corps companies not immediately required for the field, or from the same sources as the Army Service Corps draws upon for its reserve animals; and thus would be enabled to carry out its own transport duties unhampered by any possible jealousy or misunderstanding, which might otherwise arise through two branches of the Service having a finger in the same pie. This plan would have the advantage of costing the country little or nothing, and would confine the duties of the Army Service Corps within their true limits—the transport of food and supplies.

The Fifth Arm must not fall into the fatal error of over-estimating its own importance. It exists merely as a means to an end. It must not seek to dominate the operations of a campaign, but rather endeavour to facilitate them by every means in its power. Nevertheless, as it cannot perform impossibilities, it will frequently influence the strategy of a campaign to a greater or lesser extent.

It may be objected perhaps that I have taken a too militant view of the duties of the Army Service Corps, and that in claiming for the Fifth Arm a share in the manœuvres of the battle-field, if not in the actual fighting, I have lost sight of those humbler but more useful duties—the collection and distribution of supplies—to the acknowledged necessity for which the Corps owes its existence. Nevertheless I am convinced that in spite of old prejudices which die hard, and in spite of a little not unnatural jealousy in some quarters, the principles upon which I have insisted will in the end prevail.

It is not the duty of the Fifth Arm to fight, but it must be strong enough to protect itself, and it will then be far better able to carry out its special duties without interference from the enemy.

My suggestions, though drastic, will, I think, be found to follow one another in logical sequence. If it be advisable—and who can doubt it?—that as many men as possible should be in the fighting line, it follows that as few as possible should be employed in any other capacity, on the line of communications or elsewhere. Therefore within the limits I have suggested the train of the army should be able to take care of itself; and to effect this it must be sufficiently numerous and properly equipped.

To sum up. It has been advocated that the Army Service Corps companies should be raised to such a strength as to render an escort of the other arms unnecessary under normal conditions; that the fact of the train being strong enough to resist if attacked will simplify the arrangements necessary for its safety; that a relatively larger number of men can be placed in the fighting line; that the men of the Army Service Corps should be armed with the rifle instead of with the carbine, and that greater attention should be paid to their musketry instruction; that in the event of an escort of the other arms being required, the officer commanding the convoy should command the whole, and that to this end Army

Service Corps officers should be exercised in such commands on peace manœuvres. And, lastly, that the transport service should be simplified by giving the Medical Department its own transport in time of war.

Let it be remembered that an effective train cannot be created on the spur of the moment; and that, to quote Major Burn,¹ "On the efficiency or otherwise of the transport depends the efficiency and mobility of the Army."

Colonel H. S. E. REEVES, C.B. (retired pay, late A.S. Corps):—The lecture we have just had the pleasure of listening to by Captain Terry is headed "The Organisation and Control of Transport in the Field," which is a very large subject. The consideration of such a question of "Transport" covers an enormous field, and the conditions vary in different armies and countries, particularly in an Army like ours which serves all over the world. But I think in substance Captain Terry has narrowed it down really to a lecture on the transport section of the Army Service Corps and its duties. Captain Terry's main contention is, I take it to be, that the Corps should be more independent and self-supporting, in that it should be able to defend itself under normal conditions against an attack. With regard to that, I think that we must realise that it is impossible to lay down any fixed conditions of that sort. It would all depend on the strength of the attack and on the circumstances. It seems to me that the defence of the convoy and its train is one of the most serious responsibilities and cares which any general in the field can have. It is essentially a military and a fighting piece of work. The *raison d'être* of the Army Service Corps, formerly the commissariat and transport, surely is to feed the Army, and to provide it with transport, and under our present regulations a general in command of any body of troops is actually charged with the responsibility of that work himself in a very much greater degree than he is with regard to details of other services under his command. At all events, the responsibility rests on him, aided by a suitable and selected staff. It seems to me, therefore, that to lay down any rule which would hamper a general, or any officer commanding a smaller body of troops, would deprive him of a free hand, and that such conditions would be very undesirable. Captain Terry passed over lightly the smaller wars in which we have been engaged and for which our Army exists to a very large extent. He, I think, falls into a slight error in saying that the Army Service Corps as a body is not employed in those small wars. No doubt it is not often employed in the form in which we see it regimentally embodied about the streets of London or Aldershot. It depends, of course, upon the construction you put upon the words Army Service Corps. It means more than the name of a corps; it is a branch of the Service. We may say that the Royal Engineers do this, and the Royal Engineers do that, but we do not mean necessarily that so many companies of sappers are employed. In the same way transport work has been carried out efficiently by the Army Service Corps in South Africa and in Egypt. Certain companies or units of the Corps have gone out with their officers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers, and a certain number of men, and have formed the nucleus for the formation of transport locally best adapted to the conditions of the country in which they had to work. I should not like the impression to get about that the Army Service Corps as a body can only work abroad in the form under which we see it at home. The question of the Army Service Corps being a military body is a foregone conclusion; it is the result of experience in war that it must be a military body to be efficient and economical. I cordially concur in the reasons which Captain Terry gave for that. With regard to their having to guard and protect their own convoys, I think all we have a right to expect is that they should be able to find their own guards. They are highly skilled men and well paid men. It is not their primary duty to

