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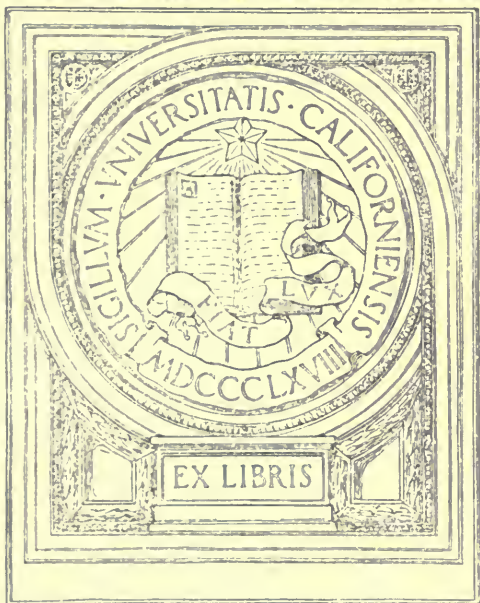
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H. A. Gwynne

(*Reuter's Correspondent*)

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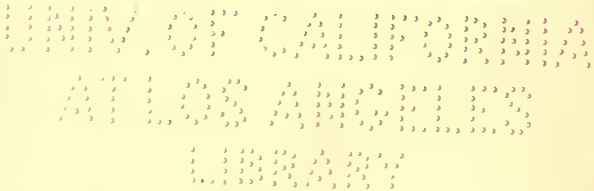
BY

H. A. GWYNNE

REUTER'S CHIEF WAR CORRESPONDENT
(BOER WAR 1899-1902)

*If England was what England seems,
An' not the England of our dreams,
But only putty, brass and paint,
'Ow quick we'd drop 'er! But she ain't!*

RUDYARD KIPLING



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AND NEW YORK

1904

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DEDICATED TO

THE REGIMENTAL OFFICER

AND TO THE

MEN HE HAS TRAINED

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HARDING

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*The day's lay-out—the mornin' sun
Beneath your 'at-brim as you sight;
The dinner—'ush from noon till one,
An' the full roar that lasts till night;
An' the pore dead that look so old
An' was so young an hour ago,
An' legs tied down before they're cold—
These are the things which make you know.*

RUDYARD KIPLING

PREFACE

THE Boer War came as a very rude shock to the British public. Perhaps its greatest and most important results were the acknowledgment that "something was wrong somewhere" and the desire to find out the defects and remedy them. The nation, alarmed at the discovery of a lack of organisation, seriously set itself the task of making a thorough examination into the state of the Army, and heartily approved of the War Commission and the appointment of Lord Esher's Committee to carry into effect its recommendations. Within a very brief period of time the office of Commander-in-Chief was abolished, the government of the Army placed in the hands of an Army Council, and steps were taken to institute a General Staff. In all of these reforms the nation has acquiesced with satisfaction, if not with enthusiasm, and we have to-day the extreme comfort of knowing that something has really been done to secure "the best article for the money."

That there remains much to do is no reflection on the reformers. They have rightly directed all their attention towards perfecting the administration of the

Army. But the machine itself remains as it was, to a great extent. We have done all that is possible to render those who are to direct its energy along proper lines capable of doing so with full knowledge. But to secure perfection the machine itself has to be thoroughly overhauled, so that it will work easily and smoothly. This task yet remains to be done, and I hope that the following pages will help the public to understand the needs, and will be of some use to those who will have to try to satisfy them.

From a somewhat varied experience of the British Army in the field, I have come to the conclusion that its real reform must come from within. While it is obvious that no army can, of itself, cast off its system of government, it is equally clear that there are very few persons outside the Army with sufficient knowledge of its internal and delicate mechanism to put forward practical schemes of reform. A thorough experience of regimental life seems to me to be the first thing necessary to a would-be reformer, and this experience is lacking in the majority of civilians. Recognising this, I thought that it would be an excellent thing to obtain from the Army itself some idea of what is required to make it thoroughly efficient. The late war being the most valuable asset the British Army possesses, I have attempted in the following pages to develop it to the utmost extent. We have learned lessons during that long struggle which should, if properly applied, raise our Army far above the continental standard of military

efficiency. But before arriving at this happy state, it is above all things necessary to know exactly what are the lessons of the war. There is an apparent divergence of views which, at first blush, seems to render unanimity impossible. But on inquiry, the difference will chiefly be found in the point of view from which a question is regarded and not in the treatment of the question itself. A cavalry officer will tell you that the Mounted Infantry is a much overpraised arm, while the Mounted Infantry officer will express profound dissatisfaction with the work of the cavalry. The infantryman will tell you that neither did particularly well, and that the real work of the campaign was done by him. And so on.

The task I have attempted to perform was to gather together in a concise form the views of the Army on the various problems of practical soldiering which have been solved, or partly solved, by our experiences in the late war and thus to place on permanent record the lessons we have learned. A successful war is apt to bring about forgetfulness, and there is a distinct tendency on the part of many soldiers to regard the Boer War as abnormal and to revert to the old systems. It is forgotten that, although we wore down the enemy and forced out of him the submission of Vereeniging, we cannot congratulate ourselves on having brought the war to a conclusion by steady persistent military superiority. It was sheer doggedness rather than brilliant strategy or tactics that ended the war. This is so often forgotten that there is every excuse for frequent

insistence on the truth, and, besides, until we recognise our inadequacy in many respects we shall not effect, or desire to effect, any real reforms.

In the following pages I have succeeded in obtaining from the Army itself its opinions on the many difficulties which have yet to be surmounted before we reach real efficiency, and I have been able to secure a certain degree of unanimity as regards the real lessons of the war. The first portion of the book was written before Lord Esher's Committee carried out its sweeping reforms, but I have left untouched the opinion of the Army on its own governing body and have allowed the recommendations to remain, as they were made. It will be seen that the Army goes even further than the "Committee of Three." Their Army Council and the "Board" suggested by my correspondents differ in many respects. Those who have answered my questions, too, are not so anxious to see the establishment of a General Staff. Their reasons are set forth, and I heartily recommend them to the public as being worthy of careful consideration.

It would be impossible at the present moment while the second great war, fought with modern weapons, is proceeding, to ignore its effect upon future military development. It is interesting to see that the lessons of the Boer War have been carefully learned by both the Japanese and the Russians. The battle of Kiu-lien-cheng, fought on May 1, was most interesting. Here the Russians held a splendid position, and were driven out

of it by a strategic move on their left flank and by a frontal attack. It will be seen in the Infantry chapter of the present work that British officers are of opinion that the old frontal attack is almost impossible, unless the ground is broken. The Russians adopted the Boer method of entrenchment—three tiers, of which one is at the bottom of the hill. To adopt Boer tactics with success it is, however, necessary to possess Boer proficiency with the rifle. In this skill the Russians were evidently deficient ; nor, indeed, did they show proof of accurate judgment in the matter of choosing the psychological moment for opening fire. They remained hidden in their trenches until the Japanese attack had reached dead ground in front of the defence. When they emerged from this, and then only, did the Russians open fire. They had, however, left it till too late, and their enemy was able to direct such a crushing fire on the trenches that under its protection the attack was reformed and was able to rush forward with irresistible force. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that the defence was necessarily weaker owing to the knowledge that the defenders' rear was threatened. The Japanese did not win the position with a frontal attack but manœuvred the Russians out of their works. The latter, even if they had repelled the attack in front, would have been forced to leave.

The further development of the war will be followed with great interest, but in one respect we shall have to acknowledge that the Japanese possess a great advantage

over all European nations. The huge sacrifices which they are willing and ready to make to obtain a position would be impossible in most European armies. I doubt very much whether a continental army would stand the losses that the Japanese experienced at Kinchow without a great loss of *morale*. To be alive after a battle is to many Japanese a source of regret and shame, and it will be some time before these old warlike traditions die out. To make deductions, therefore, from the Japanese methods of direct attack, we must presuppose the same spirit and the same contempt for death which they have displayed up to the present. It is not at all certain that any European nation possesses these attributes to this extent, and it appears certain that, if a European general asked of his men the same amount of sacrifice, he would not find a response.

To my many correspondents who have been good enough to help me in compiling this little book I tender my very best thanks. I feel it but due to them and to the public to state that I have not asked the aid of any officer who has not, in some way or other, distinguished himself in the late war. I might add, too, that I count among my correspondents every rank, from general officer to subaltern, so that the subjects about which they have been good enough to write, have been treated from every point of view.

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I. INTRODUCTORY

*Do ye wait for the spattered shrapnel ere ye learn how a gun
is laid?*

RUDYARD KIPLING.

I N dealing with any question affecting the Army there is ever present a feeling of dread lest arguments or ideas, put forward for the sole purpose of effecting good, should be seized upon and used as party weapons. Whatever the merits or demerits of the present little work may be, I must state that it is prompted solely by the desire to put before the British public a scheme of reform which has the advantage of being devised by soldiers who know what they are talking about. There has been so much destructive criticism lately that the ordinary man in the street goes to sleep nightly, convinced either that we have no army at all, or that it is rotten from top to bottom. Both these theories are utterly incorrect. As a matter of fact we have the finest material in the world, and the late war has produced some very brilliant officers who can be compared with advantage to those of any army in the world. During the earlier stages of the war, when our forces suffered defeat on several occasions, the British public demanded a victim. With the cruellest injustice they fixed on the British officer, and dubbed him "fool," "idiot," "incapable," and "stupid." Yet the regimental officer and the men trained and drilled by him won the war for us. Without their stolid, unflinching courage and determination the course of the war might have been vastly different. I feel that it is but bare justice to them to say this, and I say it with greater insistence because I was a daily witness of their pluck, bull-dog courage, and fine

discipline under most difficult and depressing circumstances.

Yet it is impossible to deny that, in spite of this satisfactory condition of things, there is a great need for reform. But we must be as careful not to tamper with the good as we should be eager to do away with the bad. Before making any changes, at least we should be quite clear in our minds as to what we are going to reform. And this is the most important aspect of the case, inasmuch as the changes which are contemplated cannot altogether come under the category of "reform." I take it that the nation is anxious and willing to remedy the defects in our army system which have been disclosed by a severe war strain of nearly three years. That in itself is excellent and commendable, but what is wanted as well is to take advantage of the lessons of the war. It must not be forgotten that the late war was the first struggle between two forces using expertly the most modern of weapons. "What would we not give for your experience?" said one of the military *attachés* to a British general in South Africa. Every man who fought in the late war knows the value of the experience, and it is for the nation to elicit and apply the lessons learnt there. They form a huge national asset which the public must use to its greatest advantage. To give an example of the value put upon our South African experiences by foreign nations, I quote a portion of a letter written to me by a British officer who paid a visit to some friends in Berlin on his return from the war. "Life is hardly

worth living here, if the Germans know you have been through the war. I am pestered day and night by German officers who have obtained introductions to me solely for the purpose of pumping me dry about the war. You have no idea how keen they are to know all the lessons of the war."

The British public, therefore, if it wants to do its duty to the Army and to the nation, will have to exact that defects should be remedied. But equal attention must be paid to the improvement of the big asset—the lessons of the war. The obvious questions arise, "What are the defects?" and "What are the lessons?" and these questions, I hope, will be fully answered in this book. My sole object is to put forward in a plain simple manner how we are to effect the remedy and use the lessons. Knowing the British officer from long and varied experience in the field, it seemed to me that the best way to attain these objects was to take advantage of his expert knowledge and his keen desire to see the Army on a proper basis. Accordingly, in conjunction with some of our most able soldiers, I drew up a set of questions which I sent round to a large number of officers, staff and regimental, who had distinguished themselves in the late war. They are the men who have "smelt it and felt it an' seen it," and their answers cannot fail to be interesting. The questions were designed to elicit defects and their remedies, while running through the whole of them is a constant reference to the lessons of the war. To this appeal I felt convinced that he would

respond. Nor have I been mistaken. From every single person I have received not only answers but expression of approval of the idea and a desire to help in every way. In my letters asking for their co-operation, I pointed out that I was anxious to give the public the very best expert advice on the subject of the Army. I insisted on the fact that it was not my desire in any way to manufacture a party weapon but to translate into plain language, free from technicalities, their own ideas on the subject of reform, so that the public would have what the diplomatists call a "basis of negotiation," upon which they can build a structure of real and permanent reform.

The public attention which has been drawn to the subject of the Army can do nothing but good, provided it is directed along proper lines. What the soldier dreads more than anything else is lest this question, so vital to the nation, should become a mere party squabble. In some of the letters I have received there is almost a piteous appeal made to me, urging that I should use every endeavour to prevent this. They point out how often an Army debate in the House of Commons has degenerated into a petty quarrel about the case of Private Jones who has not received his pay. If the people of England want an efficient Army, they must insist that the question of defence should be above party politics. It seems an Utopian idea, but I cannot help thinking that it has the advantage of being practical. The enormous sums we spend on our Army and Navy

demand a rigid watch on the part of the public, who should insist upon a fair return for their money in the shape of efficiency. And this is only to be attained if the people of England will take an intelligent interest in their Army. After all, the subject is not a difficult one to understand. The ideas of all armies are based on the case of the first two men who desired to kill one another. They manœuvred for advantages of position, light, and opportunity, so that one could drive his spear through the other when he was unready or at a disadvantage. Modern warfare is only an extension of this idea, and if, in all the apparently intricate discussions on military art, this original idea is kept in sight, it is wonderful how simple the subject becomes.

In view of the unpleasant fact that, since Adam, men have had to "fight to keep," we must be prepared at any moment to hold by force what we have won. It is a sad thing, but wholly true, that even to-day brute force is the basis of a nation's existence. We must make that "brute force" the strongest and the most dreaded in the world, if we are to keep our position. The alarmist cries "wolf" too often, but I think it the duty of every patriotic Britisher to calmly and coolly take into consideration the fact that at any time we may be called upon to face a war for our existence. If Moltke is reported correctly, when he said that he knew of fifty ways of getting into England but none of getting out, he has done almost as much harm as if he had landed one of his Army Corps on British soil, for it seems to me that the nation has put all

its trust on the impassability of its hedges, instead of relying on the keen eye and the sturdy courage of its inhabitants. If we cannot inexpensively train up a reserve of good citizen soldiers, at least we should insist that those who are paid to fight for us should be in the highest state of efficiency. If this little work will do anything towards that end, it will have fulfilled its object. Henceforth I am merely the showman pointing out, with explanatory remark, the value of the ideas of men who have bought their experience under the whistle of the bullet and on the field of battle. In justice to them, I cannot help insisting on the great value of their suggestions.

Owing to the stringent—and necessary—army regulations on the subject of publicity, I am debarred from publishing the names of the officers who have helped me. I must ask my readers to take my word for the fact that they are men of great experience and of successful careers. They have given their opinion without any idea of self-advancement, but with the single object of helping the public to form a judgment on the subject. Whatever results may follow, at least they deserve the thanks of every good citizen who is anxious to see his way clear to a definite object in a somewhat confused question.

II. THE STAFF

*No doubt ye are the People—absolute, strong and wise ;
Whatever your heart has desired ye have not withheld from
your eyes.
On your own heads, in your own hands, the sin and the saving
lies !*

RUDYARD KIPLING.

THE British Army is perhaps best compared to a large manufacturing company. The similarity is so close and so apt that I adopt this analogy in order to bring home the results of my inquiry to the merest layman on subjects military. The departments of the Army and the ramifications of a big company are almost on all fours. There is a Board of Directors on both, only the Army calls it the War Office. There is a chairman known as the Commander-in-Chief, and the different departments have their equivalents—the different arms and corps in the fighting machine. The various functions performed by each department all go to form a complete organisation, each contributing something towards the great object of the whole. The analogy becomes complete in that the shareholders of the company and the British taxpayer have the same duties to perform, the supplying of the funds and the keeping of watch and ward over the doings of the directors.

This chapter is devoted to the subject of the Board of Directors, the thinking part of the great machine, otherwise known *tout court* as the “War Office” and the “Staff.” It is perfectly obvious that in war, as in all other things, brain is necessary for the direction of affairs. Sometimes we get a heaven-born general as Staff Officer, but as we cannot rely upon his appearance at the time we want him, we have adopted a system of educating officers, to the end that they may do the thinking work of the Army. The main direction of affairs remains, as always, in the hands of the great officials at the War

Office. The Secretary of State for War is responsible to the public for the Army. He has, as his adviser, the Commander-in-Chief, who has the chiefs of the different departments to give him the benefit of their counsel and experience. Such is the present composition of the governing body of the Army. The duty of this organisation is clear. It has to keep the huge machine of the Army in working order, and is responsible for all shortcomings. Unfortunately, an army, unlike many other organisations, only goes through the great testing strain at a time of national need, and war necessarily becomes to the soldiers—the thinkers as well as the fighters—what examinations are to the scholar. On the results both are to be equally judged.

The Army underwent its examination in the years 1899, 1900, 1901, 1902. It must be admitted that the strain was long and difficult, but we must be thankful that the defects were brought out. I do not think that, looking at it broadly, we can with justice point to any particular man and say "he is to blame." The truth is that we all of us, as a nation, failed to take the Army seriously. Once the unremitting attention of the public is taken off a department it often lapses into indifference. And so we found it in the late Boer War. The machine was in bad repair and wanted several parts renovating. We found this out at a cost which was really cheap if we consider that we might have made the discovery when fighting for our national existence against a European coalition. Our duty now is clear. We must

do our best, not to apportion blame, but to remedy the defects and faults which were disclosed by the war. And in this task nobody is more eager to give a willing hand than the soldier.

Under the title of "Staff," the first question I addressed to my correspondents was this :

1. *How, in your opinion, should the Staff be recruited? Do you think the present system of admissions and selection to Staff College is the best possible? If not, what alteration do you propose?*

This question, simple as it may appear, goes to the root of one of our great difficulties, that of providing the brain of the Army. The system in vogue at present is that a certain number of officers, for sufficient and very often excellent reasons, are nominated as pupils for the Staff College. The greater number, however, are regimental officers who apply to their colonel for permission to enter for the examination for entrance to the college. At the college these officers go through a course of excellent instruction, and if they satisfy examiners at the end of their course they have the magic letters P.S.C. put after their names, and henceforth are eligible for employment on the Staff. In other words, they are labelled as belonging to the thinking portion of the Army. They may not be employed at once, but as a rule they fill positions on the staff of a station, a

brigade, or a division. Unless the heaven-born general appears, to them will fall in all likelihood the task of commanding on active service a brigade, a division, or a small expedition. But the system, admirable as it may appear, and indeed is, in many respects, has a very weak link. It lies in the permission or recommendation given by the colonel of the regiment to the officer who is desirous of leaving the regiment for the Staff College. A regimental commanding officer is but human. If he is a good officer, his regiment is everything to him. If he is a bad officer, he neither cares for his regiment nor the army at large. And, as I said before, all the time he is human. The obvious thing a colonel does, if he has the good of the regiment at heart, is to try and keep all his good officers in the regiment. It is not fair to expect him to see with equanimity his best officer leaving the regiment for good. Having gauged his value, he will do his utmost to keep him ; and when such a man applies for permission to go to the Staff College he is faced, in nine cases out of ten, by such an ardently expressed desire to retain his services, that he often gives up his dream of "Staff billets," and stays on to help his regiment to the best of his ability. Both from a regimental and even from an Army point of view the conduct of the colonel cannot be very much blamed. He is responsible for his regiment to the nation and he tries his best to fulfil his responsibilities. The same thing holds good, though perhaps not quite so much, in the case of an indifferent officer applying for permission to enter the

College. His absence, in the colonel's eyes, would not ruin the regiment, and he is far from being unwilling to let him go. So, as the system is at present, a good colonel will send an indifferent officer to the Staff College rather than an able one. Of course there are many brilliant exceptions to this.

In the case of a colonel of a regiment—and there are not a few of them—whose period of command is only regarded as a necessary but disagreeable preliminary to obtaining a pension, the desire for peace and quiet overcomes all other considerations. He will recommend for the Staff College any officer, good or bad, and while this indifference and carelessness produce now and again some excellent Staff officers, the result is due to luck rather than to anything else.

My question was intended to get a solution to the difficulty. Taking them all round, there is a wonderful amount of agreement in the answers. Those who replied include officers of nearly every rank, and I cannot do better than give their views.

An officer whose opinions are worthy of the attention of the public, writes as follows: "At present a man is not infrequently recommended by his commanding officer for the Staff College because he is likely to pass examinations, or occasionally because he is not agreeable to his brother officers or because he is married, and wishes to escape two years' foreign service. This is obviously wrong, and the effect is not good." Another suggests that "The commandant, Staff College, should freely

exercise his power of sending unpromising officers back to their regiments. Junior officers should not be allowed to remain on the Staff too long." Again another suggestion: "All cavalry and infantry officers should have served as adjutants before qualifying for the Staff." A note of absolute disapproval dominates another reply: "I do not consider that the present system of recruiting for the Staff College is a good one. It would, in my opinion, be better if the three senior officers of a regiment selected the officer they considered best suited." "There should be no competitive examination for admission to the Staff College: just a preliminary one in writing only. The finest officer I know failed in French by a few marks. He is a loss to the Staff," is the opinion of a particularly good officer who filled a staff appointment in South Africa with conspicuous success.

Throughout the whole of the replies there is an acknowledgment that the system is right but the working of it wrong. The difficulties I pointed out above are obvious to all, and the great remedy, proposed by the majority and having an over-ruling support, is that commanding officers should be made severely responsible for their recommendations. If an indifferent officer is sent to the Staff College he should not only be sent back, but the man who recommended him should be severely reprimanded.

Most of these general officers who have replied to my questions advocate in the strongest possible manner that all generals commanding divisions or brigades should

have the right of vetoing the appointment of any officer on his Staff. The reasons are obvious. Certain men suit each other while others do not, however high the qualities which they may individually possess. On active service the present system is not only unfair but dangerous. It is but just that a general, thus exercising his right of veto, should be prepared to state his objections in writing.

To sum up the many replies, the following, I think, would be a fair *précis* :

The present system is good, but the working of it is bad. The good regimental officer, as a rule, makes a good Staff officer. The unsuitability of any officer selected for the Staff College should be visited heavily on his recommender. More men should be passed through the Staff College. General officers should have the right to veto appointments on their staff. This, of course, does not refer to personal staff.

The second question in this series is as follows :

2. *What are the most important lessons which the Staff has learned or should have learned from the recent war?*

I must acknowledge that this question opens up such a very wide vista that I am not surprised there was a good deal of complaint as to the difficulty of answering it. The fact is that shrewd officers know that the war taught the Staff such an infinity of lessons that it is almost a hopeless task to set them down. One gallant officer, indeed, in answer to the inquiry, "What are the most important lessons which the Staff should have learned from the war?" answers comprehensively and yet briefly, with the four words, "Their own lamentable ignorance." Sweeping as this is, I must admit that it is the keynote of the whole of the answers. Some try to enumerate the special and particular lessons, but are content to write "&c., &c.," when they have got so far as the letters M. or N. A vast number content themselves with very brief replies. A very successful officer says: "All that they know now." Another replies "that the regimental officer pulled him through not once nor twice." He adds: "Do you think a Staff College education would have improved Delarey?" Another answer is to the effect that the chief lesson learned is "the value of thoroughly trained Staff officers, and the lamentable paucity of such officers in the Army." Many state that the reason for what they are pleased to call the "breakdown in the Staff officers during the war" is that there are only one or two stations where Staff officers can learn their duties. They complain bitterly that most of their work in peace time is office work. A very pertinent answer, which crystallises many other opinions, is that "they have realised that the

Staff is made for the Army, not the Army for the Staff."

Many answers came from regimental officers, though, of course, the majority were those of Staff officers. I think that on the whole the Staff officers are much more severe in their criticisms than the others, so that it cannot be said that any of the strictures passed on the Staff work during the war are due to the old jealousy between the two classes of officers. An officer who served on the Staff from the moment he landed in South Africa until he left, says: "It is not pleasant to have to say it, but I am convinced that the war was won by the regiment in spite of the Staff and not with its help."

I think, therefore, that there is no doubt whatever that my correspondents firmly believe that the work of the Staff was not as good as it ought to be. But curiously enough the lesson which, according to them, we should have learned above all others is the evil of jealousy among commanders.

A careful study of the replies gives the following result, which embodies the main points :

The Staff, with some few exceptions, had to learn most of its duties during the war instead of having a thorough knowledge of them before. The chief lesson learned was the imperative necessity for a properly

trained Staff and the wickedness and folly of Staff jealousies.

3. *Do you favour the establishment of a General Staff distinct from the Army, or do you favour a Staff recruited from regimental officers and returning to the regiment after a stated interval of service?*

Within the scope of the third question of this series comes the grave question of Staff *v.* Regiment. From Cæsar's days up to the present time there has existed, and, I imagine, always will exist, a sort of friction between the men who do the actual fighting and those who are charged with the direction of fighting. It is a very human failing that the soldier who in action is receiving the brunt of hard knocks should be extremely critical on the subject of the judgment of the man who has put him in that position. And when, as is necessarily very often the case, the senior fighting officer has to receive his orders through a somewhat junior Staff officer, there is always present a feeling amounting to positive dislike on the part of the former. Even when an army is successful in the field this feeling is apparent. When Wellington led that glorious Peninsular army to the gates of Paris, his regimental officers did nothing but complain of the Staff. In cases where things go wrong

and an army begins to experience checks, the contempt for the Staff officer shown by the fighting man becomes exceedingly accentuated. It is of no use to disguise the existence of this state of things, but, accepting the fact, the object of the reformer should be to devise something which should do away with it or lessen it considerably.

There used to be a very strong party in the Army before the war who were in favour of what is called a General Staff. Their idea was that we should select carefully and train scientifically a certain number of officers for Staff work. The intention was to keep these men permanently attached to the Staff, so that we should have always available a number of officers who, freed from all trammels of regimental duties, would perform the duties of administration infinitely better than a man picked up haphazard for the purpose. The arguments adduced in favour of this were undoubtedly very strong, but the war appears to have destroyed their value to a great extent. It would seem, judging from the replies that I have received, that the general opinion is that in nine cases out of ten the good regimental officer makes a good Staff officer. It was put very tersely to me in another way by a distinguished General. "The Staff College," he said, "makes a bad soldier a very bad one, and improves the good one." That is clearly the opinion of a vast majority of officers to whom I have written or spoken, and should be considered in every question of reform in this direction.

The keen regimental officer, straining every nerve to make the machine, or that portion of it placed in his

charge, as perfect as he can, feels that his efforts deserve some sort of recognition. Within the limits of a company he sees that he has to do, on a small scale, duties which, so far from rendering him incapable for Staff work, are the very best education possible. He does not want to leave his regiment, but he is perfectly aware of the fact that by remaining in his regiment as a keen, zealous officer, his chances of getting on in the service are considerably lessened. He knows that the backbone of every Army is the regiment, and he is not ignorant that his work is perhaps more essential to the improvement of the service than that of most junior Staff officers. But he perceives that the young Staff officer, whose work is not so important as his, possesses greater chances of promotion than he can hope for in his present position. Hence discontent and unhappiness.

The whole situation is summed up in a letter I recently received from a very distinguished officer—not a failure, but a man to whom success has come very early. He writes: “The *crux* of the whole question is this. As things are at present you must quit your regiment if you want to get on in the service. It is wrong, but quite true. In South Africa the regimental officer was ignored. They searched high and low for Staff officers, and never gave a chance to the splendid material they had ready at hand in the regiments. I know cases where the powers that be took a poor man out of the quiet repose of a county town in England, where he was doing no harm, and made him a Staff officer, where his

opportunities of making mistakes were unbounded. In his command were some of the finest regimental officers I have ever seen—just the fellows for the Staff. Can you wonder why the whole of the regimental officers who did yeoman service in South Africa are disgusted with the Staff, lock, stock, and barrel? ”

Allowing for the warmth of feeling, this is a very true statement of actual fact. There is no doubt that the regimental officer feels that he has been hardly treated. The consequence is that the strained relations between him and the Staff officers have become more strained than ever. So much so, indeed, that all proposals for a separate permanent General Staff meet with an unqualified “ no,” even from Staff officers themselves.

But there is undoubtedly a middle way, and it is to be hoped that it will be adopted. The answers received to my question in this connection are practically unanimous. The writers recommend that when a regimental officer has entered the Staff he should return to his regiment for a certain period. The bulk of my correspondents are in favour of three years on the Staff and two years with the regiment. The advantages would be the diminution of the “ Regiment *v.* Staff ” feeling, and that alone would be a very great achievement. I will quote verbatim the answer of an officer of superior rank, as it is a practical *précis* of the other replies. He says : “ Most emphatically I prefer a Staff recruited from regimental officers who return to regimental duty in each rank. The regimental training is of much value to them,

and keeps them in touch with regimental needs ; and their experience is, or should be, of much value to their regiments."

I feel it is but just to give the two exceptions to that practical unanimity. One, a Staff officer, says : " I am in favour of the formation of a GREAT GENERAL STAFF entirely distinct from the army, taken from the pick of the ordinary General Staff, who should return to their regiments at stated intervals. Once on the Great General Staff, an officer should become a specialist in Staff work, and it is a loss of power to send him back to his regiment."

The other, a regimental officer, says : " Keep them on the Staff if they are any good. An officer who has qualified for the Staff and is kept at regimental duty is generally a bit of a growler."

I should sum up the general result of this inquiry by saying that with practical unanimity my correspondents

Do not approve of a General Staff distinct from the Army. They are of opinion that Staff officers should be recruited from the best regimental officers who should serve three years on the Staff and return to their regiments for two years' consecutive duty.

So far the inquiries addressed to officers have had reference to the purely practical side of the organisation,

and the replies are valuable because of the intimate knowledge which each correspondent possessed of the subject. In the next question, however, I have wandered a little into the domain of what I should term *la haute politique* of the Army. The subject has been so ably and thoroughly discussed by Mr. L. S. Amery that I have no intention of going into the matter more than is necessary to explain the question.

Mr. Amery proposes that we should treat, for the purposes of defence, the Empire as a whole. We must look at the map of the world, and not at the map of Europe, if we wish to understand how best the Empire can be safeguarded. And, indeed, looking upon our vast possessions from this obviously reasonable point of view, the first thing that strikes one is that England is in a very awkward strategic position, while South Africa fulfils all the requirements of what might be termed the Strategic Capital of the British Empire. In case of war we should most likely be unable to use the Suez Canal, and we should be obliged to steam round the Cape, which would then become our half-way house for the Empire. Instead of boxing up the Army in England, we should keep a portion of it to garrison this great strategic point. This is briefly the case for a large permanent force in South Africa. I must refer those who wish to go further into the subject to Mr. Amery's excellent book.

In order to find out whether Mr. Amery's idea was

supported by the army, I included the following question in my series :

4. *It has been suggested that a large force of troops should be kept in South Africa. The arguments adduced in favour of this step are the strategic position of the Cape and the excellent opportunities for manœuvring which the conformation of this ground offers. Are you in favour of or against the suggestion? Please give your reasons for your opinions.*

The answer to this question has been quite unanimous. There is not a single dissentient. One and all they are in favour of a large force being kept in South Africa. The reasons given coincide very much.

(1) The strategic position of South Africa with regard to the Empire is immeasurably better than England.

(2) The excellent opportunity the country affords for big manœuvres and the training of mounted men.

(3) The necessity for a strong garrison until peace and quiet is absolutely assured in South Africa.

(4) The healthiness of the climate for the young soldier, which will greatly help him to get acclimatised to hot countries.

(5) Plenty of room for ranges,

Some of my correspondents, while agreeing with the idea, point out the difficulties, which, however, they urge should be overcome as quickly as possible. One of these appears to be the cost, but, as an officer says, this will have to be faced sooner or later, and why not now? Others point out that unless we reserve "training rights" the country will become as impassable owing to wire as England is on account of hedges. The great difficulty appears, however, to be that recruiting would suffer. None of these obstacles appear to be insuperable, however, and the summing up of all the replies is a very simple one:

Unanimously in favour of a large force
being kept in South Africa.

The subject treated in my next question goes to the root of all reform. An officer, referring to the scheme of Army reform, wrote: "Until we have decided upon what the British Army is to be trained for, any scheme of reform would be like the plans of an architect for a building which may be a dwelling-house, a brewery, or a music hall. But it is a curious fact that since the Crimean war there has been no authoritative decision as to what the British Army shall be trained for . . ." Of course, as a defensive force, its uses are obvious enough, but apart from that part of its duties nobody seems to know exactly wherefore it exists. I therefore put the following question:

5. *For what purpose does the British Army exist? Setting apart its obvious defensive duties, should it be trained to meet European troops? If not, what should be the right objective of its training?*

There is something almost comical about the question. But if ever an answer was required to any inquiry about the Army, surely this is the most important. It is useless to talk of introducing any new scheme or plan until the country has decided this most vital question. An officer, who has passed with great credit through all the Staff grades and whose knowledge of the Army and its requirements is exceptional, writes in answer to the question: "I have been waiting for many years for some one to tell me—ask the Prime Minister." Apparently he is not satisfied with Mr. Balfour's definition, and indeed there is a great amount of variety in the replies. To some the question has come as a Chinese puzzle, and others have "given up the riddle," as they call it.

The truth is that we have not fought European troops since the Crimean war. When the Germans won the great war of 1870-1 we more or less modelled our Army on theirs. It was not unnatural that we should take as an example the Army which had given the most brilliant results, but many soldiers insist upon the fact

that we have not used this European training for fifty years, and they argue that, since this is the case, we should consider now, whether its training should not be modified to meet the class of work which it has performed during that period. Too blind an adherence to a European model tends to make an army "stiff-jointed," and they would recommend elasticity as the great essential. An officer of high rank gives his ideas thus : "The Boer war has taught us that, as the German system was the best up to 1871, so the Boer system is the best in the present day. Had we defeated the Boers with ease, then I should have triumphantly pointed to the European training as the main factor in our success. But as we didn't, I at once became convinced that the system was wrong and antiquated before the new system of the brethren" (*i.e.*, the Boers). The only logical corollary to this is that we should train our army *à la* Boer. Our soldiers should all be horsemen and all marksmen. It is, of course, the ideal army, but the cost would be excessive. Still, it is easy to see that, while very few of my correspondents go so far as to boldly propose that the Boer system should be adopted in its entirety, yet in their inmost hearts they appear convinced that, with some modifications to meet our special wants, we should make the Boer organisation our ideal.

But from the answers I have received I cannot claim to be able to put forward any other result than the schoolboy answer : "I don't know." Of course I have

received some able expositions of the uses to which the British Army should be put, but as, unfortunately, other answers from just as capable and successful officers very often traverse in every respect their arguments and statements, I feel compelled to sum up as follows :

Nobody quite knows for what purpose the British Army exists outside its defensive duties. But all urge that the question should be settled before large reforms are undertaken.

Perhaps the most difficult of all Army questions, as far as its internal organisation is concerned, is that of promotion. The elimination of the "personal equation" is clearly the ideal. A man should be judged on his merits and not on social or other grounds, divorced from the needs and requirements of the service. But we had better admit at once that in no organisation in the whole world has this ideal state been reached. As an officer writes to me : " If the angel Gabriel came down to take up the duties of Commander-in-Chief he could not help doing a 'job' now and again." There is a vast amount of truth in this. As all organisations are composed of men, we cannot expect them to suddenly drop all their human frailties the moment they become members, and so we must expect, until the millennium comes, that *coeteris paribus*, a man would prefer giving

an appointment to a friend or relative than to a stranger. This may appear terrible morality, but I am perfectly sure it is a practical and material commonsense way of looking at the subject.

My sixth question was broad enough for the inclusion of every sort of view on every side of the question, and my expectations were realised. I asked :

6. How, in your opinion, can the matter of promotion best be arranged?

In order that the question may be thoroughly understood, the present system by which promotions are regulated had better be described. There is at the War Office a Selection Board, whose duties are to deal with the matter of promotion. It consists of the Commander-in-Chief, as president, and six other members, heads of military departments—the Adjutant-General, the Quartermaster-General, the Inspector-General of Fortifications, the Director-General of Ordnance, the Military Secretary, and the Director of Military Education and Training. Their duty is to select and recommend officers for (a) Promotion in the Army above the substantial rank of Major, (b) Staff appointments above the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. Promotions of officers beneath these ranks are not made by the Selection Board. Such officers obtain their step mostly according to seniority, or in some cases, to merit. The most important appointments, which seriously affect, one way or another, the

well-being of the Army are those made by the Selection Board.

In all my replies there is expressed a certain amount of approval of the system of Selection Board, but it is evident that they consider that the enormous power for good which it might exercise is seriously limited, if not totally lost, by the procedure which governs its labours. The Commander-in-Chief* summons to consultation such members as he may think necessary: he may also, if he thinks fit, summon a special representative of the arm in which the selection is to be made. This, according to my correspondents, practically gives over the entire power of promotion and selection to the Commander-in-Chief, who, it must be remembered, is always the military superior of the members of the Board. The objections to this are numerous and strong. There is no question of a Commander-in-Chief's integrity, or honesty of purpose, but the objection is that *any one man* should have in his hands the power of promotion. They state in the strongest possible manner that it is an impossible task for one man to do with justice to himself or the army, and they are strongly in favour of a Board whose members have an equal vote. One officer says, "According to the present arrangements, the Selection Board is merely a screen behind which the Commander-in-Chief arranges the promotions and selections."

* In this connection whenever the title of Commander-in-Chief appears, there is no reference whatever intended to the distinguished soldier who holds the office, but only to the office itself.

There is most evident, in all the replies received, a feeling of dissatisfaction with the manner in which promotions have been made up to the present. I should be the last to attach any very great importance to these grumbles, because at the end of every war there are always a great number of disappointed men, were it not for the fact that the vast majority of my correspondents are successful soldiers, who have come out of the test of active service with honour and promotion. I feel therefore that I should not be doing justice to them unless I gave a faithful translation of their sentiments. "The modern invention of 'accelerated promotion,'" writes an officer, "is only a manner of legalising methods of jobbery." "I am in favour of selection," says another, "if it can be done without jobbery." "The late war," writes a very candid and successful officer, "was productive of more jobs than any of Marlborough's campaigns." "If you want to get on in the service," declares a soldier who particularly wishes his observations to be set forth, "leave your regiment first; then get your aunt to call on Lady —— and give her a thumping subscription for one of her charities and the thing is done."

But, after all, remedial measures and not mere criticisms are needed. And I must say that if the latter have been strong and forcible there is no lack of the former in my replies. The great majority are in favour of promotion by selection, but they urge that the method of rejection should not be omitted. They point out that the lists are crowded with men who will never be employed, and

yet stand in the way of the promotion of other deserving men. In answer to the question, a distinguished Staff officer gives a practical summary of the rest of his colleagues' answers. "I am in favour of promotion up to and including the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel by *rejection rather than selection.*" This is practically what all the others say in a less concise manner. "No officer," says a gallant soldier, "should be allowed to think that he has vested rights in the army. If he is unfit for his work, let him give place to better men."

With regard to regimental promotion, the general opinion is that it is too slow, and they favour the idea that the colonel and senior officers of a regiment should be given the power of removing junior officers if they do not show proof of making good officers. "The reason why the Foot Guards are good soldiers," writes an officer of the line, "is that they have methods of getting rid of a 'rotter' which we don't possess. If my colonel is convinced that Subaltern Jones is not and never can be a good soldier, he can say so in a confidential report, which will probably deprive him of the chance of ever commanding a regiment. But it will not prevent Jones from drawing the public money until he gets to be a major and then retiring on a pension. From the taxpayer's point of view it would be cheaper to give Jones, as a subaltern, a thousand pounds and his *cong e*, than to keep him on doing harm to the service."

Before summing up the replies, I feel that I should not pass over in silence the subject of the accusations of

jobbery that have been made. In many replies I have been given individual cases, and, from my own experience, I feel that they are not exaggerated. Officers urge upon the public that if these continue the regimental officer will lose all his confidence in the Army. I have promised my correspondents to refrain from a system of general criticism, but I feel myself quite justified in making these complaints public. To those who have urged me to speak out boldly in this connection I can only say that my promise to the rest of their comrades prevents me from doing so, and they must content themselves with the knowledge that the abuse is being carefully watched.

Meanwhile I should say that the consensus of the opinions of my correspondents is this :

Promotion should go by rejection rather than selection up to and including the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. That the members of the War Office Selection Board should have equal votes and should be all consulted. That regimental promotion is too slow because the present system allows too many incompetent officers to remain.