¹ "Notes on Transport and on Camel Corps." By Major D. B. Burn, 18th Hussars.

fight; their primary duty is to look after their horses, and to work very laboriously, according to their various duties; but of course every soldier in such situations should be armed in the field in order that he may be able to take part in the defence of his camp, and be of use in a general defence of places attacked. There are many instances of men having done that in South Africa and elsewhere. If not armed, a transport soldier is at the mercy of the first man who comes with a pitchfork or shovel against him. The chief thing which Captain Terry advocates is the increase of the men of the Corps. With regard to that, he advocates our going as far as having two men per horse on a peace establishment, and I think to take the field with that establishment. Well, I have been a director of transport on service, and I should be very glad indeed to have that number of trained men at my disposal; I should feel very comfortable to be able to expand my corps by having such a large number of men; but I do not see how he proposes to employ those men usefully in times of peace. I think he must remember that the Army Service Corps transport companies we see are raised primarily for war. We could get the work done a great deal cheaper probably at home during peace by employing civilian transport, but it is very necessary for military purposes to keep these men up as a disciplined body of soldiers, and therefore their services are utilised in times of peace; but how does Captain Terry propose to utilise such a large number of men? To have two men to every horse would be too much, and rather more than the country could be expected to pay for, I think. Complaints have often been made, as I remember before I retired, and it is probably the same now—as to the want of “spare” men in a company at home. I have every sympathy with this feeling. I know the time when I had the same feelings myself with regard to finding so many, what we call, “regimental casualties” for duty outside my company, but these disappear to a great extent. When a company is mobilised for war a very far larger proportion of men are put into it. With regard to defending the convoy, I think a general officer must protect his own convoy in the same way as he protects his field batteries of artillery. He would be required to protect his Royal Engineers. He must also protect his ammunition columns. He must also protect his hospitals. The same grounds which Captain Terry mentions for increasing the Army Service Corps to such an extent would apply—well, to the other arms I have just mentioned. He admits that the escort must in special cases be augmented by the other arms. That is rather giving away the system, because if you have all these men with the Corps normally, it is admitted that you require more men under certain circumstances, and it seems to me more desirable to let it be a recognised part of the duty of the fighting troops to make such disposition as the general may order for the protection of the train of the Army. I only want to add one little word with regard to the reservists. Captain Terry says:—“There is another very strong argument in favor of increasing the number of men in a company on a peace footing. It is that the present peace establishment is so small compared with the war establishment that on mobilisation a company would be literally swamped with reservists—strangers to their officers and to each other; and this at the very time cohesion and mutual confidence would be most needed.” Well, we have heard a great deal of that subject lately in discussions in the Press, and that applies to a very great extent to every arm of the Service. I agree as to insufficient peace establishment for such large expansion in war, but I should like to say that my own experience is that the reservists called out from the Army Service Corps are the most useful men I have ever had to do with when I have been on service. In 1882, in the Egyptian campaign, we had large numbers of them, and they were the most reliable men we had, thoroughly useful men, perhaps all the better for having been in civil life, where many of them had been hungry and had to work very hard. They quite appreciated coming back to their own corps and comrades, and they were among the best of the rank and file of each company. If one or two things I have said are adverse to Captain Terry’s contention, he will yet, I hope,

accept my congratulations on having brought this subject before us. I think it is most satisfactory that we have now in the Army Service Corps a body of officers with men like Captain Terry, young active officers, who take an interest in these questions, and bring them up for discussion. These matters are really very important, and cannot be too freely discussed, and I think that we owe him thanks for having brought the question before us.

Lieutenant-General Lord METHUEN, K.C.V.O., C.B., C.M.G.:—I wish to make very few remarks, and more so because of the valuable statements from Colonel Reeves, which were those I should have made myself. It was rather a surprise that the lecturer had not thought of that very remarkable anomaly that we have to find escorts for the Artillery and Engineers, just as we have for the Army Service Corps; and although no general likes having to detail escorts, I am perfectly certain if I were in command of an army corps I would a thousand times rather find my own officers and escorts for all these duties than leave them to the different officers in command. Again, it would be extremely hard work to expect the same men to escort transports every single day of the campaign, for there is no harder work. There are places, like Africa and India, where the conditions are absolutely different. What number of men, for instance, in a transport in India would he require to act for a transport occupying fourteen or sixteen hours of marching on a hilly pass? I may be wrong. With regard to the Reserves, I go absolutely with Colonel Reeves. More willing men I never wish to meet. Lastly, I should stultify myself in any remarks I have to make in a future lecture if I agreed with him regarding the carbine. I am one of those who, on the contrary, are inclined on some grounds to run the carbine against the rifle. The carbine shoots for practical purposes as well as the rifle, it is 2 lbs. lighter, and much easier to carry, and I undertake to say that a man with a carbine and a long bayonet will certainly hold his own against a man with a rifle and a shorter bayonet.

Captain T. W. HEATH (Supply Officer of the North London Volunteer Brigade): The lecturer has not exactly pointed out whether he is dealing with the army abroad or in England. The conditions are totally different. The defence and attack of a convoy in an enclosed country like England, where you cannot advance like you can abroad, where there are no hedges to prevent you, is very much more easy from the great amount of cover available in this country. I should like to have heard the lecturer say something of how he would deal with these matters in England, especially from the Volunteer point of view as being the Service I am mostly interested in. I am desirous of some information on that point. Still the general information we get in this paper, which I shall read again, is very serviceable. There is one point I should like to refer to. Lord Methuen rather took the wind out of my sail a little, about the rifle. I do not think any man armed with a carbine is at any disadvantage with a man who is armed with a magazine Lee-Metford, simply because in the last few years the chamber of the carbine has been made the same as the Lee-Metford, and therefore it carries the same ammunition and has practically the same range. The muzzle velocity is about 2,000 feet per second, and is the same—

Lord METHUEN:—I think the muzzle velocity is 100 feet less.

Captain HEATH:—It depends on the erosion inside of the barrel. It may be a little less, I do not mean within 100 feet. Still the short rifle loses accuracy after 800 yards, compared with the long rifle. I quite agree with his lordship in the handiness of the carbine to the man defending himself. A man can turn a short weapon round quicker than he can a long one; it is handier, easier carried, lighter, and he fires the same cartridge and therefore can inflict the same wound. I think a man armed with a carbine, especially in enclosed countries, is not at a disadvantage with one armed with the longer rifle, especially in a country like England, where the long range of the rifle would not always be available, as one

would be so much under cover, and there would be the enclosed roads and valleys where we should to some extent be hidden from view. It is a most interesting lecture, and from the Volunteer point of view I feel very thankful for it, and I personally have to thank the lecturer.