The seventh question concludes this series, and, though the last, is by no means the least in importance or in

the extraordinary unanimity which characterises the replies. My question was :

7. Are you in favour of an Army Board as Governing Body? If so, what form should it take?

The whole history of Army supreme government has been so thoroughly thrashed out that there is no need for me to go into long explanatory details. The results of the War Commission are too fresh in the minds of the public to render it necessary. It is sufficient to say that the Commission recommended the establishment of an Army Board, with certain recommendations as to the part that the Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary of State for War should take in it. It was with the object of finding out whether their recommendation was approved or not by the Army generally that I addressed the question. The result is overwhelmingly in favour of a system of government by a Board, but the suggestions as to the duties and composition of the Board are somewhat different from those of the Commission. I cannot think that I am doing justice to the thought and care exercised by my correspondents in their replies unless I urge upon my readers the value of their recommendations. As a rule, soldiers are so conservative in their ideas that an innovation is generally unpopular because it is an innovation. But in this case the Army seems to have accepted, with great

unanimity, the necessity for some new form of government, and, not content with this, offers some very radical suggestions as to the details of the new departure.

The prevalent idea to be gathered from the replies of my correspondents is the necessity for absolute independence on the part of the Governing Body and for a continuity of policy. Under the old system each Commander-in-Chief, having his own ideas on the subject of the Army, naturally determined to have them adopted as promptly as possible. But in such a huge organisation the change took time, and it was nearly two years before everything was ready for carrying out his plans. It is clear that the value of such changes could only be gauged after some experience of their working. But as a Commander-in-Chief's appointment was for five years only, the necessary time was wanting. Before the good or bad points of the new policy could be discovered by results, a new Commander-in-Chief appeared with perhaps ideas radically opposed to his predecessor. The consequences were disastrous. There was no continuity of policy, and the whole army was divided into "So-and-so's men" and "So-and-so's men." It was a fatal method of Army government and deserved the condemnation it has received at the hands of the War Commission.

What my correspondents are clearly anxious to see is a Board on the lines of the Admiralty. They wish to have *absolute independence*, and to secure this they do not wish to see on the Board *any officer in active*

employ. Their idea is that an officer actually in charge of a Department or acting in any military capacity is bound to lose a certain amount of independence towards his superior officer the Commander-in-Chief. This is the scheme :

President of the Board—The Secretary of State for War. Three civilian members, either at present in the War Office, or appointed by Parliament. One must necessarily be the Permanent Under-Secretary. Three military members who, immediately they are appointed, are taken off the active list. Each of these should retire after a certain time, and his vacancy should be at once filled by the Secretary of State.

There will be no Commander-in-Chief at all, since the Board would absorb all his functions.

It is claimed for such a Board that jobbery will practically be abolished, that it will produce a continuity of policy which has not been attainable heretofore, and that it will have the full confidence not only of the Army but of the nation. There are, of course, objections to the scheme, because at first sight one is tempted to ask what is to become of the heads of the purely military departments. The answer given by those in favour of the scheme is that, instead of being responsible to the Commander-in-Chief for the efficiency and progress of their several departments, they will owe their responsibility to the Board, which will have among its military members

experts on all military subjects, able to deal with them effectively.

In the much vexed matter of promotion, it is urged that such a Board will effect an enormous improvement. If influence or any illegal pressure is used, it will have to be used on seven men of undoubted position. Many of the supporters of the scheme state that it is their firm conviction that it will do away with every kind of jobbery, and the arguments they adduce to support their view seem very strong.

A further suggestion has been made to meet the undoubted desire of the Army in general that its government should be treated in a non-party spirit. They propose that of the three civilian members of the Board one shall be a member of the Government, another a prominent member of the Opposition, while a third shall be the Permanent Under-Secretary. This suggestion may be fifty years in advance of the time. It seems hopeless to expect that under party government certain departments should be placed outside the sphere of party attack and defence. But I cannot urge too strongly on the public attention a thoughtful consideration of this suggestion, knowing as I do its source. It cannot be too much impressed upon those who have any regard for the well-being of the Army, that the dominant note in all these questions is the ardent desire of soldiers that the organisation and the administration of a great national Army should be taken out of the arena of party quarrels. As an officer writes: "Considering that the Army is a

national asset, and one of the bases of our existence, surely politicians can be persuaded to sink party differences in order to make it as perfect as possible."

The answers I have received to this question are very unanimous with regard to the need of an Army Board. I should say that the following would convey their general tenour :

Undoubtedly in favour of an Army Board on the lines of the Admiralty, which should take the place of the Commander-in-Chief. It should consist of Secretary of State as President, three civilian members, of whom one should be the Permanent Under-Secretary, and three military members, officers of superior rank, who must be taken off the active list the moment they are appointed. They should retire in rotation.

III. ARTILLERY

*Extreme, depressed, point-blank or short, end first or any'ow,
From Colesberg Kop to Quagga's Poort—from Ninety-Nine
till now—*

*By what I've 'eard the others tell an' I in spots 'ave seen,
There's nothing this side 'Eaven or 'Ell Ubique doesn't
mean.*

RUDYARD KIPLING.

IGNORING the usual precedence of the arms I have determined to deal with artillery first because, both from its training and especially the results of it, a great lesson should be learnt by the whole Army. Mr. Kipling in his poem "Ubique" has but given expression to the feelings of admiration which their comrades in South Africa felt for the "gunners." From beginning to end they stood the strain and came out of the supreme war test with a reputation for thoroughness, devotion, knowledge of their duties, steadiness and pluck which has set a mark on them for ever. From the days when their magnificent batteries, perfectly equipped and splendidly horsed, galloped past the reserves into action, through that go-as-you-please period when, adapting ourselves to circumstances, a section of a Royal Horse Battery was drawn by mules, right up to the time when the "Glorious Regiment" turned itself into mounted Rifles—R.A.M.R. or "Rammers," as the facetious soldier called them—they were always magnificent, always reliable and always received the ungrudging approbation of their comrades in the other arms.

The very excellence of the arm deserves more than a mere passing reference to the organisation and training which have produced these results. The unit of the Royal Artillery is a battery, and I propose to describe its composition with some detail. The strength of a battery is roughly about 120 men and five officers—the Major in supreme command, the Captain who, while being second in command, does the whole of the

Adjutant's work, and three subalterns, and they all are grouped around six wicked-looking guns which become the darlings of every good gunner's heart. The first thing which strikes one in the organisation is the fact that there is an officer to every twenty-four men and it is quite legitimate to infer from this that an absolute knowledge of each individual man is possessed by his officer. Even the total—120—is so small that each officer should know every man in the battery—and he most likely does. That alone is a great factor towards success, each man having perfect knowledge of the other and full confidence in each other.

This state of things, admirable as it is and admirable as the results are, is not the chief factor in the organisation of the Royal Artillery. There is something more. It is the early responsibility which is thrown on the officer. The moment a young subaltern joins a battery he is at once given charge of two guns and of the men who work them. He is taught his duties but is not interfered with. A certain degree of uniformity is required, but, outside that, all that the Major asks is that the subaltern's section should be efficient. The consequence is that, from the day he joins, the subaltern feels that he is an essential part of his battery and that on his shoulders rests the responsibility for a third portion of it. To any right-minded lad this responsibility is *the* great incentive and the results of the system are the "almost perfect arm."

I would beg my readers to pay particular attention to

this system of "early responsibility." It is the system which has pervaded the navy, the artillery and a greater portion of our native armies. Take Egypt for example. Here we have a most puzzling state of things. The native army is partly Egyptian and partly Soudanese—two different nationalities only connected by the link of language, and—on the part of the Soudanese—by the merest thread of a religious affinity. When Lord Kitchener took over the organisation of the Egyptian Army, he simply told his young British officer to go and help him to make a fighting machine. His responsibilities began the moment he had donned the "tarboosh." Was he appointed to an Egyptian battalion? Well, he studied their peculiarities, their weaknesses and their strong points, because, being responsible for their efficiency, he felt that this knowledge was absolutely essential. Was he transferred to a black battalion, with its different traditions, ideas and idiosyncrasies? He did the same there, and the result is the Egyptian Army of to-day. In fact, it may be stated without fear of contradiction that, in every branch of our services, naval or military, where responsibility has been thrown on the subaltern at the earliest possible opportunity, the results have been most excellent.

But to return to the Royal Artillery, while admitting its perfections, it would be wrong to conclude that the Boer war has not taught them something. One of the difficulties which the Army first encountered in South Africa was the practical invisibility of the Boer

guns. With smokeless powder and from a carefully chosen position, they sometimes fired on us for hours before we could detect where they were. Once this was done the gun spoke very seldom again for the simple reason that we overwhelmed it. We, on the contrary—I am talking of the earlier stages of the war—galloped up our magnificent batteries, a huge black mass on the open plain, a mark for all the Boer guns. It is true they seldom did much damage, but they might have inflicted very severe losses. The enemy never massed his guns together, so that each of them had to be separately searched for, and it was sometimes necessary for a battery to direct the whole of its fire against a single Boer gun while its fellows continued to play on us.

The question naturally arises, therefore, as to whether in adopting these tactics—which, it must be admitted, were perhaps due rather to a paucity of guns than to a definite plan—the Boers have taught us something that might be useful. I therefore sent round the following question :

1. *What is your opinion on the question of massed batteries as against single guns as exemplified in the Boer War? Will you give examples from your own experience confirming your opinion either way.*

There is an overwhelming reply in favour of massed

batteries. "The effect of the fire of a battery of six guns," writes a distinguished officer, "is more than six times the effect of one gun." "The Boer artillery," says another of my correspondents, "with their system of dispersion did extremely little damage. They had a certain amount of moral effect but could not stop troops who meant to go on." "The Boer artillery tactics were best for their special case, and they brought out many of the advantages of dispersion," is another opinion. At the same time it is clear from the replies I have received that the Boer method of dispersion has given food for thought. The reply of a successful and experienced artillery officer, differing in some respects from the others, is worthy of full quotation. "It depends on ground," he writes. "If massed batteries can be well concealed and if a good position, sufficiently extensive, is available, then mass them, as a 'surprise by fire' will then be more easy, *i.e.*, a sudden and overwhelming shower of shells can be hurled on the decisive tactical objective of the moment. If the same simultaneous fire on any object can be effected by field telegraph or other means, with batteries or guns scattered, the moral effect will be far greater, as the shower of shells will then come from different directions. Probably the best result will be obtained by massed batteries in attack and scattered guns and batteries in the defence."

On the whole, I should say the great bulk of opinion is against dispersed guns, but it is recognised that the subject deserves attention, and that something should be

done to devise a mechanical communication, which would allow of control over a greater distance. The following would therefore represent the result of my inquiry :

Massed batteries are superior to open formation. If scattered gun formation is used some mechanical means of communication becomes necessary for control.

The question of keeping a greater interval between guns or of retaining the present system is one that was greatly discussed during the late war, and I found a good deal of difference of opinion among the experts. The advantage of a battery being extended in more open order is chiefly the smaller target it offers to the enemy. A well-timed shrapnel bursting over a battery in its present formation might cause considerable damage to men working two or three guns. If you disperse your battery, obviously this would not be the case. The disadvantages, however, must not be overlooked. The present formation is the result of practical experience, and is devised so that the Major commanding the battery has every gun under his eye. He can alter the range or direction in a moment, and his machine, so to speak, is under full control. The present regulation distance between guns is $19\frac{1}{2}$ yards. The argument therefore resolves itself into the merits of control *versus* decrease in casualties. But as one of my correspondents most pertinently points out, "The present system of control

is that of voice and eye. I think that we could substitute for these some mechanical arrangement such as the telephone." I think that artillery officers—who, by the way, are described by a very able and experienced Staff officer as being "too rigid" in their ideas—if they could be assured that the control of their batteries would in no way be affected, would gladly concur in a system of more open formation. The whole thing therefore resolves itself into the question of mechanical device. Telephones are not an innovation altogether in artillery work since they are part of the equipment of a howitzer battery, and it is quite conceivable that a somewhat similar appliance can be invented for ordinary batteries.

The answers to this question are fairly unanimous on the subject. A battery, in the opinion of my correspondents, does lose cohesion and efficiency. At the same time I might quote a typical reply as it covers the ground from the point of view of a soldier who is not an artillery officer. "It unquestionably does lose cohesion and efficiency," he writes, "but not to so great an extent as many Royal Artillery officers would have us believe. I cannot quote an instance, for we were never opposed in South Africa by an artillery that could make us suffer adequately for our mistakes. At the same time I am of opinion that our system of artillery tactics must be more elastic. The 19½ yards interval between guns should be made capable of extension to at least 40 yards at the will of the commander." An experienced artillery officer gives this as his opinion: "The greater the

extension the less will be the control of the battery commander, and the greater will be the difficulty of accurate ranging; also, the more difficult will it be to concentrate fire on the exact spot required at the moment."

The tenour of the replies I should interpret as follows:

A battery would lose cohesion and efficiency if extended beyond the present distance, but if a mechanical appliance could be produced which would give the battery commander the same control as heretofore, extended battery formation would be a distinct improvement.

"The gunner's weapon is his gun, but he can't shoot ducks with a 15-pounder," says one of my correspondents, and, at first blush, it seems that his words are rather calculated to express a sympathy with the lack of opportunity of looting, from which the unarmed artilleryman suffers, than a serious contribution to the question whether drivers and gunners in a battery should carry firearms for their own protection. Yet it pithily expresses the sense of most of my correspondents' answers. At present a gun, on active service, is of no use except when it is in action or when it serves the purpose of "moral control." The drivers and gunners

are practically unarmed, and rely on an escort for protection. I put the following question :

3. *To what extent should the drivers and gunners be provided with weapons for their own protection and that of the guns? What, if any, increase of musketry instruction could you recommend?*

Obviously in warfare, of which the essence is surprise, there might often arise occasions when artillerymen might need something for their own protection. I quote from an artillery officer : "All gunners and drivers should be armed with a firearm—light magazine rifle or carbine with a short bayonet for night work. Swords should be abolished for all artillerymen. The rifles for the gunners should be carried on the guns and limbers and not on the men's backs. Drivers should carry carbines slung. At least a hundred and fifty rounds should be fired by all each year, to ensure the men being good shots up to six hundred yards and at all objects."

This is practically the idea of all my correspondents. The artillery officers insist upon the inconvenience to gunners—the men who load, lay, and fire the gun—of having anything bulky attached to their persons while engaged in their duties. All are agreed upon this, and they generally advocate that the rifles should be carried

for their men either on the gun or on the limber. With regard to the revolver as an arm of defence, I find it most unpopular. One officer says: "I consider them in most cases more dangerous to one's friends than one's foes."

Altogether the great consensus of opinion points to the following conclusion:

Drivers and gunners should carry a fire-arm. The former should have it slung or attached to his person, while the latter's weapon should be carried for him either on the gun or the limber. To accustom them to the use of the rifle they should fire between 100 and 200 rounds yearly.

The last question I addressed to my correspondents on the subject of artillery was this:

4. *Are there any alterations or additions in the arms which your experience could suggest?*

To this question there was an ample response, and the importance of the suggestions made cannot be exaggerated. The artillery arm, like all others, learnt a great deal from the war. The introduction of the pom-pom opened up a vista of new ideas. For the unlearned in

their ways I may explain that the pom-pom is a magnified Maxim, throwing a pound shell in quick succession. It has a fair range up to 5000 yards. The Boers used them whenever they could, and towards the end of the war they were in very extensive use in our army. To quote from the lips of a soldier who had just come from under a heavy pom-pom fire: "It ain't the 'arm they does, but it's the noise they make and the fright they give a fellow." Their effect was, indeed, rather a moral than an actually destructive one. On troops in close order, however, they form a most effective gun. Indeed, it was generally acknowledged that they were a good weapon, and towards the end of the war were thoroughly approved of by gunners generally.

At the same time a vast amount of nonsense was written about the superior range of the Boer guns. It is true that they brought on to the field heavy weapons which, up to then, had been confined to garrisons and fortresses. But the mobility of our guns altogether outbalanced the enemy's advantage of range. It was very uncomfortable to be shot at by a "long Tom" at an impossible range, but we silenced it the moment we attacked. Of course in sieges this does not hold good, since the line of rifle investment prevented our lighter guns getting within range. But I never met a gunner during the war who did not consider the use of the Boer heavy guns in the field a matter of little moment. At the same time nobody appears to go so far as to advise the abolition of long-range heavy

guns with our army. Only they are inclined to regard them as luxuries, not necessities.

The question of quick-firing guns is the important point touched upon by my correspondents. And they are unanimous in their favour. The new pattern upon which the War Office has been making confidential experiments is a very fine weapon. An officer, who knows what he is talking about, says it is "the best gun in existence." Such being the case, the necessity for its immediate introduction is urged by all my correspondents. One distinguished artillery officer says that they should be employed "even if the number of guns had to be reduced in order to carry enough ammunition." But the question of expense is one that the country will have to consider. We possess the finest *personnel* in the world, and it would be a thousand pities if the three or four millions necessary for re-arming our forces with the new gun should not be forthcoming. My correspondents urge upon me the pressing need for this. But I think that the change is of such clear importance to the Army that there should be no difficulty in obtaining the requisite amount. It should be remembered that the improvement is absolutely essential to the Army. If a European force, armed with modern quick-firing guns, met our artillery in their present state, we should—to use a correspondent's words—"have to begin to search for a fresh Royal Regiment of Artillery." It will therefore lie with the public to decide whether our gallant gunners should go to meet the enemy with full

confidence in their arm, or whether they should ride to practical annihilation. For this, as indeed in all army matters, the question is one of life and death for the soldier.

Putting aside the Royal Garrison Artillery, whose work I have not attempted to touch upon in this series of questions, the Royal Regiment of Artillery is divided into Field and Horse Batteries. The field gun is a heavier weapon, throwing a 15-pound shell. It is intended to accompany infantry rather than mounted men, and is less mobile than the horse gun, which, being lighter, throws out a 12-pound shell, and has a less effective range than a field gun. There are some officers who would do away with the distinction altogether and simply mount, as at present, all the horse gunners. All, however, appear to think that something should be done to give the horse gun a range as effective as a field gun. Whether this can be done without increasing the weight is a matter, I take it, for gun manufacturers and inventors.

I feel constrained to quote in full the suggestions of an officer whose knowledge of all arms of the service has been recognised by his present important appointment. He proposes :

1. That we should have a Maxim to shoot accurately up to 5000 yards.
2. An improved pom-pom * must take the place of the Horse Artillery with mounted troops.

* This may be met by the adoption of a lighter quick-firer.

3. The next step in the rifle must be an automatic weapon for the best shots.
4. We must have a "quick-loading" (which is the same as a "quick-firing") field gun with fixed ammunition, and effective shrapnel up to 6000 yards.
5. "Cow" guns (*i.e.*, heavy long-range guns), with mechanical transport, must form a necessary adjunct to the infantry division.

I would commend these suggestions to inventors.

After carefully going through the whole of the replies, I think that they answer my question in the following manner :

We must have quick-firing guns both for horse and field artillery. There should be a liberal allowance of pom-poms to accompany mounted forces. As far as is compatible with weight the horse-gun should be made as effective a weapon as the field gun. Long-range heavy guns should accompany the infantry.

IV. CAVALRY. FROM THE STAFF
AND REGIMENTAL POINT
OF VIEW

*It was our fault, and our very great fault, and not the judgment of Heaven.
We made an army in our own image, on an island nine by seven,
Which faithfully mirrored its maker's ideals, equipment and mental attitude—
And so we got our lesson : and we ought to accept it with gratitude.*

RUDYARD KIPLING.

But the British Public makes my blood boil. As a nation we are rotten. It makes me smile to hear people talk of our magnificent material for cavalry when as a matter of fact only 14 per cent. of the cavalry have had anything to do with horses before enlistment. Our horses are what no one else will buy. . . . The Treasury will give money for anything which has gone through their estimates for years, but anything new is discouraged.

LETTER FROM A CAVALRY OFFICER.

ACCORDING to our old friend *Punch*, a cavalry subaltern was once asked in an examination what were the uses of cavalry in warfare. "The chief use of cavalry," he replied (I forget the exact words) "is to give tone to what would otherwise be a mere vulgar brawl." It must be confessed that there is a certain amount of that sentiment still prevalent in the mounted arm. Gallant to a degree, good riders and good horse-masters, as a rule, yet there is about the cavalry officer an unexpressed but strong feeling that he belongs to a branch of the service which might not be unfairly described as the aristocratic arm. Nor can it be denied that their service is to a certain extent exclusive. It is impossible for a young officer to join the cavalry unless he has a very good private income, so that the choice of officers for the mounted arm is restricted by the question of fortune. It is equally true that the cavalry are the most conservative of all the Army and change with them is somewhat difficult. But against all this must be put the fact that the new cavalry commanders appointed by the Government are men whose anxiety to produce an efficient arm is much more powerful than any prejudices they may have acquired, and, taking it all round, there is every reason to believe that they effect some far-reaching and thorough reforms. In this connection I might quote part of a letter written to me by a cavalry officer whose services in South Africa could best be described as brilliant. He says, "What you say about 'destructive criticisms' is very true or rather *was* very

true. There has been a great deal done during the past ten or twelve months in the direction you more or less indicate to improve the efficiency of the service in all its branches, and much is in process of being done which needs time to develop."

It is somewhat difficult to approach the subject of cavalry reform without coming into contact with prejudices which often bar the way to improvement. Any proposals, therefore, upon the subject must be founded on facts. During the war and since I asked ten commanders of divisions, brigades and columns, whether in their opinion the cavalry sent out to us were proficient in one of their chief duties, that of scouting. Of these officers two were cavalry soldiers, and the verdict I received was "no," by nine to one. The answer of the one was that "they scouted much better than mounted infantry." These replies, I think, coming as they did from impartial men, justify me in saying that the cavalry in South Africa were not up to the proper level in the great art of scouting. I daresay that many cavalry officers will deny this, but there are a great number who frankly acknowledge it and are very desirous of improving the arm in this respect.

To understand thoroughly the uses of cavalry let us take a typical case. Say that General A. has with him 500 cavalry, 2000 infantry, and 12 guns, and General B., his enemy, is lying fifty miles off with exactly the same force. Neither knows the precise whereabouts or the composition of the other's force. Both will at once

send out cavalry detachments to scout and gain every possible information about his enemy. In fact before either A. or B. can make any decisive move they *must* have accurate information. We may suppose that each of the generals sends out a squadron of cavalry for this purpose. The detachment which has been best trained in the art of using its eyes, ears and brain will detect the presence of the other first, and can easily defeat all their enemy's attempts to obtain information. Supposing that A.'s cavalry are the better trained as scouts, B. will be without information that night, while A. might be doing anything behind the screen of his intelligent cavalry. But B.'s reconnoitring squadron is, let us say, magnificently armed and can use their weapons with greater skill than A.'s. Relying on this the officer commanding B.'s might determine to defeat the superior intelligence of the opposing squadron by brute force. Accordingly he manœuvres for a position and then suddenly attacks his opponent, who being inferior in the use of arms, is driven off, and thus discloses his commander's position. B.'s command is thus furnished with the information he requires, marches his force that night, and a battle is fought on the morrow. During the action A.'s cavalry may be doing very intelligent work, but they will be keeping a nervous eye on B.'s horsemen who played the deuce with one of their squadrons the day before. If a decisive cavalry combat ensues A.'s men will in all probability be defeated and the victory will rest with B. But if we suppose that A.'s

cavalry were as good horsemen and swordsmen and riflemen as B.'s the whole aspect of the affair would be different. We are therefore justified in laying it down as an axiom that scouting with a perfect knowledge of arms and horsemanship is the essence of cavalry training.

Within the limits of this little typical case are examples of nearly all the various questions which are so keenly discussed to-day by cavalry soldiers. There is a party which says that if A.'s men knew how to use a rifle well they would have annihilated B.'s before they could have got within touch of them. And as for the big action, they would say, there could be no conflict between cavalry and cavalry, acting as such, since the mounted force, which were expert riflemen, could keep their enemy at a very respectful distance, and, as for cavalry charging infantry, they scout the very idea. There is another school which says: "All that may be very true. The day of cavalry charges may be over, but at the same time nobody is in a position to say so with any degree of certainty. Let us by all means be expert riflemen, if possible, but do not let us do away with cold steel altogether until we can be convinced by some actual experience that such is the case." As regards scouting, I think both sides are agreed that it is the chief objective of cavalry training. It is for this reason that the latter school does not altogether disapprove of the abolition of the lance. An officer of a Lancer regiment, referring to the subject, writes to me as follows:

"During the war I found behind a big, thick bush,

which absolutely concealed them from the enemy, the bodies of one of our men and his horse, riddled with seventeen bullet-holes. He had taken perfect cover, and was in a position to obtain an excellent view of the enemy's movements. The top of his lance gave him away. From that time I have been in favour of the abolition of the lance."

It seems to me, judging by the general tenour of the replies I have received, that the art of scouting is the prime necessity of the cavalry arm, and next to that comes the need for the very best of training as a fighting man, both with the sword and the rifle.

The questions I have addressed to my correspondents on the subject were addressed not only to cavalry officers but also to officers of other arms who have held separate command. Our mounted arm has been the subject of so much general discussion that many questions, which, under ordinary circumstances, should be addressed to regimental officers only, have been sent to others. But in order that the cavalry may have no reason to complain, I shall distinguish between the replies given by cavalry and those sent me by other officers.

The first question I addressed on the subject of cavalry was this :

1. *Do you consider that all or any of the functions of cavalry have been superseded or modified during the recent war? If so, in what direction have*

these changes taken place and what alteration of drill, tradition and armament would you propose to meet the demands of future campaigns ?

I will quote two answers to this question, each of which comes from a cavalry officer. They are both men whose work in South Africa has been brilliantly successful. The opinions are worthy of deep attention. The first writes :

“ No, certainly not as regards the functions of cavalry. The chief lesson learnt in the late campaign was that cavalry must rely to a greater extent on their firearm, and be taught to use it with more effect. This is being done. The necessary alterations in drill (there are not many important ones), are embodied in the new Cavalry Drill Book which is now in the press. It should not be lost sight of that cavalry in the recent campaign was not used *as* cavalry for the reason that no cavalry was opposed to them.”

The other says :

“ I cannot see that any of the functions of cavalry have been superseded or modified by the recent war. All will, however, agree that the ideal cavalry soldier must be able to fight on foot. The drill, however, should be greatly altered, which I hoped to have seen done years ago. It is far too complicated, so much so that even old N.C.O's have difficulty in keeping it up.

All that is required is the simplest commonsense drill. Then there would at once be sufficient saving of time to make the cavalryman a good mounted infantryman."

But although the two answers I have quoted are typical of the rest of those given by cavalry officers, I feel I should not be doing my duty to the subject unless I quoted in full the opinion of an infantry officer who held an important command in South Africa. He writes :

"The knee-to-knee charge is, I think, a thing of the past, except under very rare circumstances, which, however, should be provided for. Drill in extended order should be the usual fighting formation, and the use of the rifle should be most studied as being that likely to be most frequently used. The charge in extended order or long gallop over rough ground should be well taught. Men should be instructed to shoot off their horses' backs.

"The weapon of all should be a long-shooting light rifle of the longest range, with a light pointing sword and a short bayonet to fix on the rifle. If the sword can be made to fix on the rifle so much the better, as then one weapon less need he carried.

"In my opinion, cavalry action in the future will consist in galloping and seizing certain fire positions and arriving there before the enemy, who will then be repulsed, not by shock tactics, but by a hail of bullets from magazine rifles, machine guns, pom-poms and light, quick-firing

shrapnel guns. This will, I believe, require as much or more dash and nerve in cavalry leaders than the old shock tactics.

“Small horses have a smaller frame to fill, and so do better than big horses on service forage. Scouts to feel the way for mounted troops, and very highly trained officers to control these scouts, will be absolutely necessary.”

Here are three typical answers, none of which lays particular stress on the scouting education on which the rest of my correspondents insist. I take it that it is of such obvious necessity that there is no need to labour the point.

One of the replies I have received contains a most comprehensive scheme of regimental reform. I know the author to be as keen a cavalry soldier as there is in the Army, and I am also aware that the scheme is one that has been approved by many other officers. I give it in its entirety, and I feel that, in recommending my reader to pay careful attention to it, I am not only doing justice to the author, but am putting forward a scheme which has the advantage of being eminently practical. The following is his idea :

RECRUITS FOR CAVALRY.—Assuming that cavalry is to consist of the most intelligent and active body of officers and men I would suggest that both start with a certain amount of liking and fitness for cavalry and so propose—

OFFICERS AND MEN.—That every officer and man serve his first year in infantry. Those only who show an inclination and are smart, active men should be allowed to volunteer for cavalry.

MEN.—In the case of the men, they must be of good character, first-class shots, active, not over eleven stone stripped, and enlisted for seven years with the colours (the present system of three years will break down under the demands of India and South Africa).

PRIVILEGES.—That on joining cavalry they be allowed to wear plain clothes when off duty and that no passes be required for them.

CAVALRY ATTACHED TO INFANTRY.—To remove the natural dislike of infantry C. O.s of losing their best officers and men—I would permanently attach one cavalry regiment to four infantry regiments who would supply it with both officers and men, thus having an interest in it. For instance, the Scots Greys would be supplied with officers and men by the Cameronians, Black Watch, Highland Light Infantry, and Seaforths, and so on throughout the service.

ADVANTAGES.—I. The men would join on one date per year, say November 1. So that they will have finished their recruits' drill, musketry and physical training together. II. The man who increases his weight over 11 stone 7 lbs. could be returned to the infantry without a moment's delay.

DISCHARGE BY COMMANDING OFFICER.—I would give to all commanding officers the power to discharge at once bad or useless men, such as is the case in the Life Guards.

BERTILLON SYSTEM.—I would introduce the Bertillon system in recruiting, thus doing away at once with fraudulent enlistments and bad characters, and saving the country an enormous amount of money every year.

REGIMENTAL STAFF.—Should be filled by men who are of good character and who have re-engaged.

OFFICERS' SERVANTS, PROVOSTS, &c.—The country never intended to enlist a man to become a servant at one year's service.

THE SQUADRON.—Some idea should be given as to the future functions of cavalry. As we are now situated, all our training is based on the idea of meeting like trained cavalry, whereas all our wars compel us to learn afresh and are most disheartening to all concerned, as no one can do himself justice and the men don't know what to believe. Close drill has come in again, yet if we go on active service it will not be wanted. Men and horses are gregarious animals, and it is a harder task to teach them open order than close order.

TROOP DRILL.—The increase and diminishing of front and formations to flanks should be abolished with their complicated drill which no one ever knows, and the simple idea of always keeping in their own section and always inclining to the left could be taught in half an

hour to any recruit—right and left form bringing them into time to a flank.

SQUADRON.—It is impossible to really look after or teach more than 100 men, and no squadron should be more than that number on parade. Four troops of twenty front each with five men leading the five pack horses forming the nominal rear rank, and regiments should be increased to six squadrons, so that there would be in the six squadrons in the ranks 480 *bona fide* good men with 120 pack horses a little way behind.

SQUADRON SYSTEM.—It is acknowledged on all hands that in peace and war the gunners are the most efficient in every way. I should like to see the Battery System introduced at once. Make every squadron a self-supporting unit: the squadron system now in vogue is useless. Squadron leaders would get their recruits and their remounts on November 1, and would be absolutely responsible for everything to do with the efficiency of their squadron to have it ready by May 1.

THE COMMANDING OFFICER.—He would be ready to advise, and would give certain lines that he wished to see carried out, but the means to the end would be the squadron leader, and he would stand or fall by the results; if his squadron was not efficient in every respect, he would lose both it and the chance of commanding the regiment.

VOTING FOR C.O.—I would suggest that regimental officers be given 75 per cent. secret ballot for their C.O.

from amongst the squadron leaders; self-preservation would prevent their choosing a "rotter," and they have more chance of knowing a good man than the Committee of Selections. Half the C.O.'s who are selected have never commanded a squadron, and have been on staff billets, thus knowing nothing, and are the ruin of regiments. Napoleon said, "There were no bad regiments, but there *are* bad colonels." A colonel thus chosen would be a man whose advice was worth having, and which would be sought for, because he had been through the mill, and done well what you were trying to do yourselves.

MUSKETRY.—The allowance of 200 rounds per man per year is ridiculous, and should be raised to 1000 rounds, to be used as the squadron leader liked. After completing the annual course, he could be fairly asked to show results.

BUTT REGISTERS.—Butt registers should be at once introduced, and all misses shown on them, which would put an end to half the swindling that now goes on in creating the Figure of Merit.

ARMAMENT—RAPIER.—I should like a long, strong rapier introduced—the tendency of all men is to strike, not point, but perhaps if they were taught from the first to point and never to strike, they might do a little damage in action—they can do none now.

RIFLE.—A light, accurate carbine, firing to 2000 yards, with Mauser breech and clip, is what is wanted. The present rifle is too heavy for mounted work with the

recruits we have, and the magazine is useless, as the spring gets weak.

While engaged in collating the answers to this question, I have received replies to the series from a cavalry officer, whose reputation as a successful leader is such that his opinions merit full quotation. He writes :

“The functions of cavalry have been proved by the recent war to be considerably enlarged. The possession of the rifle by the mounted man, by which he adds to the great advantage he always possessed (*i.e.*, mobility) a further great power, making him completely independent, opens up for cavalry great fields of enterprise. Cavalry can now be used for great strategical movements round an enemy's rear or against his flanks, with far greater chances both of success (owing to the power of the rifle and the great difficulty which the enemy will now always find in discovering the strength and composition of the force) and also of safety, than they could formerly.

“Cavalry in future, besides in great strategical enterprises, must find their *true* use in gaining information, in screening the movements of the main body and its intentions from the prying eyes of the enemy, and in protecting all bodies of troops from surprise.

“That cavalry on the battlefield can *not* be used to ‘ride over masses of infantry’ is no new deduction of the war in South Africa. But it has again been brought to our notice by the recent war and possibly accentuated.

“ Ever since 1866 this fact has been more or less apparent. The literature of every army directly it has come *freshly* out of a campaign shows how strongly and clearly this fact has impressed itself on every thoughtful student. But even a year of peace has been sufficient to let theory again take the leading place and to allow the cavalry to rebel against any idea of the diminution of their power to charge. Why cavalry should be so prejudiced as a body, why so adverse to all advance or change in their tactics when the other arms eagerly embrace any improvement, is more than I can say. But it is self-evident . . .

“ That cavalry can most effectively charge I am the last to gainsay. The Boers gave the best proof to the contrary. But it is only on occasion. The principles governing the success of shock tactics are *not new*, but are generally overlooked by cavalry leaders, certainly in training cavalry and in writing of or discussing its tactics. Cavalry leaders are fond of asserting that it is necessary to teach cavalry that they can ride over every one under all circumstances in order to induce them to charge. To my mind, this almost amounts to an insult to our courage. Our cavalry can charge with success when it can surprise its enemy, when it finds its enemy beaten or demoralised, and when it greatly outnumbered its enemy, as in General French’s charge in the relief of Kimberley, when he, with three brigades (about 2700 men), supported besides by Mounted Infantry and guns, charged some 300 Boers.

“I think that the above deals with what changes in tradition should take place in our cavalry. Teach them the *truth*—a sound knowledge of what war really is, and *not* teach them the courage of ignorance and boastfulness.

“The changes in drill (for shock-action) that are necessary are (beyond that which is required for instilling a *strict* discipline) that drill should be confined to the simplest movements and to those only that are required in war, *i.e.*, the ability of squadrons to move fast and *steadily* without unduly getting their horses out of hand, and to form line and charge in any direction.

“The drill of larger bodies, such as brigades and divisions, should be considerably more loose and flexible, leaving the conforming to general rules more to regimental commanders and squadron leaders, as must be done in war. We should not attempt to move the whole body about as one clumsy whole by the word of command of one man. All the present complicated manœuvres of a brigade, ‘peacocking’ about in the open, ‘troops half-right’ here, ‘heads of squadrons half-left’ there, are absolutely *absurd* and unpractical, and could *never* be done in actual warfare.

“As for armament—the sword and the rifle. The lance must go for ever. In shock-action the horse is the cavalry soldier’s principal weapon; what he carries in his hand is not material. What tells in shock-action is the determination of the cavalry to ride down and into the enemy, and it is the knowledge of this, which

his enemy feels, that gives such a moral power to a cavalry charge. A lance may possibly be a more effective weapon than a sword for a charge (though the sword in the hands of men who can use it is very effective; see examples of charges by our Indian cavalry), but it is such an encumbrance to a man at all other times that its enormous disadvantage quite outweighs any advantage it may possess."

Taking these four replies which I have quoted in conjunction with the others which I have most carefully read and collated, it is pleasant to be able to record that on this vexed question cavalry soldiers who have proved their theories on the battlefield are in agreement on main points. I think the following, written after much careful consideration, translates briefly the opinions of the vast majority of those who have replied to the question :

The war has enlarged, not superseded, many of the functions of cavalry. The shock-tactics tradition should be abandoned. Scouting should be the chief object of the training of cavalry. The use of the rifle should be most assiduously taught. The lance should give place to a strong pointing sword. Drill should be as simple as possible compatible with discipline. Training for shock-action

should have a place, but should not be the primary object of a cavalry education.

For the next question which I have propounded on this subject I think I may fairly claim that it is not one that can be adequately answered by the cavalry officers only. I have therefore addressed it to soldiers of other arms who have held independent command in South Africa. Owing to the open formation recommended by so many officers, it is clear that the question of manœuvring area becomes of the greatest importance. The conformation of the greater part of Great Britain and Ireland, owing to the intersection of thick and often impassable hedges, does not offer the ideal manœuvring ground for cavalry. I therefore addressed the following question :

2. Is there, in your opinion, any place within the limits of the British Isles where cavalry can be efficiently trained and, if so, would you name the places ?

The replies received to this question all more or less contain the complaint that while there are a few places in the British Isles where cavalry could be taught their fighting formation, there are a great many cavalry stations which are not and never can be made suitable. These, it is urged, should be abolished. A distin-

guished cavalry officer of high rank answers my question with a terse and emphatic "no." Others advocate that all cavalry stations should be selected most carefully with a view to giving every opportunity for field training. Another experienced cavalry officer writes as follows :

"Salisbury Plain when first purchased by Government was an ideal training ground for cavalry, in fact, as good as can be found in South Africa. . . . It has now been ruined by rifle ranges, huts, barracks, &c., and I believe is no better than Aldershot. I should like regiments to spend their winter in their old quarters where the officers can be cheaply educated in riding to hounds and thus gain an eye for a country, whilst the men are taught riding, to be masters of their weapons, scouting in enclosed country, outposts, &c. When, however, the month of May comes round they should march to a similar place to what Salisbury Plain was for regimental training under the supervision of their Brigadier. This work should last two months or more, and should be followed by Brigade drills for seven days only to enable the Inspector-General of Cavalry to find out whether the Brigadier knows how to handle a brigade. Then should follow one week of Divisional drill and of Brigade *versus* Brigade work. Finally, about four days at most, manœuvres of all arms on service conditions devoid of all comforts and luxuries. Much more could be learnt in this short space of time under

these conditions than in ten days or more of semi-comfort."

In this connection it must be admitted that the Army manœuvres last year came nearer the ideal advocated by all progressive officers than anything we have yet had. Some very fine performances were accomplished by the 3rd Cavalry Brigade under Brigadier-General Rimington in Ireland last August. Manœuvres were carried out by this force under conditions which were practically those of active warfare. Judging from what I have heard and read of these manœuvres they must have offered splendid lessons to officers and men. Here are some facts worthy of notice. "A" Squadron of the 21st Lancers marched 225 miles in $67\frac{1}{4}$ hours, losing two horses. "Z" Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery marched 180 miles in $48\frac{1}{2}$ hours, losing seven horses. "B" Squadron of the 6th Dragoons did 231 miles in $59\frac{1}{4}$ hours with a recorded casualty in horses of two. These examples show what can be done to render cavalry field training what it should be.

The answers to my question are not difficult to collate. I should say that the following would be a fair interpretation :

There are few places in the British Isles where cavalry can be efficiently trained and some cavalry stations at present in use are

absolutely worthless and should be abolished.
Places suggested as good training grounds
are Exmoor, a tract of land near Welshpool,
Aldershot, Berkshire Downs and some land
near Shorncliffe.

It is very clear that if we are to have in our cavalry an arm which shall really and efficiently perform the function of acting as the eyes of an army a higher degree of intelligence is required. When it is remembered that sometimes the safety of a whole force may depend on the intelligent use of his faculties by one man, the need for the best material is obvious. The limitation due to the need is further increased by questions of weight. The horse has to carry everything, intelligence and all, so the cry is for light men first and intelligent men afterwards.

In order to find out the views of officers on this important subject, I addressed the following question :

- 3. Are you satisfied with the recruiting for the mounted branch, either in numbers or quality?*

One cavalry officer says : " Recruiting for the cavalry has been closed since Nov. 1902, but I have good reasons for thinking that plenty of recruits could be obtained at any time and that the quality would be

satisfactory." Another writes: "I should like to see the cavalry increased in number, it being an arm difficult to train it and cannot be augmented in war time without the loss of its best officers for instructional purposes. I consider that every man enlisted for this branch should do so on the condition that, if he is found unsuitable as regards weight, shape and want of nerve, &c., he be at once transferred to another arm without his sanction. At present in every regiment there are at least 33 per cent. of useless men who are not worth their keep as cavalry men."