The CHAIRMAN (Colonel Lonsdale Hale):—I should like to offer with regard to the lecture a few remarks from the tactical point of view. I doubt the wisdom of dividing the protecting troops into two bodies—the escort and the guard—and also of placing the command of the protecting troops in the hands of two officers, instead of in the hands of one officer. Then Captain Terry would provide for his guard by giving so many men per company. Thus the guard depends on the number of companies required for the technical working of the convoy, and although the commander may foresee that, owing to the difficulties of the road, the convoy during the march will inevitably cover two or three times the length of road it covered at starting, the escort for this extra length cannot be provided for beforehand, because it depends solely on the number of companies with the convoy. I have every sympathy with Captain Terry in his effort to secure some portion of the combatant command to the A.S. Corps, because if his Corps may be denominated the fifth arm, we—the Engineers—are supposed to be the fourth arm, and we used to be terribly sore in the old days, when we were not allowed to be regarded as a combatant arm in any way. In the field the Royal Engineers and Army Service Corps stand with regard to many of their special duties precisely on the same footing. Let me suppose that Captain Terry is in charge of a convoy, and I am in charge of a pontoon train. Our position is exactly the same. He is told to take the convoy; I am told to make the bridge over which it has to go. He and I have both passed the examination in tactics, and why should not we do the fighting work? But my special duty is to make the bridge, and I cannot be in two places at once, and do two things at once. In the same way with the Army Service Corps. Captain Terry is in charge of the convoy, and must be with the convoy, and not away from the convoy. I always told my brother officers when I was teaching them tactics, that they should understand tactics sufficiently so that when executing their technical duties they should carry them out as far as possible in accordance with tactical requirements. If I am sent with a pontoon train to make a bridge across a river, and if I know nothing of tactics I look at making the bridge only from a technical point of view and say, "I will make the bridge at that point." The officer in command comes and says, "If you make the bridge at that point I cannot protect you; you make it half-a-mile farther off and I can protect you." If I know nothing about tactics I may quarrel with him; but my knowledge of tactics enables me to judge his views, and we co-operate together. We sappers have been taught tactics in order that we may put our fortifications and such-like in conformity with the requirements of tactics. In the same way the Army Service Corps officer may elect to park or to march by a particular road. The officer commanding the escort comes up and says:—"I cannot protect or defend you if you go by that road, or if you park on that spot." If the Army Service Corps officer understands tactics, there will be co-operation and agreement, and that is the value of the Army Service Corps learning tactics. I am afraid, Captain Terry, I must differ from you, although I sympathise with you very much. When I was your age I kicked terribly against being, as a sapper, regarded as a non-combatant officer. But no doubt there is contentment to be got from the history of the past; and although I daresay I should like our sappers to have been at the Atbara in the fighting line, yet I am content to think that there would have been no Atbara at all if the sappers had not made the railway. It is just in the same way with the Army Service Corps; if they have not the glory of fighting they carry out their work of supplying the fighters, and without their invaluable aid there could be no fighting at all.

Captain TERRY, in reply, said:—I am going very briefly indeed to reply to the remarks which have been made, because I am in a somewhat difficult position.