Taking the answers as a whole, there is an evident wish on the part of cavalry officers to see the arm increased. But this, as one officer observes, "will depend on the efficiency which the cavalry can attain. The country won't spend any more money unless it is perfectly certain that it will be expended on a branch of the service that has given proofs of its capability to improve itself." Running through the replies there is also a clear indication of a certain amount of dissatisfaction with the quality of the recruit, the quantity for present needs being ample. Altogether I should say that my correspondents are fairly agreed upon the following:

Recruits sufficient but not so good in quality as could be desired.

The question which I next addressed to my correspondents is one, which is of particular interest. The

mobility of cavalry is its chief *raison d'être*, and to get as much work out of a horse as possible by putting on its back the minimum of weight is the chief aim of every good cavalry officer since the days of Xenophon. A horse has to carry certain things without which he and the rider would be useless in warfare. The idea of weight being necessary for cavalry as a charging, shock-action arm has not occurred to any of my correspondents, and we may conclude that it is as dead as the dodo. The absolute requisites which a cavalry horse has to carry are :

- 1st. The man, clothed and armed.
- 2nd. Saddle.
- 3rd. Bridle.
- 4th. Man's food and utensils, coat and blanket.
- 5th. Something with which to piquet or tie up
the horse.
- 6th. Ammunition.
- 7th. Food for horse—something to carry it.

This is the "irreducible minimum" of the burden which a cavalry horse has to carry. The great question is where and how weight can be saved without losing efficiency. I have never met a good cavalry soldier yet who had not spent some of his spare time over this problem, and when I propounded a question dealing with the subject I was overwhelmed with answers. This is what I asked :

4. *What, in your opinion, is the minimum service kit that a troop horse should carry? What is your opinion of the present system of carrying forage by the cavalry soldier? What scale should accompany the regiment?*

The whole of this question affects the most vital need of cavalry mobility, and it is pleasant to be able to record that this has been fully recognised by my correspondents, who have given the subject a most careful consideration. The opinions are really valuable, for they not only suggest theories, but they also give the results of the attempt to combine theory and practice in South Africa. The first portion of the question deals with man and beast, and, although it is well known that there has been much diversity of opinion on the subject, the practical experiences of the late war seem to have resulted in an unexpected unanimity on many details.

Coming to the man first of all, I find that the ideal weight should be 11 stone 7 lbs. When a man gets beyond that weight he should, according to some of my replies, not be allowed to remain in the cavalry. His rifle should be a combination of the ordinary infantry weapon and the carbine. His sword should be lighter than the present, but it must be strong. The bridle should be a headstall as well and should be provided with

a single bit and a single rein. The saddle should be of colonial pattern with a wider arch—a good deal lighter than the present one. The man should carry on him in his haversack one day's rations and two days' groceries, socks, towel, soap, knife, with spoon attached. He should have a light water-proof cloak—the heavy one for warmth should be carried by other means of transport. The blankets to serve as numnahs should be carried under the saddle, and a mess-tin (Australian billy) should be attached to back of it. The requisite for attaching the horse should only be a head-rope—no picketing pegs, no spare horse-shoes. Ammunition to the extent of a hundred rounds should go on the man, while fifty rounds should be carried round the horse's neck. There should be no wallets. With regard to food for the horse, this should be carried in nose-bags, filled with from 4 lb. to 6 lb. of oats, on the saddle. With regard to the scale of forage which should accompany a regiment, my correspondents consider that it would entirely depend on circumstances, and no fixed rule could be properly made. Hay-nets are strongly condemned.

To sum up, I should say that :

The minimum a horse should carry should be as described above. Scale of forage to accompany regiment depends entirely on circumstances.

I hope I have made plain to the lay reader that many of these "regimental technicalities" are mere matters of common sense, and are in no way subjects difficult to comprehend. The desire of the cavalry soldier is to reduce the weight which his beast has to carry in order that it may carry further and do more useful work than a mere packhorse. Indeed, the horse is everything to a cavalryman. However good a man you may put on it, the value of the combination is, after all, almost entirely limited by the powers of the beast. I therefore included in my questions one which was intended to elicit from officers whether they were satisfied with the training of the horses. It was as follows :

5. *Do you consider the training of the troop horse is sufficient for all demands likely to be made upon the intelligence of the animal?*

The answers to this question are mostly in the negative, though there are many officers of great experience who say "Yes." I quote from a cavalry officer's answer: "I disagree absolutely with the present training of a cavalry horse, as, when a finished article, it is unable to fulfil most of the duties it is required to perform. It requires much less instruction in the riding-school and much more individual instruction out of doors. At present it is only one of a flock of sheep, taking the soldier where it likes, and not where the

soldier is directed to go. The class of horse now supplied is very unsatisfactory, being long-backed, bad-shouldered, big-headed, large-footed brutes which no man, valuing his life, would take into a hunting-field."

Another distinguished cavalry officer says: "I think the new system of training, which considerably curtails riding-school tricks, and goes in for jumping and hardiness across country, is sufficient. Horses should (and could easily) be taught to stand by themselves."

Unfortunately the training of troop horses varies so much in various stations that the "new system," here referred to, is new to a great many officers. The general trend of the opinions expressed is this:

The training of the troop horse has been up to the present on wrong lines. There should be less riding school and more out of doors training. The ideal of a troop horse is a polo pony on a bigger scale.

The last two questions which I addressed on the subject of cavalry were:

6. *Assuming that cavalry are to approximate in future more nearly to Mounted Infantry would you recommend any changes in equipment, and if so, what changes?*

7. *Assuming that cavalry are to continue on the old basis have you any change to suggest in regard to weight, size, and shape of the sword, lance, and carbine, with necessary attachments?*

I have thought it best to deal with these questions together as being a simpler method of contrasting the ideas and plans of what might be called the "new" and the "old" schools. Among the advantages of the modern rifle is the great increase in the number of bullets it can fire at long distances. A man armed with it, and knowing how to use it, has such enormous power that no cavalry officer who has been through the late campaign in South Africa even hints at a reversion to the old style when the carbine was a complementary arm to the sword or lance. To-day they are of opinion that the sword or lance should be complementary to the rifle. This admission, which is practically universal, is a vast advance in ideas. The old school thought (I cannot write "thinks" because I imagine that there are very few of the old school left) that the ideal of a cavalry soldier should be a good rider, an expert swordsman or lancer, dashing and fearless, trained to form part of a heavy mass which, riding at a tremendous pace, should meet and overthrow by weight and pace any body of men opposed to them. He was also trained to scout, but scouting was rather a subsidiary part of his instruc-

tions. To the ordinary man in the street a cavalry regiment suggests to his mind's eye a picture of five or six hundred horsemen riding curvetting steeds with jingling bits and spurs polished as bright as a mirror, clothed in bright uniform, pennants on their lances, helmets plumed and gay; in fine, a mass of colour and noise, a dream of fine horsemen whose duty it is to ride down and cut up anything before it, whether battery, regiment, or battalion. That is the popular idea, but this is what good cavalry officers want to get. Horses strong and sturdy, carrying not a bit of metal to glitter and betray their presence, plain saddles, men clad in a neutral-coloured uniform with every button dulled, and carrying nothing that can shine but the bare blade of their leather-sheathed sword, expert riflemen, quick to see advantages of country, keen eyed, alert to notice the smallest movement in the landscape before them, not too big, fine horsemen and finer horse-masters, trained to manœuvre in open formation, but also able, if need be, to close and charge like the men of old.

In these two pictures are presented the two ideals. One is as dead as the dodo and the other is the ideal towards which we should aim. "Shock-tactics," *i.e.*, the training of cavalry to ride in masses and by sheer weight and pace to cut their way through the enemy, should not be, in the opinion of the experienced cavalry officer of to-day, the essential of good cavalry training. But they say that, as long as there is a possibility of cavalry being ever required to win a battle or protect a retreat by

being thrown in heavy masses against the enemy, modern training should include shock-tactic training, only they ask that this form of instruction should take a subsidiary and not the principal part in the soldier's education as heretofore.

In asking what changes in equipment should be adopted "assuming that cavalry are to approximate in future more nearly to Mounted Infantry," I have unwittingly trodden on not a few good cavalrymen's toes. One writes: "There can be no question of cavalry approximating to Mounted Infantry. Mounted Infantry are infantry soldiers on horses. There can be no question of their ever becoming cavalrymen, or cavalrymen "approximating" in any way to foot soldiers on horseback." With all deference to this distinguished soldier, I must still persist in thinking the form of the question is calculated to elicit the opinions and wishes of cavalry officers with regard to their equipment supposing their arm will be called to do duties which were performed by many mounted infantrymen in the late war. Another officer says: "I don't assume this and therefore won't discuss it." One of the replies, however, which the question provoked, contains the kernel of the whole matter and I quote it in full. "I consider the ideal cavalry soldier should be the 'handy man' of the army, capable of turning his hand to anything as occasion offers. When required to be Mounted Infantry he should prove himself superior to any Mounted Infantry yet trained and yet be equal to any cavalry in

the world opposed to them." Here seems to me to be the whole question in a nutshell. And it is borne out by another remark of a distinguished cavalry officer: "All this present craze for Mounted Infantry is the result of indifferent cavalry. If we were trained, as we ought to be trained, the duties of Mounted Infantry would merely be those of infantry on horseback." In these two answers I think the whole duty of a cavalryman is defined.

On the assumption, with which nearly every one of my correspondents agrees, that the rifle must receive a great amount of serious attention from the cavalryman of the future, the question of how it is to be carried becomes one of great moment. In South Africa there were two methods adopted. One was to carry it slung over the shoulder, and the other was to allow the butt to rest in a leather bucket, generally attached to the off-side of the saddle, while a sling from the upper portion of the weapon allowed the rider to keep it steady by passing his arm through it. But the cavalry of the future, according to my correspondents, while giving the rifle a very prominent place, still insists on the need of the sword. A man cannot use the latter with a rifle slung on his back or attached to his sword-arm. The consensus of opinion is in favour of carrying it in a bucket attached to the saddle on the near side. There are difficulties even in this, but I think we may rest certain that they will be overcome. The recognition of the necessity for a long range carbine or a rifle, and for

careful instruction in its uses, is the great step in advance.

The question of the sword is one that has been unanimously answered by my correspondents. They want a rapier, a thrusting weapon strong enough to ward off blows. I believe that the subject has already had the attention of the authorities, and it is probable that a new issue will be made. It is to be hoped that leather scabbards will accompany the new weapon. The change will cost about £40,000, and if the country haggles over this it does not deserve to have an army at all. The public must remember that, as I said in another part of the book, this is a matter of life and death to the soldier, and they will have to ask themselves whether they intend to send men into action with a weapon declared necessary by experts, or whether they will allow them to go on with the present cumbersome sword which has been universally condemned.

As regards the latter question, it is really answered already. *Nobody*, among my correspondents, will have anything to do with the old methods of training if they are to consist in giving chief place to the "knee-to-knee" "shock-tactics" formation. They urge that it should form part, but only part, of the training, and for this they are convinced that the rapier is the weapon. There is hardly any correspondent in favour of the lance.

To sum up, then, the answers to both these questions :

The cavalry soldier should carry a long-range carbine or a rifle attached to the near side and not on his person. A rapier, strong enough to ward off blows, should take the place of the present sword, and the lance should be abolished.

V. MOUNTED INFANTRY

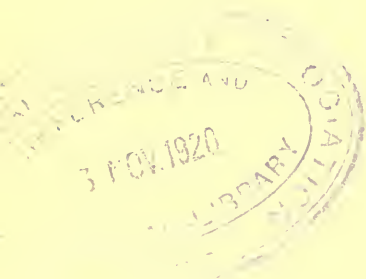
*I wish myself could talk to myself as I left 'im a year ago,
I could tell 'im a lot that would save 'im a lot on the things
that 'e ought to know!*

*When I think o' that ignorant barrack-bird it almost makes
me cry.*

*I used to belong to an Army once
(Gawd! what a rum little Army once)
Red little, dead little Army once!*

But now I am M.I.

RUDYARD KIPLING.



THE war in South Africa, whatever defects it may have brought out in our Army, produced at least one admirable thing—the mounted infantryman of to-day. He is nothing like the Mounted Infantry of the old text books. There is no point of resemblance between the men whom we hastily put on to horses at Orange River and the finished product as he appeared when peace was proclaimed. He entered the conflict a mere infantry soldier “stuck on a horse,” he came out of it a cavalryman of a high order, except that he did not know how to use a sword or how to charge knee-to-knee—two duties, which from the peculiar nature of the war, the regular cavalry were not called upon to perform. This extraordinary progress was mainly due to two facts: that the training was a war-training and therefore quick in its results, and that the material was excellent. Those who served in the ranks of this force suddenly found that, when peace had come, they appeared to be a superfluity in their perfected state. They had reached easily, and passed far beyond, the limits of regular Mounted Infantry, and to-day they are faced with the question, “What is to become of us?”

This question I propose to answer in this chapter, with the help of my many correspondents. It may be at once admitted that the subject is the most difficult of all to treat, because there are not a few soldiers, especially in the cavalry, who have grave doubt whether the new style of Mounted Infantry, the finished product of the war, has any right to exist at all under the title of “Mounted

Infantry." Their contention is worthy of full consideration. What they say, in effect, is that the Mounted Infantry arm has usurped, in many respects, the duties of cavalry. Some are very frank about it, and say that this is due to the indifferent state of the cavalry. "Mounted Infantry," they say, "were originally intended to be exactly what their title defines them to be—infantry soldiers mounted for the sake of mobility. In the warfare of the future, where the line of battle will be of enormous length, the need for increased mobility will become still greater, and there will be a much greater necessity for moving infantry about more rapidly than they can go on foot. A mounted infantryman is an infantry soldier on a horse, a bicycle, or waggon, or motor-car. He 'mounts' each of these means of transport. But the moment he is put on a horse he aspires to do the duties of a cavalry soldier. This destroys his value as an infantryman and does not make him a good cavalry man."

I give a prominent place to the views of the cavalry on the subject, because it seems to me but right that the regular mounted arm should have a voice in the matter. It is perfectly true that the original idea of Mounted Infantry was the rapid transport of the foot soldier. Infantry is the arm that deals the knock-down blow in warfare, and it is quite conceivable that a general is sometimes handicapped, when he wishes to strike hard and rapidly, by the slow progress of his foot-soldiers. The mounted infantryman is the outcome of this need,

but the mounted infantryman, who stood in the Church Square, Pretoria, when the peace thanksgiving service was held, was not at all the type devised and imagined of old. He could move rapidly, the basis of his military training was infantry, and he knew how to use his rifle; but he also was a good scout, a very fair horseman, and galloped at kopjes with as much dash as any cavalry soldier. In fact, we must admit that he was the outcome of a war fought against a nation of mounted riflemen.

But if he has gone beyond what was contemplated in the original plan of Mounted Infantry, there appears to be no good reason why he should be sent back to his original duties and revert to the text-book type. For good or for bad he has come to stay, this new strange thing that we call a mounted infantryman. He is something altogether different. He is really a cavalry soldier, untrained in shock-tactics and instructed to trust to his rifle as his only weapon. At first blush, it does seem that he overlaps in so many things the cavalryman that there can hardly be place for both of them. But I think that it will be seen later on that the new mounted infantryman has a distinct and important place in our Army organisation.

The question I set to elicit the views of officers on this subject was this :

1. *State briefly your views on the functions of Mounted Infantry as learnt from the war. Are you in favour of a*

permanent force of Mounted Infantry? It has been suggested that every infantry soldier in the British Army should be taught to ride precisely as he is taught to swim. Are you in favour of this? If not, what proportion per battalion would you suggest should receive such instruction?

There is apparent in all the replies I have received—and they are very numerous—a tacit admission that the Mounted Infantry has developed into a new force. It will have to play two parts, as an adjunct to cavalry and as an instructing medium to the infantry. There is no question of his reverting to the infantryman on a horse, but there is, of course, a recognition of the fact that the mobility of infantry will be a pressing need in the future. A question which demanded a statement of views on the function of Mounted infantry, as learnt from the war, gives an opportunity (as indeed it was intended to give) to everybody of putting forward his opinion on the all-absorbing subject. I will give the views of a cavalry officer of high rank first: “Well trained and, therefore, efficient Mounted Infantry is, in my opinion, a most useful force. Many cavalry officers of as much, or more, experience than I have do not think so. I am strongly of opinion that a battalion of good Mounted Infantry would add to the strength and utility of a cavalry brigade,

but Mounted Infantry only partially or badly trained are worse than useless and a source of actual weakness. This was, I think, proved over and again in the South African campaign.

“It is not easy to define the functions as learned from the war, as deductions so drawn might (and probably would) be very misleading ; but I would lay it down as an axiom that Mounted Infantry should always be attached to cavalry and used to escort and protect horse artillery.”

Here is another view from the pen of an officer whose experience is such that his answer merits full quotation. He writes :

“As learnt from the last war the functions of Mounted Infantry pure and simple have practically ceased to exist and those of Mounted Rifles have taken their place. The *rôle* of the latter is to be able to scout, patrol, reconnoitre, move and charge positions (rifle, not sword in hand) as well as cavalry ; to shoot, and on occasion, march and move on foot as well as the infantry soldier can do.

“Their functions, in fact, as found necessary and applied in the late war, demand the highest efficiency in horsemanship,* horsemanship, and in skill with the rifle.

“The *rôle* of Mounted Infantry as laid down in existing handbooks is that of men trained to ride merely well enough to move rapidly from point to point on horseback. It was absolutely abandoned and found too

* Horsemanship is the art of looking after a horse properly.

limited and generally impracticable for the size of our mounted forces in the field. This is a most significant fact. For if, contending with the Boers, whose tactics were chiefly defensive, it was found impossible to confine the Mounted Infantry to their original *rôle*, how much more impossible would it be found in a European war to abstain from utilising in the "reconnoitring area" the number of men and horses, as represented by Mounted Infantry, moving in accordance with their original and limited *rôle*.

"It may be pertinently asked then, since scouting, horsemastership, horsemanship, and the use of the rifle are functions of cavalry, if it is intended to assign, in warfare, precisely similar duties to both cavalry and Mounted Rifles? And it may reasonably be pointed out that I have suggested that cavalry should be made into Mounted Rifles, merely adding to their present establishments. My reply to this is that I have not intended to do so. As far as scouting, horsemanship &c., are concerned, the same efficiency should certainly be reached by Mounted Rifles as by cavalry, all their qualifications being utilised in the field by both arms. But there the similarity ends. To commence with, the animal on which the Mounted Rifles would be mounted in war time (as in peace) would be inferior and smaller than that provided for the cavalry.

"The two classes, "cavalry horse" and "cob," were distinctly and rigidly observed in the South African campaign as soon as the Remount Department had

become properly organised, thereby practising economy and getting full value out of material.

.. "If increased numbers of mounted men are to be put into the field as pure cavalry, the enormous expense and difficulty in procuring the "cavalry horse" in sufficient numbers would result in the standard of horseflesh being lowered, "cavalry horse" and "cob" being issued, with the result that cavalry regiments would be called upon to perform such duties as wide screening movements, lengthy and fast reconnaissances, which would be beyond the capabilities of a large percentage of the animals in the ranks.

"In the field the main difference between cavalry and Mounted Rifles is that the mounted *rôle* of the latter is not so extended as that of cavalry, and that they work on inner or shorter lines than cavalry. That is to say, when employed with the cavalry screen of an army, if called upon to work in the "scouting line," they would be detailed for the centre and not sent off to the flanks on long distances, beyond the capabilities of their cobs. Or they would form the supports and reserves, and would be especially useful in covering the rear of a cavalry retirement, the front *prior to*, and the flanks *during*, a cavalry charge.

"The brunt of a cavalry engagement exclusive of charge or pursuit should be borne by Mounted Rifles. The cavalry then could be kept concentrated for the charge when the proper moment presented itself, fresh for the pursuit which they could take up with all the more confi-

dence, feeling that their rear was protected by Mounted Riflemen, as highly trained in the art of horsemanship as themselves, and to be depended on to economise their horseflesh to the last ounce."

Another officer who held a separate command in the war and had under him some very fine Mounted Infantry regiments, says: "The functions of Mounted Infantry are, to my mind, the same as those of any mounted troops, namely, to use the rifle and the horse, in combination, to the best advantage. I dislike the term Mounted Infantry, and would prefer Mounted Riflemen."

Lieut.-Colonel Godley, Commandant of Mounted Infantry at Aldershot, thus defines the use of Mounted Infantry under modern conditions in his evidence before the recent War Commission :

"Their rôle," he says, "should be to support and form points of *appui* for the cavalry, or, in the absence of cavalry, to take its place in wide-reaching enveloping movements against the enemy's flanks and lines of communication, destruction of his railways, magazines, telegraphs, &c., to follow up vigorously any advantage gained by a rapid onslaught of the cavalry, to make good points of vantage and to form rallying points in case of reserve. To move rapidly, to seize defiles, hold bridges and forestall the enemy in commanding positions in front of the slower moving infantry.

"In a rear-guard action they should be, and proved to be in the war, specially useful, using their fire-

power and mobility to delay the enemy till the last moment.

“They can be most usefully employed as escorts to artillery.

“They should be trained, as far as possible, in the cavalry duties of scouting, patrolling, and reconnaissance, in order that they may take the place of cavalry when the latter are not available, as was the case in the war.”

Another writes: “No one suggests that the limited scope of Mounted Infantry in the old text-books should be adhered to now. I am thankful to say that the horrible idea of their being trained only sufficiently to be able to ride well enough to get from place to place is quite exploded too.”

Another officer, whose present appointment as well as his past experience makes his opinion of value, says:

“Mounted infantry are useful as—

“(1) Advance, flank, rear-guards.

“(2) A central force, with infantry, which can be quickly sent (a) to a threatened point, or (b) to push home an attack.

“(3) Guards to convoys.

“(4) Support to cavalry or artillery.

“They should never be used to scout for large bodies of troops, as no time is available to instruct them in this important and difficult duty. The utmost they can do is to scout well enough to safeguard themselves.”

It will be seen from these replies that there is practically a suggestion of a new arm to do various

duties which have been found to be useful, if not essential, to an army. There is one thing which must not be forgotten, and that is that whatever the Mounted Infantry becomes, whether an improvement on the textbook Mounted Infantry or a Mounted Rifleman, we have the most magnificent material in the world in the shape of those men and officers who served in the Mounted Infantry during the war. That there were indifferent Mounted Infantry corps it cannot be denied, but it is equally true that some of the battalions were almost perfect. None of the officers or men who served in these should be lost sight of, and in any organisation of the future they should be employed.

It is essential that the functions of the Mounted Infantry should be properly defined before coming to the next portion of the question as to the merits or demerits of a permanent force of that kind. If we are to get a clear conception of its future *rôle* we must brush on one side all prejudice and jealousy. The cavalry officer does not altogether like the idea of the establishment of a mounted force which in his eye will be neither "fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring." You cannot, indeed, expect him to be cordial on the subject until he knows exactly the limit of the mounted instruction which the Mounted Infantry are going to receive. There must be no overlapping. The first officer I quoted in this connection, although a cavalry officer, acknowledges that "a battalion of good Mounted Infantry would add to the

strength and utility of a cavalry brigade." An artillery officer, who can be supposed to be perfectly unprejudiced in the matter, says: "The Mounted Infantry in the South African war acted as cavalry throughout the war." Another officer, who also is no partisan, writes: "In one sense I think that the South African war is not a good example. In that war it may be said that the enemy were composed entirely of Mounted Infantry. Consequently we were to a large extent obliged to follow suit and to make Mounted Infantry our principal arm. Towards the end of the war, cavalry and even artillery were turned into Mounted Infantry. We are very unlikely to fight again in that sort of country against a similar enemy, and I should not propose to base organisation on our South African experiences alone."

A warm partisan of Mounted Infantry makes the following pertinent remark: "The Boers being practically a nation of Mounted Infantry were able to force us to adopt their methods before we could get the better of them. Supposing we had a European war and our Army had been trained to Mounted Infantry work, we should see a repetition of history. The enemy would have to adopt our tactics or we should be superior to them as the Boer was to us in the proportion of ten to one."

A little book which Colonel Pilcher has lately published, called "Some Lessons from the Boer War," contains a very good answer to the first portion of

my question. On page 51 he writes: "At the commencement of the late war, like most Mounted Infantry officers, I was inclined to look on the horse of the Mounted Infantryman as simply a means of transferring him more quickly to some point where his action as an infantryman might be more effective, and I considered that in this the mounted infantryman naturally differed from the cavalryman who, we were taught to believe, would seldom fight unmounted. The experiences of this war have altered my ideas. During the war, cavalry made but few charges, whereas they ought on foot throughout the campaign. During the later stages, the Mounted Infantry more often galloped positions than dismounted and advanced against them as infantrymen. The methods used by cavalry and Mounted Infantry were, therefore, similar, except in the case of some three or four cavalry charges, and the carbine and rifle were the only weapons really used."

He goes on to warn us against taking our South African experiences as the main basis of future training.

I have, I think, fairly exhausted the subject of the functions of Mounted Infantry as defined by my correspondents, but before coming to the proposal of a permanent Mounted Infantry establishment it is clearly necessary that there must be some sort of agreement as to its actual functions. This agreement is somewhat difficult to find. No one for a moment

recommends a reversion to the old idea, and everybody (although the idea finds expression in different ways) is convinced of the value of the asset we acquired by our Mounted Infantry training in the Boer war. These admissions at least form a definite conclusion to which we have succeeded in arriving. But going beyond this there is at once a diversity of opinion. The cavalry commander, who acknowledges in the most handsome manner the good work done by the Mounted Infantry, naturally would like to see them put on a sound permanent basis and *attached to the cavalry*. The gunner would be delighted to have them as permanent escort to his guns, and if this were conceded, is all in favour of the permanent establishment. The Divisional Commander says that they should be permanently kept and used as divisional and corps mounted troops. It is only the infantry officer who looks with a dubious eye on any scheme which is going to take good officers and men from *his* regiment and will not give his approval to a permanent Mounted Infantry until he knows exactly how far it is going to affect the force under his command.

The majority of my correspondents, therefore, are in favour of the establishment of a permanent Mounted Infantry. Their motives may be doubtful, but their desire is unmistakable. If the commanding officer of an infantry regiment is not so decided, his motive appears to me to be in conformity with his duty to the Army, which is to secure for the country the most efficient regiment possible. This motive, I think, deserves every

respect, and in all schemes for the establishment of a permanent Mounted Infantry it should be borne in mind. But as my replies do not lead to a very decisive conclusion as to the functions of Mounted Infantry, it is somewhat difficult to find a point of agreement on which to base the permanent superstructure. Yet this is not quite an impossible task. There is one subject on which all soldiers, to whatever arm they belong, are in entire agreement, and that is (to paraphrase a popular saying) the necessity for "the greatest mobility of the greatest numbers." But as untrained men are not merely useless but a positive danger, efficiency cannot be sacrificed to mobility. This is the tenor of all my replies, as well as the stress laid on one of our big assets of the South African war—the Mounted Infantry training.

With the need of a permanent Mounted Infantry, the desire for the greatest possibly mobility, compatible with efficiency, and the wish to make use of our war experiences with Mounted Infantry, granted, we get a considerable step further towards a clear definition of what the permanent establishment should be. There are many arguments against the establishment of a new arm. In this respect it is impossible to mistake the trend of my replies, but it appears to be admitted that some sort of a permanent force of Mounted Infantry is necessary. An officer strikes the right note when he makes the following proposition: "We must have a permanent Mounted Infantry force, if only for instructional purposes. It will become, without doubt, a much more efficient arm

than the ordinary Mounted Infantry, but if it keeps within the strict limits of its avowed purpose, there is no reason whatever why it should encroach in any way upon the cavalry."

This, I think, meets all the difficulties of the case, and is supported by a majority of my correspondents. And we, therefore, arrive at some sort of finality in the establishment of a force of permanent Mounted Infantry to instruct the ordinary foot soldier.

The next portion of my question is intimately connected with this conclusion. Should this permanent instructional force try to teach the whole Army the elements of Mounted Infantry work, or should it instruct thoroughly only a portion? The answers are unmistakably in favour of the latter course. It is pointed out that quality, not mere quantity, is what should be attempted, and though, if we could afford to make every infantry soldier a skilled mounted infantryman, we should have an almost irresistible Army, it is admitted that the expense would be too enormous even to contemplate. It is impossible, in the opinion of a vast majority of my correspondents, to teach every infantry soldier to ride as he is now taught to swim. There are some men who, by reasons of weight or shape, would never be fit for mounted work. "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing," says an officer, "and if we revert to the idea of training a soldier only sufficiently to make him able to sit on his horse, we do not make a Mounted Infantryman of him, and he becomes a danger instead of a help." It is evident that the high

state of perfection attained by the first eight Mounted Infantry battalions in South Africa is the ideal for the future, and to attain this a higher degree of efficiency is required than could be possibly acquired by passing the whole of our infantry soldiers through a "sketchy" course of Mounted Infantry instruction.

The next question asks, since such is the case, what would be the proper proportion of an infantry battalion to go through the training?

There are some officers—and their opinions derive value from their experience—who advocate that each regiment of infantry should be assigned a certain number of horses in order that a proportion of the men should receive in the regiment itself a course of mounted infantry instruction. The great majority of my correspondents, however, are against this, and favour a proportion of about one-eighth of the whole regiment being trained as *efficient* Mounted Infantrymen.

But here occurs a great difficulty which has to be faced. Just as a good infantry colonel does not like to see his best officers go into the Staff College, so he dislikes the idea of handing over his best men to the Mounted Infantry. It is impossible to blame him, and indeed he would not be doing his duty to his regiment if he did not try to keep his best men and officers in the regiment. And yet it is highly essential that the Mounted Infantry portion of a regiment should consist of really good officers and men. Indeed, to make the arm worthy of its duties, they should be the pick of the

regiment. How are we going to reconcile the attitude of the commanding officer with the needs of the Mounted Infantry? Something must be devised whereby a regiment does not lose touch of its Mountry Infantry. In making up battalions of Mounted Infantry some regard must be had for the *esprit de corps* of the regiment providing it, or a colonel must be impressed with the fact that the reputation of his Mounted Infantry company should be as dear to the regiment as any other portion of it.

There have been several suggested schemes for the organisation of the proposed permanent Mounted Infantry. It is curious to remark in these schemes how sensitive the soldier is with regard to questions of expenditure. The public are rather inclined to think that the Army is a spending department, and that like a prodigal, "the more it gets the more it wants." All the schemes suggested which depend on any large increase of expenditure are self-condemned, according to my correspondents, who declare that the nation will not stand expense. A proposal for adding a ninth company to the line regiments, and making it purely a Mounted Infantry company does not seem at all a bad idea, though, of course, there are serious objections to it. But the officer who proposed it at the same time condemns it on the chief ground of its expense.

An officer, whose knowledge and experience are above question, brings many arguments forward in support of a definite scheme which I commend most heartily to my readers. It presupposes, though it does not

expressly indicate, a permanent instructional skeleton. The following is the outline of the scheme :

TRAINING IN PEACE.

One section from each infantry battalion (except Guards) quartered at home (78), say 80, will give

80 sections of Mounted Infantry		
or 20 companies	”	”
or 5 battalions	”	”

Each Mounted Infantry battalion trains for three months, and at the end of this time the sections furnished by infantry battalions, which form it, are replaced by others.

Therefore, at the end of a year, each infantry battalion has four sections trained as a Mounted Infantry company.

MOBILISATION.

On mobilisation these companies are called up, and you then have

80 companies of Mounted Infantry		
or 20 battalions	”	”

of which eight battalions would mobilise in the 1st Army Corps area.

SUGGESTED MODE OF DISTRIBUTION.

- 1 battalion with 1st Cavalry Brigade.
- 1 „ to replace Divisional Cavalry.
- 1½ „ for Infantry Brigades (one company to each brigade).
- ½ „ with Corps Artillery.
- 4 „ or one brigade, with Corps troops, under the command of the officer commanding Mounted Infantry in the Army Corps.

I cannot too strongly urge a consideration of this scheme. It is simple and yet seems to provide for every contingency. It is true that our Mounted Infantry will be a limited quantity, but it will be *efficient*, for the plan provides for a yearly instruction of three months. It would provide in case of need over 11,000 *trained* Mounted Infantry, not counting reservists, while only 3000 horses will be required in the training.

But the question of training is of the utmost importance, and in this respect all my correspondents urge that advantage must be taken of our South African experiences. And what, will be asked, will the instructional force consist of? There is a difficulty here. All Mounted Infantry work, I am told, should be modelled on the lines of the 1st-8th Mounted Infantry battalions which served during the war. They reached the ideal of what a mounted infantryman should be. It is clear that the officers alone of the supposed instruc-

tional force would not be sufficient to train the new arrivals in the right way, and it has been proposed that a *cadre* of men should be permanently attached to the Mounted Infantry establishments. If this is done, some attempt should be made to get hold of as many South African Mounted Infantry veterans as possible. A small amount of these, officered by men with South African experience, will give a tone and a tradition to Mounted Infantry which will make it one of the finest arms in the British Army.

To sum up the whole of the replies to the question, I think I may write as follows :

The functions of the Mounted Infantry should be a great deal in advance of the aims of the old Mounted Infantry and yet not encroach on cavalry. A permanent force is necessary for instructional purposes. It is impossible that every infantry soldier should be taught to ride, but wherever practicable as many as possible should receive sufficient instruction to enable them to meet the needs of the original Mounted Infantry aim, i.e., quick transport. An eighth of every Infantry battalion should receive a thorough and annual training in the more extensive duties

of Mounted Infantry. On no account should we fail to make use of the experiences of our Mounted Infantry in South Africa.

The danger to which every permanent mounted force, not being cavalry, seems liable, is that of apeing the cavalry and gradually attempting to adopt its methods. The permanent force which has been recommended in the answers to the first question will be of fairly considerable strength, and unless its duties and scope are most clearly defined there is a distinct danger of its degenerating into inefficient cavalry. The subject is of such importance that I addressed the following question :

2. It has been stated that permanent Mounted Infantry would degenerate into an inefficient cavalry force. Are you of this opinion ?

Opinions are somewhat divided on this subject. One officer oracularly remarks, "History repeats itself." Another makes the very pertinent reply, "It entirely depends on the system of training laid down at the commencement, the first selection of officers, and the methods adopted of filling the ranks whether permanent Mounted Rifles (I set aside the term Mounted Infantry) were a failure or not. The fact seems to be overlooked

that there are at present in South Africa four regiments of Mounted Infantry (2nd Mounted Infantry, 4th, 5th, 6th), which are practically permanent, most of the officers and non-commissioned officers having served in them or some other Mounted Infantry regiment for the last three or four years.

“ These regiments are practically *Mounted Rifles*, and they are infinitely superior to any Mounted Infantry in the United Kingdom. Far from degenerating they have gone on improving, and I am firmly of opinion that, established, on the right lines, permanent Mounted Rifles would prove to be an unqualified success.”

I think that the majority of my answers agree in thinking that :

There is a distinct danger of permanent Mounted Infantry becoming indifferent cavalry unless the duties and scope of the permanent Mounted Infantry are rigidly defined and adhered to.

The experiences of the late war brought to the front the Mounted Infantry work. Allowing for inter-arm jealousy I think it was fairly generously allowed that their work was admirable, though of course they learnt in the very best school—war. To give the public an impartial description of their work I addressed the following question :

3. *What is your opinion of the work done by the Mounted Infantry during the war? Will you state confidentially in which points it did worst and in which points best?*

In the latter part of the question I used the term "confidentially" in order to bring out individual instances of good or bad work, and in this way increase the value of the opinion. The result of the question has been admirable, some officers giving what I should term a scientific examination of the performance of the Mounted Infantry, and the reasons which produced the good results. First of all, I would quote from a cavalry officer. From his point of view—that of a skilled mounted soldier—he naturally looks upon Mounted Infantry work from a high ideal. He writes:

"Mounted Infantry battalions in the South African campaign, like regiments of cavalry or battalions of infantry, did good, moderate, or indifferent work in exact proportion to the way in which they were officered. There was, perhaps, more difference between a good and bad Mounted Infantry battalion than between a good and bad infantry or militia battalion, for the reason that a bad, *i.e.*, untrained, Mounted Infantry, was worse than useless, for it became a source of positive danger to us and gain to the Boers, but given a well-officered and well-trained Mounted Infantry battalion, it always did good work.

“To my mind it all hinged on this. Any deduction on the value of Mounted Infantry drawn from the experience of the late war would and must prove most misleading, and would most probably land you in wrong conclusions.”

An infantry officer of high rank says: “The work done by the Mounted Infantry during the war was on the whole admirable, and I do not think sufficient credit has been done to them. Commencing with six battalions in 1899, the number was increased until at the termination of the war there were 28 battalions in the field. Of these the first eight, and what was known as Gough’s Mounted Infantry, were *corps d’élite*. They scouted well, fought brilliantly, and were good horse-masters, and the amount of *esprit de corps* which existed in each of the above-mentioned battalions was immense.” The writer goes on to point out cases where this high level was not reached, and agrees with the first officer quoted, that in all such cases it was due to lack of knowledge or energy of the officers.

I feel constrained to add to my answers the testimony of a subaltern who served with distinction. He says: “As a matter of fact, Mounted Infantry not only did the work of cavalry by day during the late campaign, but very often that of infantry by night, that is, more work than either cavalry or infantry.

“Great difficulty was often experienced with Mounted Infantry recruits, especially during rearguard actions, when a quick retirement was required. The fact of

having a horse to mount and a rifle to carry in the hand (slings were taken from us at one time) at the same time, being perhaps under a warmish fire, very often upset a partially-trained man, and, as confusion spreads fast, it frequently took some time before a section of Mounted Infantry could be induced to extend. I think that Mounted Infantry failed in this respect more than in any other.

“My opinion is that Mounted Infantry did best in action when a stubborn resistance was wanted. In this and in scouting they compared very favourably with cavalry.”

Here is the testimony of an officer who had under his command both cavalry and Mounted Infantry :

“The South African War was essentially a rifle war, and, as such, our cavalry, armed only with carbines and carrying a small supply of ammunition and burdened with all their other weapons (which they had been taught to use principally, while the carbines were only to be used occasionally), were at a great disadvantage. They thought their place was on their horses' backs, and even to the end of the war they were the worst offenders in not saving their horses by dismounting whenever it was possible to do so.

“In some Mounted Infantry battalions, trained and officered by infantry officers with a fondness for polo, hunting, &c., who had, in order to indulge their tastes, been forced in peace times to study how to make, and keep, fit cheap animals, and save them at every oppor-

tunity, the horsemastership shown had much better results. I am of opinion, too, that the ties of discipline, as well as the ties between officers and men were, in some cases, stronger in the infantry than the cavalry."

The majority of my correspondents are of opinion that :

Those Mounted Infantry battalions which were well-officered and well-trained came as near perfection as possible. Other battalions did not come up to the level, chiefly owing to want of effective training by their officers. A previous Mounted Infantry training was proved to be the most essential factor in making a good Mounted Infantry officer or man.

The chief complaints against these Mounted Infantry battalions which did not reach the high level of efficiency of the others, are that their officers, lacking proper Mounted Infantry training, were unable to teach their men what they did not know themselves, and that this ignorance resulted in a terrible waste of horseflesh. Knowing that the exigencies of warfare so often go beyond all rules and regulations, and that we may, in some future war, be obliged to do exactly as we did in the Boer War, *e.g.*, take untrained officers to do work

of Mounted Infantry, I sent round the following question :

4. *Would you approve of all young officers being put through a course of Mounted Infantry instruction ?*

Whatever may be the doubts and divisions in the minds of officers about Mounted Infantry, there seems to be a wonderful degree of unanimity on the advisability of having as many infantry officers with a knowledge of Mounted Infantry work. Though the answers do not recommend that *all* officers should undergo instruction, they agree in recommending that a large proportion should do so. In view of the possibility of our having at some future date to increase the mobility of our infantry by putting them on horses (not making them Mounted Infantry in the modern accepted term), there is no reason whatever why, as many infantry officers as show an aptitude for it, should not receive a course of instruction. It is pointed out that the expense would not be great, and that it can only add an experience which will be productive of nothing but good. The answers therefore may be summed up as recommending that :

Every infantry officer with an aptitude for Mounted Infantry work should go through a course of instruction in that branch.

VI. INFANTRY. FROM THE
STAFF POINT OF VIEW

Old Nickel Neck, 'oo isn't on the staff.