The officers, with one exception, who have been kind enough to criticise my paper, are so immensely my seniors, that I really cannot get up and say that I do not agree with them. It would only make me, perhaps, ridiculous. However, I should like, in reply to Colonel Reeves, to say that as far as I can understand, he starts very much with the same hypothesis as I did, only he came to the conclusion that by the Corps being self-defensive it would hamper the general in command. I am very sorry, but I must stick to my opinion that it would help him. I think the more independent his different arms may be in themselves, the less he will have to bother about what after all are really details. Then Colonel Reeves spoke about the work of the train abroad being, generally speaking, different to what it is at home—which no doubt is absolutely correct. But I specially limited my remarks to the case of a big European war abroad in which, I think, the work will be very much the same as it is at home, because you will have the same kind of country to manœuvre over and very much the same kind of work to do as we have in the big manœuvres here; if not, then the big manœuvres are no use. Colonel Reeves asked what would you do with this number of men, supposing the companies were increased in proportion of two men to a horse. Well, my answer to that question is, that it is only by increasing the companies to such a strength as I suggested that we shall be able to practise what I would like to see the companies do in war. If you do not increase the men you cannot do it. We have not enough spare men, and you cannot tell the few we have to fight. They are all driving. You want the additional spare men to give them a smattering of the training I hold to be necessary. I think Colonel Reeves made a mistake—I say it with all respect—but I understood him to say that we should have many more spare men in war, but that is not the case. The proportion is less—only one in six on a war footing; whereas in peace, even with our present establishment, it is two in three; so that as we go on increasing our men we do not increase the relative number of spare men, but we get fewer spare men although the total is bigger. I say we want more spare men, not less. As regards the reservists, both Colonel Reeves and Lord Methuen spoke up for them. I wish it to be understood that I don't say anything against the reservists as men or soldiers. What I did say was, that when you take the field in a transport company (which has to be split up more or less), you want a company that has been thoroughly welded together. I quite admit that at the end of a campaign reservists are as good soldiers as anybody, probably better, because they have been soldiers longer; but when you have a company of only 50 men of all ranks and you increase it to 250 or 300 with reservists, I say it will be a difficult thing to start that company fair and square. You have men who do not know each other, and who do not know you, and may not trust you; or you may not trust them; and until you get to know one another you will find it somewhat difficult to carry on the work. In reply to General Lord Methuen: he instanced India; but as the Army Service Corps does not go there I did not take that country into consideration at all. Of course, I know if we had to repel, say, a Russian invasion, it might be possible that the Army Service Corps companies would be sent out to help the Indian transport; but I confess that is rather a remote contingency, and I have not from that point of view considered the subject at all. As regards the carbine, with great respect, I cannot agree that it is a better weapon, and I cannot agree with Captain Heath, because it seems to me that an enemy armed with a long-range rifle might pick off your men and horses, and if your escort has nothing but a carbine to fire back with it might not reach the enemy at all. You must have a weapon that will be able to reach the enemy; it does not matter how straight it will shoot up to 600 or 800 yards if the enemy can shoot straight up to 1,200. As regards the weight, the 2 lbs. difference would not matter in the least if the rifles were carried as I suggested they should be, on the wagons. If you have it on the horse's back the weight does matter, but if you put it on the wagons and let the animal draw it, it is practically immaterial. In answer to Captain Heath, I have only to say that I

have not considered the conditions of defending England, because I am one of those who hold that as long as we have command of the sea invasion is impossible. With regard to your remarks, Sir, our little battle has been fought out already on paper, more or less, and, with great respect, I think we have left off agreeing somewhat to differ. There is one thing, however, I should like to say. You talk of a convoy trailing out, which no doubt it does; but I do not think, under ordinary conditions, that individual companies ought to trail out. The company ought to be able to keep together fairly, and therefore I have taken the company as a unit, and the escort of the company as a unit; and so you will always have your 100 or 70 men to defend your company. If it trails out, you must split up your escort. I have only argued from the supposition that any enemy that may attack you will consist only of small bodies, who may have either got round or otherwise eluded your covering screen, which I still maintain will be necessary to act at long distances from the convoy. I do not look forward to the time when the convoy will have to repel a general attack, because that will be done by the convoy guard falling back on the convoy, and doing the fighting; but I do think it is possible that a small body of the enemy may elude that screen, and give you a certain amount of desultory fighting. It is for this purpose that I think the spare men of the Army Service Corps should be trained to take their place in battle more than they are at present. I have to thank you, Sir, very much for the honour you have done me in taking the Chair this afternoon, and I have to thank the distinguished officers who have so kindly spoken, and also all those who have listened to my remarks.