RUDYARD KIPLING.

THE tendency of soldiers who have enjoyed a long peace is to indulge in theories which very often have the effect of turning the art of war into a complication of technicalities, difficult to understand and liable to become unworkable in practice. The chemist when he has formed his theories can put them into practice on a small scale, and arrive at a certain proof of the practicability or impracticability of his views. A soldier, however, needs a war before he can test his theories. The Continental armies, on whose organisation we base a great part of our training, is suffering in this respect just now from a prolonged peace. Many theories which we accept because of the practical unanimity of the Continental experts, have still to stand the supreme test of war. Mr. Kipling rightly interprets the truth of all this. We may train and exercise and try new devices, but the real instructor is the bullet—"Old Nickel Neck, 'oo isn't on the staff."

The inestimable value of the late war was that, in a great many matters, it proved or disproved theories. As many officers have pointed out, in the course of these answers, more theories have been proved to be sound than the contrary during the South African campaign. Fortunately the war is still a nine days' wonder, and people even to-day have the recollection of our troubles sufficiently fresh in their minds to make its lessons of value. It is the test-stone which we alone among all the nations possess, and it would be criminal folly on our part not to use it to its fullest extent, so that we shall

be able to produce an army as much superior to continental armies as we were considered inferior before. This is the ideal we must aim for; not a close and successful imitation of the German or French model, but an independent and superior training for fighting which they may try to imitate if they like.

The rifle is *the arm par excellence*. That is a very old theory which has been proved to the hilt by the experiences of the late war, and the man who carries it and relies upon it to deal his blow is the infantryman. No army in the world can attain any great degree of efficiency unless its infantry arm is properly trained, disciplined, and instructed. "Thank God," I heard a distinguished general say at Driefontein, as the Welsh and the Essex regiments stormed the Boer positions, "Thank God, we've got the same old Peninsular and Crimean infantry." This is true enough and a matter for congratulation. What process it is that takes a practical *decavé* and turns him into a "shilling-a-day hero," I cannot well make out. But there is the fact that out of men which British social traditions class as "failures" we get a magnificent fighting man, and as Lord Roberts said—"a gentleman." He carries in his hand the rifle and with it the fortunes of his side. To him we must look for the great deeds of defence and offence, and it behoves us to see that his training is the best in the world.

The first question I have addressed in this sense is the following :

- I. *What changes do you, by the light of your recent experiences, consider would be most advantageous in the infantry of the line?*
 - (a) *In equipment.*
 - (b) *In training.*

To this question the answers are eminently practical. They contain an unanimous condemnation of the pouches which dropped ammunition whenever the man lay down to fire. Indeed, the loss of ammunition during the late war owing to defective pouches and bandoliers was something enormous. I remember in one action an infantry soldier, carrying one of the—then—new web bandoliers without flaps, arrived at the firing line at the double, and found that all his cartridges save fifteen had dropped out of the bandolier! It is essential, according to my correspondents, that there should be flaps fastened with strong metal buttons on any ammunition-carrier of the future. If we are to use the clip rifle (*i.e.*, a rifle which loads five or more cartridges at a time in a “clip”), the compartments of a bandoline should be so divided as to allow each of them to carry a clip full of cartridges.

This is what an eminent officer writes: “Leather belt and bandolier, each filled with cartridges, *with* flaps—five cartridges each flap, or whatever number may be held by clip, if the clip is decided on. Abolish the present pouch, and when it is desired to carry more

ammunition than can be held by belt and bandolier, substitute for pouch a strong canvas bag, like a cartridge bag for sporting purposes." Another says: "Introduction of bandolier, felt hats (and helmets for India), putties instead of gaiters or leggings, abolition of the valise and Slade-Wallace equipment, and the introduction of a small bivouac-tent for their men." Another writes: "Abolish valise equipment, pouches, and substitute two bandoliers with bayonet attachment to the belt of one and a *large strong* havresack of kharki colour, in which should be carried a modified cavalry pattern canteen made of aluminium, socks, soap, towels, and food. Add a good three-pint water-bottle. A light waterproof cape, such as that worn by cyclists, should be a part of every soldier's equipment, to keep the upper part of his body, arms, and equipment dry and light."

An officer who has spent his life in one of the finest infantry regiments in the British Army, says: "The equipment is satisfactory excepting the havresack, which should be of a stronger material, made in the form of a rucksack, such as is used by climbers; and it should be slung on the back."

As regards training, the great need seems to be the adoption of the open formation and the early responsibilities of officers. As far as possible the company should be independent, only conforming to the general lines of training of the regiment. The following is a succinct list of reforms advocated by one distinguished

officer: "More extended formation, higher training of section commanders, further inducement to good shooting, more care in the selection of battalion commanders, universal training to semaphore signalling, greater familiarity with camp-life, instruction to the private in the art of making himself comfortable, non-commissioned officers to be more encouraged in the art of map-reading, vital importance of the selection of outpost positions, careful practice of the attack as now laid down, encouragement of initiative on the part of all company and section commanders." This seems a fairly long list, but it covers all the other suggestions, and it is in opposition to none.

I should say that the following is a fair interpretation of the majority of the answers:

The present pouch and valise equipment should be abolished, and there should be substituted bandoliers with flaps to carry ammunition and a strong canvas rucksack. As regards training, more training in open formation and earlier responsibility of junior officers.

The vast improvement in all arms due to the war training is a very difficult thing to keep up to its proper level. Every war is productive of great lessons, but the

experience of history leads one to the conclusion that they are very easily forgotten. There are so many elements which tend towards forgetfulness, and the greatest of all is victory. The signing of the peace terms on May 31, 1902, convinced the great mass of the public that whatever were the methods which we adopted they were right and proper because they resulted in success. But I would rather draw public attention to the year 1901, when we were having great difficulties and when the result was not so certain. Not that anybody doubted that ultimately the Boer resistance would be overcome, but the means of overcoming it were not so apparent. It is almost absurd of us to remember only the collapse of the enemy's resistance and to disregard that dark period of our history when England, going mad over the doings of Warner's team in Australia, could only furnish us with untrained, unskilled men, whom our officers had to train in front of the enemy. The disasters of the early part of the war were due perhaps to inferior generalship, but they also were the outcome of our inability to grasp the fact that a new style of fighting had become necessary. The adaptability of the race was never shown to better advantage than in the way in which we met this difficulty, but I venture to say that the nakedness of the land never was so openly disclosed as when, towards the end of 1901, all England could do for her army out in South Africa was to send out imperfectly trained and physically unfit men. Whatever lessons the army should have learned, surely

the nation ought to have learned still more. It is no wonder that serious soldiers who passed through that sickening period cry out for universal military service.

This, perhaps, is beside the present question. What I have asked my correspondents is this :

2. *Do you consider that the present training of Infantry in England has gained anything from the lessons of the recent war, and, if so, in what direction? Does it sufficiently improve the intellectual qualities of the soldier and increase his self-reliance?*

In the series of questions addressed chiefly to infantry regimental officers I shall go into this question in greater detail. My object in the present question was to ask those whose rank and present appointments particularly fit them to look at the subject from the point of view of the general welfare of the army and not from that of a technical regimental officer. And it is pleasant to find that much has been done to take advantage of the war training. One officer writes : " I think they have gained enormously, more than any other arm. The work of the infantry at this year's combined manoeuvres left little to be desired. You don't want so much to improve the intellect of the private soldier as to enlarge the mind and encourage intelligent action on the part of the

section leaders. The junior officers and all the non-commissioned officers are the really important element in battle, for all Britishers, thank goodness, will follow a bold, intelligent leader in whom they have confidence." Another says: "The training has improved as companies are left a little more to themselves, but so long as each regiment has to find one-eighth of its strength, and often more, on regimental and garrison employ, it is impossible to get companies complete." Many officers, while agreeing that a great improvement is taking place, utter a word of warning on the subject of discipline without which an army is of little use. "With regard to the intellectual qualities of the soldier," writes a distinguished officer, "improvements must to a large extent rest in the hands of the company officers. I think this is now generally recognised, and at field training and manœuvres, the reason of his existence being more fully explained to the soldier, he is, in consequence, more interested in his work, and displays greater intelligence. Self-reliance comes to a man from experience on active service, and to a certain extent from manœuvres. But when there are no bullets flying, umpires are apt to give decisions which to the soldier appear to be ridiculous and not infrequently do him more harm than good."

On the whole, while recognising that we are still far from perfection, the answers would give the following result :

Much has been gained in present Infantry training from the war, chiefly in the encouragement of individual action both with the junior officer and the men. By making the soldier feel that he is a real and necessary part of a big machine, and by explaining the aim and object of his functions, his intelligence is being improved as well as, to a certain extent, his self-reliance.

We are inclined somehow to forget that the main object of military training is to produce a man skilled in the art of killing his enemy with the minimum of risk to himself. This is bald but true, and we must be careful in all schemes of reform to keep this main idea before us. Under modern conditions it has been found that the *arme à feu*, the rifle, is a terribly effective weapon. Napoleon recognised that the firearm was the most destructive of all and insisted on its importance. What he would have urged to-day in view of the extraordinary range and power of the new rifle is not difficult to imagine. Every soldier feels convinced that the army of the future whose rifle shooting is the best must win the battle, *cæteris paribus*. I witnessed in South Africa a dozen times the enormous advantage which the good shot had over the indifferent marksmen. Sometimes it was

pitiable to see our men being hit before they realised that they were being fired at. Later on our men on the whole were not much inferior in shooting to the Boers, and now and again we actually drove them off by superior accuracy. I remember after the battle of Driefontein having a talk with one of the Boer prisoners. "Our shooting," he said, "was dreadful, while yours was excellent." On my expressing my surprise at this expression of opinion which, at that time, was not held by our officers and men, he went on to explain. "I was with a lot of men who were told to keep down the fire of the Yorkshire Regiment posted on a hill. I had the correct range, 750 yards; my right hand neighbour had his sights up to 1100, and on my left a man was firing at 900 yards range. Now when the Yorkshire Regiment came into action, acting under their officer, they fired a series of sighting shots until they got the correct range. Once they did get it their volleys practically silenced us, for every shot was so close that we had to conceal ourselves and give up firing back. Now, if I had been in authority and had been able to order our men to fire at 750 yards we should have silenced your men completely."

I quote this example merely to show, what every soldier has realised, that a properly controlled fire is a most deadly thing. Musketry training of every kind and description is the essential need of the modern army. We cannot have too much of it if we want to obtain a really effective force. Throughout the

evidence of the War Commission there was a frequent expression of opinion that efficiency, not numbers, was the ideal towards which to aim. That is to say that, inasmuch as we only have a small army, it is much better to have it thoroughly efficient than to persuade the public, or to allow the public to persuade itself, that mere numbers will tell. A regiment of 500 men, of whom all are good marksmen, could in an open, straightforward fight easily put to flight a thousand soldiers who were badly trained in the use of the rifle. It is evident that the primary idea of "the man skilled in the art of killing his enemy with the minimum of risk to himself," is realised much more effectively by careful training in musketry than in any other way.

In order to find out whether the need has been adequately met I asked the following question :

- 3. Are you satisfied with the present musketry regulations as regards number of rounds to be fired by recruit and trained man, system of instruction at the range and in judging distances?*

This is the opinion of a distinguished officer: "I should like to see," he says, "more rounds fired by the *recruit*, more time taken over his instruction in musketry, and less anxiety displayed to get him into the ranks in a hurry as a 'trained soldier.' The hurry

now existing is the outcome of our constant demand for foreign drafts and consequent lack of 'duty men' in the ranks.

"The number of rounds fired by the trained soldier is, I think, sufficient. But I should like to see more practice given to firing at moving objects, if possible at unknown distances, when a man has once learnt to hit a target up to, say, 500 yards, fairly well.

"Practice in 'judging distance' is most important. I should like to see more of it. At the same time it should be recollected that a man may be a first-class judge in this country and be completely thrown out of his calculations by the atmosphere of India or South Africa, and *vice versâ*."

Another officer, whose term of active service in many climates renders his opinion of great value, writes thus :

"If the public can realise how very valuable to the State is a first-class shot, I feel confident that there would be no stinting of money for ammunition. As a matter of fact, no system of musketry training is sufficient which does not allow of a practically unlimited expenditure of ammunition. A., being a handy man, learns to be a fair shot in about 200 rounds, B., being denser and slower, may require 500 rounds before he is any good. Let him get it, I say, for the extra money spent on B. is not lost. It is useless to lay down any fixed limit of ammunition. Expend as much as is necessary to make a man a really good shot; and, if he shows signs of never being able to attain to this, the

sooner he is discharged from the army the better, for an infantry soldier who cannot shoot is a useless expense to the country."

In "Some Lessons from the Boer War" Colonel Pilcher has some pertinent remarks to make on this subject. "The question of musketry is of paramount importance, and ordinary target practice on the range should be regarded as only the first step towards making a soldier a good field shot. . . . Our object should be to make *all* our soldiers first-class shots at target practice, as this may be taken as the standard they should reach before being instructed in the more advanced parts of musketry training."

Most of my answers, while not expressing in so many words Colonel Pilcher's suggestions, clearly express the opinion that the ideal of musketry training cannot be too high, and I would translate their general tendency into the following :

No expenditure of time or money is too great when made in the direction of obtaining efficient shots. The ideal of musketry training is not high enough.

In the next question I have asked my correspondents to give an opinion on a somewhat technical subject. I am dealing with it more fully in the next chapter, so I will do no more than record the question and the general trend of the answers. I asked :

4. *Do you think that a marksman of 500 yards would be as efficient in real war as a marksman of 800 yards?*

The result of my question is that the majority of my correspondents think that :

The marksman at 800 yards would be the more efficient.

The question of range is, in a way, a new one. The extreme accuracy of the new rifle at ranges which in former wars were considered beyond attainment, opens up a big question. The regimental officer will deal with this subject later on, so I will not enter into minute details now. But the experiences of the war should produce some degree of unanimity as to the most useful range. The old Peninsular order, "Wait till you see the whites of their eyes before you fire, men," no longer holds good. In order to ascertain the general opinion of the higher ranks of officers I addressed the following question :

5. *What do you consider the most useful range at which a soldier should be trained?*

I am glad to be able to record that the answers to this

question are sufficiently unanimous to provide a direct answer. My correspondents urge the great need of "snap-shooting," that is, quick, accurate shooting at a short range. "Supposing," writes an officer, "that one of the enemy were found hanging round one of our pickets trying to reconnoitre the position. If he were discovered anywhere within 200 yards, the sentry should be able to pick him off at once. In the same way in case of a force attempting to break through a slight infantry cordon, our men should be so quick and accurate with their rifles that their losses should be enormous. I have seen a party of Boers escape untouched within 200 yards of our infantry. It must be confessed too that the Boers were equally at fault sometimes when our patrols rode into their arms, as it were, and yet escaped unhurt."

I think that the following would give a fair interpretation of the answers received :

While not neglecting snap-shot shooting at close range, soldiers should be taught to fire with accuracy at 500 yards and beyond. Five hundred yards is the most useful range.

If we are to have the best army in the world and not a bad imitation of any other army, it seems essential that we should pay the utmost attention to the matter of the clothing of the man who is to form part of the big

striking force of our army. A man clothed in easy and comfortable boots, coat, trousers, and hat, will march better and be worth more than the man whose clothing has been clapped on to him anyway. In this respect it must be admitted that we are a good deal ahead of continental armies, but there is still scope for improvement. The adoption of khaki as a fighting colour, admirably conceived and carried out from one end of the Army to the other, saved thousands of lives in the late war. In other respects we were also very practical, but in order to find out in what respects we could still improve I asked the following question :

6. *Could you suggest any modification in the clothing, cap, boots, &c., of the Infantryman?*

The answers justified the question, for my correspondents, while acknowledging that the needs of the soldier in this respect had been fairly well met in the late war, are of opinion that there are still many modifications necessary before we reach anything like perfection. In this connection I feel constrained to give publicity to the grumble of an officer, knowing how well it is founded. After dealing with the men's clothing, &c., he goes on to say: "The officers are continually being put to extra expense in changes of uniform. The sash which was worn round the shoulder was, a short time ago, ordered to be worn round the waist. This

necessitated new sashes. Within the last few days another order has appeared saying that the sash round the waist is again to be altered. In South Africa officers wore a plain useful khaki coat, not unlike a Norfolk jacket, with leather buttons and a turn-down collar, and badges of rank. This has been abolished, and after the introduction of two intermediate khaki coats, each more horrible than the other, a new coat has been settled on which is uncomfortable, untidy, and expensive. If the clothing of officers could be put into the hands of a committee of regimental officers and uniforms were not so frequently changed, an immense boon would be conferred on the Army."

The majority of my correspondents concur in thinking that—

The ideal boot, coat and trousers have yet to be reached. A sort of Norfolk jacket should be introduced, and the trousers should be baggier. Greater care should be exercised in the fitting of boots, it being observed that too big a boot is often as bad for marching as too small a one. Ease should be the object to which all modifications should tend.

VII. INFANTRY. FROM THE REGI-
MENTAL POINT OF VIEW.

" Lieutenant Acton, in command of some sixty men of the 77th, was ordered to gather under his command two other tiny British companies . . . and attack the most western Russian battery . . . Acton drew the three companies into line fronting the battery, some 800 yards distant. He explained to the officers his orders, and said he would lead his detachment on the battery front if the other two companies would attack on either flank. The other officers refused to join in the attack, saying the force was too hopelessly small. 'If you won't come,' said Acton, 'I will attack with my own men,' and turning to them said, 'Forward, lads!' But the men had heard the dispute between the officers and refused to move. 'Then,' said Acton, 'I'll go myself.' Turning his face towards the battery he marched off single-handed to attack it. But it is not the way of British soldiers to forsake their officers. Acton had advanced some fifty yards when a private of the 77th named Tyrrel ran out of the ranks after him, reached his side, and said, 'Sir, I'll stand by you.' From one of the other companies a second man ran up and the three brave men clambered up the slope to attack the battery thundering round shot over their heads. Great, however, is the magic of a brave example. The 77th could not see their lieutenant with only two followers moving up unsupported to attack a battery; and, with a shout, they ran out, an eager crowd, caught up to him, and fell into rank behind him."

FITCHETT'S "INKERMANN."

THE chief feature of the late Boer war seems to me to be the achievement of the infantry arm. Without boasting, without noise or fuss, they marched, fought, and did their duty as only British infantry can. "I could stand your guns," said a Boer general to me after the war, "and your mounted troops, but when I saw your infantry come up I knew it was time to go and I went. What magnificent fellows they are!" During the war somebody sent me a cutting from an English paper which I have unfortunately lost. I can, however, remember that it pointed out in the most infallible way that our infantry were rotten, that this state of things was due to the want of training and education of the officers, and that it was chiefly owing to this that the war was being protracted so unduly. I give the two versions without comment because I feel assured that no great discrimination is needed to know which is the right one.

I am but a civilian, but it used to make my blood boil when I read those newspaper criticisms on our infantry. I know from actual knowledge, acquired by sight of my own eyes, that the infantry saved us during the last war. Without them we should still be fighting, and it was their splendid courage, steadiness, and discipline which enabled us to sustain what was, after all, an unequal fight. It seems to me to be but common justice to take up the cudgels on behalf of the much-maligned infantry officer. Did the people know the real extent and value of the work he performed they would cease their grumbings and recognise the undoubted fact that he did his

duty with that calm courage and wonderful devotion to duty which, thank God, have always been the characteristic of the British officer.

Lord Wolseley, in his book, uttered a solemn warning to the nation when he told us on no account to "touch the regiment." That he was right nobody who knows the British Army can doubt. The Army reformer who has not studied, and does not know, the daily life of a regiment is apt to treat it as the regulation unit to be put here or there, shipped hither or thither, to be sacrificed in this position or placed in reserve behind that. He is likely to forget that a regiment consists of a thousand or so "real live men," and that it is the basis of every Army. It is possible to have the finest staff and the most brilliant generals, but they can do nothing with regiments which are badly trained ; while good regiments can win (and have won during the war) battles in spite of staff, general, and all.

It is very often forgotten that our army, like everything else British, is peculiar and stands by itself. Just as we have our own Church, our own customs and habits, our own style of newspaper, railway, cab, &c., so we have our own peculiar little army. In England there is a large leisured class which we find nowhere else in such numbers. This class produces young men with small independent incomes, and with sound ambitions. They look round, at the proper age, to find avocations. The Government invites them to become soldiers. It tells them plainly : " You cannot live on the pay we can give

you. We cannot afford to give you a living wage, but, if you throw in your private income and add it to our pittance, at least you won't starve, and—you may become a Field Marshal." In this bargain, whether it is precisely expressed or not, there is a distinct understanding that the young man on becoming an officer in his Majesty's Army will not receive sufficient money to feed him, much less clothe him. In all questions affecting the British officer this must not be forgotten, otherwise we are apt to lose the sense of proportion; and so it is worth while reiterating the fact that the British officer does not, when he joins the army, receive a living wage.

The Government in this matter is in no way to blame. If it can get an efficient officer for a few shillings a day why pay more? But it should not have, strictly and legally speaking, any right to exact for this pittance any more work than it could obtain in the open market. But as individual effort is the basis of nine-tenths of our institutions, great or small, the Government tacitly accepts the fact, and trades on it, to the comfort and ease of the British taxpayer. But as long as the officer is maintained as a public servant on terms which differ altogether from those on which other public servants are engaged, so long is he justified in regarding his position as a peculiar one. This is a sort of understanding, tacitly recognised on both sides, that the remuneration which he receives is accompanied by a social position which, in a way, takes the place of extra pay. All other European nations have calculated the minimum wage on

which an officer can live decently and respectably and—pays it. We, on the other hand, though not openly and officially, exact that the officer should have a private income with which to supplement his earnings as a soldier. In this matter, therefore, the British officer is in a situation unlike that of any of his foreign colleagues.

But this is not the only peculiarity in the British Army. Our discipline is essentially a British product. In France, Germany, Russia, Austria, and Italy, it has been recognised that some great inducement, of a very strong nature, is necessary to persuade a man to go into the battle line and take the risks of instant death. There are some men who enjoy to the full the chance of being killed and the excitement of fighting, but the great majority fear the dangers of warfare, and would prefer safety to glory. To counteract this natural tendency of human nature discipline has been invented. With foreign nations it is so stringent and rigid that I think that its basis may fairly be called fear. Acting on the assumption that fear is one of the strongest instincts in human nature, they have made the soldier afraid of being afraid. Death is the penalty for so many offences that he prefers the risk of dying by the enemy's bullets than to be shot as a coward. He, therefore, enters the battle with the conviction that it is a great deal more dangerous to his life to run back than to run forward. The former is certain death, the latter is only a risk. I put out of the calculation patriotism, excitement, hatred, and hot blood, each and every one of which will sometimes turn a

regiment of fearsome men into a horde of bloodthirsty fighters. But in order to meet the ordinary needs of warfare foreign discipline is based on the principle of the greater fear counteracting the lesser fear.

With us it is totally different. The nation never has taken kindly to a standing Army, and is very jealous of any privileges granted to it. The very existence of the Army at all depends on an annual formal resolution of the House of Commons, which from ancient times has brooked no encroachment on the supremacy of civil law. Our Army has had, therefore, to devise a system in accordance with the circumstances of the case, and being an adaptable nation we have produced our own peculiar discipline. All we aim at practically is the obedience necessary for the proper carrying on of warfare. But we respect the rights of the private soldiers, which, indeed, are not so much legally defined as they are tacitly recognised. This has resulted in a sort of give-and-take system, which, on the whole, works admirably. But it must not be forgotten that the whole basis of it is *respect for, not fear of, the officer on the part of the private*. If it is not personal respect it is a class respect, and any tampering with this would be fatal to the well-being of the Army.

But no amount of description will adequately convey my meaning as two incidents which came under my notice during the South African war. I was travelling in the train with one of the foreign military *attachés* and a young officer. It was during that period when the railways had just been taken over, and there were no conveniences in

the way of porters. We arrived at the station with a fair amount of baggage, and we found it somewhat difficult to move it away. The military *attaché* turned to the subaltern, and said: "I see some private soldiers on the platform, why not get the men to help us?" The answer of the subaltern was a revelation to the foreign officer. "I can't very well ask them," he said, "they don't belong to my regiment." Some time after I again met the *attaché*, who at once told me that he had been puzzling over the subaltern's reply. "Why," he asked, "did he not order the men to carry the luggage? In my country not an officer would have hesitated a moment provided the soldiers were not on duty; but those soldiers were doing nothing."

My reply to the distinguished officer contained the whole story of our discipline. Incidentally I gave him the subaltern's explanation, which was that he had to respect the rights of the men. They were not engaged as baggage carriers, and though, if they had been politely asked to help, they most likely would have given a willing hand, yet they would have been perfectly justified in refusing. "If they had been men of my own regiment," said the subaltern, "I would have said, 'Lend us a hand, my men,' and they would have done so all the more willingly because they knew they were in a way doing a favour." The military *attaché*, when he heard my story, simply said: "Yes, I understand, it is English discipline," with the emphasis on the word "English."

Another time I was sitting in a club with a British officer and another foreign *attaché* discussing the

operations. A week or so before there had been some very severe fighting, in which the officer had taken part with his regiment. Under a deadly fire he and part of his company had been ordered to attack a very strong Boer position by a series of short rushes. The loss was considerable, for the hail of bullets never ceased. There was a small knoll on the right of the immediate neighbourhood of the officer, and, seeing the advantage of securing it, he shouted to the men near him to make a rush forward, at the same time advancing himself with a short rush. When he looked back, however, he saw that the knoll was still unoccupied. "Now, my lads," he shouted, "make a dash for it," and then, to re-assure the men, he said: "The first fellow that gets to that knoll shall have the stiffest glass of whisky he ever tasted, the moment we get to a town." The appeal was enough, and four men made the rush. Two were shot, but the other two reached the knoll in safety.

We were sitting chatting with this officer when we saw through the door of the room, which opened on to a back passage, a swift vision of two grimy soldiers passing. A little later one of the waiters came to my friend and asked him if he was Captain —, adding that two private soldiers would very much like to see him for a moment. The officer immediately went out and returned laughing, at the same time ordering and taking out with him two very strong whiskies and sodas. He returned in a short time with the empty glasses, set them down, and resumed the conversation. But the *attaché* wanted

to know all about the two men and the whiskey, and the officer told his story with much laughter. The foreigner, when he had finished, got up, and banging the table with a most emphatic fist, exclaimed: "That is a sort of discipline which only the English could have and only an Englishman could understand."

These two incidents, and the story which I have quoted at the head of this chapter, will show that the iron discipline of other armies is not at all the same sort of thing as that which obtains with us. We are more elastic, and we have found out that until an officer has gained the respect of his men his discipline must be weak. In a somewhat varied experience of the British Army I have never known the men acquire any respect for an officer who did not deserve it. In some way or other they have an instinct for finding out a good man. It must not be imagined for a moment that the private soldier has any admiration for an officer because he is merely kind to them. He must be something more, a man of character and with a full knowledge of his work, before he gains the respect of his men. In many cases, too, they do not like the officer personally, but they will follow him to the gates of death. One of the finest regimental infantry officers I ever knew worked his company so hard that the men hardly had time to go to the canteen, yet everybody intrigued to get into his company. Another officer of my acquaintance, one of the strictest disciplinarians in the British Army, was positively adored by his men. But such men are born, not made. The private

soldier is a puzzle and a marvel. He *will* have a *man* for an officer, and when he has that, he will respect and obey him. But give him a man whom he cannot respect and then I am afraid he is a devil.

It will be perceived, then, that discipline in the British Army has a foundation of sorts on certain rules and regulations laid down with much exactitude and care, but it really depends on the respect which the officer, as a rule, obtains from his men. But the better the officer is, the more he insists on the thorough application of the rules and regulations, though he knows in his heart of hearts that there is something else besides that necessary for the proper handling of his men.

I have devoted a considerable space to the question of discipline, and the nature of it, because it is absolutely necessary to thoroughly understand the subject before coming to the infantry regiment. We have been told that the infantry officer lacks education and intelligence, that he is a man of indifferent mental power, and somewhat unfitted to be an officer. I remember once dining with the officers of a German regiment of the line in a little out-of-the-way town. We were discussing distances and how they should be judged. They all had theories and advocated the use of mechanical contrivances. A young English lad, who was with me, made a wager that he would judge a hundred yards by eye alone better than anybody present with all the mechanical contrivances in the world. This was eagerly accepted, and early the next morning the test was made. Every

German officer who had a theory or contrivance came forward, but in each case the lad was correct, and they were often as much as ten or twenty yards out of their reckoning. Nothing could persuade him to tell us how it was done, but when we had left the town he let me into the secret. He was the winner, it seemed, of several "long throws" with the cricket-ball. His average distance was ninety-seven yards, and, of course, he could calculate this distance to a nicety. It was merely a question of adding three yards to his estimate.

I do not for a moment wish to disparage scientific training, but what I am perfectly sure is, that for a soldier, a fighting man, the training of sport is the best in the world. I once knew an officer, from whom, in my earlier days, I sucked in a good proportion of my military knowledge. He was the best theorist in the world, and his ideas were excellent. He was always in my eyes the best exponent of the *art militaire* that it was possible to find. But I learned a year or two afterwards that he was the very worst officer in his regiment, and since then I am very doubtful of my "theorists." As a matter of fact, a soldier requires attributes of a peculiar nature, which are not so necessary in other professions. He must be clear-headed and straight-limbed, healthy, with a good knowledge of country, quick to see the advantages of position, cover, and ground, slow to anger, with a perfect knowledge of men, tactful, firm, courageous, and pertinacious, and—it is not absolutely necessary that he should know how to spell.

But to return to the infantry. It seems to me that the nation has not yet realised the fact that we have the best infantry in the world. It is a very inarticulate infantry, but it is very good for all that. If any scheme of reform is going to introduce radical changes into our infantry regiments, it seems to me that nothing but disaster can be the result. They have still their traditions of Marlborough and Wellington. They take punishment like men and fight like lions. They want encouragement—not an everlasting stream of undeserved blame. If the regiment is given the opportunity it will reform itself if it is not good, and will keep up its level of excellence if it is excellent. In the questions I have addressed I have attempted to place on some sort of permanent record the lessons of the war. I have had a great number of answers, far larger than in any other series. It is easy to see that my correspondents have spared neither time nor labour in their replies, and I cannot too cordially recommend to any one who is desirous of obtaining a practical knowledge of our Army the results of my inquiries.

The first question I addressed was this :

1. *What, in your opinion, is the chief lesson learned in the war as far as it affects infantry regiments?*

This opens up the widest possible scope for everybody, and yet the answers display a surprising degree of

unanimity. The necessity for discipline seems to be the greatest lesson learned, and it is pointed out that those regiments which were in the best state of discipline had the fewest "regrettable incidents." An officer pointing out the fact that the war convinced the infantry of the necessity for open order, pertinently remarks that it does not give a new lesson but rather "puts the dots on the i's" of what many soldiers knew before. Everybody, however, confesses that the power of the long range rifle came as a surprise, and forced the adoption of open order much quicker than any theory could have persuaded them to do.

It seems generally allowed that the whole question of infantry attack has undergone a thoroughly fresh development. Admitting that South Africa gave exceptional opportunities for long range firing, yet it is obvious that a defending force having the power, as it has in most cases, to choose its own position, can still in any country so arrange matters that the field of fire will be sufficiently large to admit the full use of long range firing. Before the use of the modern rifle the attack by a mass of infantry soldiers was always possible. They could get within 300 or 200 yards of a position without suffering much loss. The defenders could only fire at, comparatively speaking, long intervals, and the destruction, even when the attackers were within range, was not so overwhelming, so that if the attacking force was sufficiently strong in numbers, there were always enough survivors at the foot of the defences to render the chance of

success quite possible. To-day, all that is changed. The attackers marching at a defended work come under rifle fire at the distance of a mile. I do not for a moment pretend that this fire is really very serious, but it certainly has an effect on the *morale* of the assailants. But when they come to within 800 yards their losses begin to be considerable and increase in geometrical progression as they get nearer the defenders. It stands to reason, that in a prolonged advance casualties would be enormous. The range of the new rifle alone would insure that, but when, in addition to the range, the rapidity of fire is taken into account, the attack on foot seems to be the maddest thing in the world. German officers as well as French pretend to believe that an attack *en masse* is still possible. We know it is not, and this knowledge should be a precious thing.

In a conversation I recently had with a German officer, whose position renders his opinions of great value, he told me a few things for which I was not altogether unprepared. They will, however, come as a surprise, I think, to a good many British soldiers. It is a well-known fact that the German Emperor is convinced that a massed attack is a thing of the past, but his Staff are by no means of the same way of thinking. My friend gave me the reason, which I give for what it is worth. "The whole question of open order," he said, "is a matter of discipline. Discipline as we understand it does not exist in your Army. We have a rigid system which enforces obedience under the heaviest penalties.

The officer may be loved and respected, but he must be feared. The close control of the officer over his men is the essential factor of our system. How can that be exercised if a company attacks in extended order about half a mile long! It would be entirely lost except in case of those in close proximity to the commander. It would never work with us, and so we are forced to keep to the old principle of the massed attack. But you can do it. Your men would go forward not because they would be afraid of hanging back but because they would be ashamed to let an officer go on in front alone or unsupported. The open attack suits you but it does not suit us, that is the real state of the case."

One of my correspondents covers the ground of most others. He writes in answer to the question: "The absolute importance and necessity of training all individual men and non-commissioned officers in peace so as to develop to the highest degree their powers of initiation and self-reliance so that, in critical moments, on active service they should know instinctively how to continue carrying out their orders, how to take every advantage of ground, how to meet and overcome any difficulty or emergency that may arise, with as much confidence as if a superior were at hand to direct them.

"Besides being thoroughly efficient with their rifles they should know what a tremendous power they possess when well posted in position, if they use their rifles coolly and intelligently. All this would point to less

men, but those men should be more highly trained than at present."

Another officer remarks: "The necessity for the training of the infantry, and the importance of full delegation in peace time of the training and command in the field to those who alone can exercise control on service, namely, the company commander. The company is the training unit so far as the soldier is concerned. And, secondly, the disastrous effects of initial mistakes in action can seldom be corrected. Troops should not be hurried into action, but should thoroughly understand the *rôle* they have to play. Thirdly, the value of cover."

This seems a point which is greatly insisted upon by my correspondents. They point out that once the regiment is committed to action it is impossible to have any control over it. This was borne out times without number in the late war, and it was recognised that not only was it impossible for orders to be given, except by means of signals along the firing line, but ammunition could not be carried up. In fact, it was found in many actions that anybody who raised his head from the ground, in most cases, was killed or wounded. An officer in this connection writes as follows: "I think the thing that struck one most was the utter impossibility of sending or receiving orders during an action. Once under fire an officer had to do the best he could under the circumstances without receiving further orders. This seemed to be a new idea to many officers, judging by

the number of complaints one heard during the first months of the war both from company and commanding officers. 'I was waiting for orders.' 'I did not know whether to go on or stay where I was.' 'I had no orders,' &c. &c., was what one constantly heard. These complaints got fewer and fewer as the war went on, and officers got more accustomed to depending on their own resources. The same thing is sure to occur again, and I think it ought to be made an absolute rule that on field days when once the advance has commenced no further orders should be issued. It will be a very difficult rule to carry out, as when one sees things going utterly wrong it will be very trying not to be able to interfere, but I am sure it is the only way to teach officers to depend on themselves."

There are several complaints about the class of man that is recruited, and it is observed by every officer who has touched upon the subject that the reservist was an infinitely better soldier than all others. Another officer says: "A great lesson of the war has been to clearly show the necessity for a greater expansion owing to the effect of modern rifle firing, and the impossibility, therefore, of getting control of his unit, when once engaged, by company commander." Those who advocate a greater intelligence and a higher power of initiative on the part of the private soldier are those who recognise this fact. In any case of attack under conditions, similar to those under which we fought in South Africa, the company, having to extend enormous distances, really divides itself

up into a number of separate fighting entities, as it were, which will be obliged to depend to some extent on the original orders received, but to a much greater extent on their own intelligence and initiative. There is a class of soldier, eminent in his profession and thoroughly imbued with the best traditions of the Army, which appears to think that the increase of initiative and intelligence on the part of the private soldier may militate against discipline, but it is pointed out by several of my correspondents that these capabilities which they wish to develop can only necessarily be sufficient to insure a man understanding his original orders, and, when thrown on his own responsibility, carrying them out to the best of his ability. There is no desire to make every private a budding Napoleon, but it is recognised that the more open formation, now rendered necessary by the long range firing arm, demands a greater amount of intelligent instruction than was given before. To sum up, therefore, I should say that the following would be a fair interpretation of the majority of the answers :

The chief lessons learnt in the war have been the wonderful power of the long range rifle, the value of discipline, the necessity of a different formation for attack, and the enhanced power of defence.

In spite of the fact that the answers I have received

to this question show that the arguments in favour of an open formation seem to be overwhelming, I have met, not frequently it is true, soldiers of undoubted experience who say that an attack can never be pushed home if the attackers are obliged to open out to any considerable extent. They believe, in fact, to a certain extent on the same lines as the cavalry, that to deal a crushing blow it is necessary to have weight. In order to obtain indubitable evidence on this point I asked the following question :

2. *Are you in favour of a recurrence to the old close order or the open attack as exemplified in the recent war?*

I quote from an officer whose experience gives particular value to his answer. "It is dangerous to draw conclusions from the war in South Africa without remembering that the fighting took place under conditions which would not necessarily obtain in a European war. Also, the army was not such as one would expect to meet in a war between two nations which kept up large war organisations and highly-trained armies. The Boers practically neglected any attempt at counter attack, such as would be certainly adopted by a European force if they were attacked by such thin and extended lines as we were able to use in South Africa. Then for large bodies of troops in a European war such wide extension as we used in South Africa would be impossible. But

while remembering this it is without doubt impossible to expect to be able to move troops over exposed ground in close order. A frontal attack can only succeed by directing so much of the enemy's attention to his flanks that the fire development of his front is sensibly weakened. We can only hope to be able to move infantry over open ground against a hostile position under cover by an overwhelming and accurate artillery fire which will render it impossible for the defence to bring an accurate and fully disciplined rifle fire on the attack. If this opportunity is offered it would be necessary to thrust forward men in fairly large numbers, in order to establish a superior fire to the defence at a decisive range and to have sufficient weight to assault the position."

This answer re-echoes in a clear way the opinions of those who feel that an attack, to succeed, must be pushed home. On the other hand there is a considerable number who, although they do not say so in actual words, seem to suggest by their answers that an infantry attack can never be pushed home, in future, provided there is sufficient open ground for the defence, and they are justified in believing with the correspondent I have just quoted that it will be necessary in the future to manœuvre forces out of their defence and not to carry them by storm. This is what an officer of great experience says: "To advance in close order over a fire-swept plain if men would do it (which they will not) would simply mean a first-class burial." Another writes: "No more close order, saw enough of that at Enslim." Again an

officer answers: "No. The mean should be adopted, extensions of about three yards are enough. Our wide extensions could not have prevailed against a European enemy." Another writes: "I do not believe in continental theory. Great slaughter as they would have is bound to tell on the *morale* of men." Another says: "Distinctly open attack; close formations are, I consider, impossible under the conditions of modern warfare." The following are extracts from some other answers: "Open order attack is absolutely necessary, and as a rule the firing line of the defence must also be extended." "I favour the open attack, as it seems to me the attack once launched control gradually gets less." "With a wide extension the individual soldier will not be so aware of heavy casualties, and he will have more scope for taking advantage of the ground." "Certainly not a recurrence to close order, but I am afraid we are drifting too much in the opposite direction. We always as a nation go to extremes. Reserves are nowadays of more importance than ever, as it is only by their means that a commander can influence an action. I venture to think that the infantry training is very sound in laying it down that, while we can advance to a position in open order only, we must be prepared to have a dense firing line at decisive range in order to produce real firing effect." "I consider the old close formation next to impossible in daylight."

Such are the tenour of most of the answers, but many strike a note of warning lest we should carry the open

order formation too far, and this warning is one that I feel it right to notice. On the whole the answers I have received to this question are to this effect :

The old close formation attack is impracticable under modern conditions of warfare. Infantry attacks in the future must either in some way be modified to the new conditions, or it will become necessary to abandon them altogether in favour of shifting the enemy by strategic flank movements.

In order to settle as far as possible the somewhat vexed question of the quality of our shooting I addressed the following question :

3. *Were you satisfied with the shooting of your men during the war?*

This is the answer of an officer of great and varied experience in South Africa : "No. The idea of every man armed with a rifle should be to be able to be pretty certain of hitting a man's head showing within 500 yards of him, and to be able to pick up a range and shoot within a yard of a man at 800 yards or further if he can see his shot strike."

It is obvious that the ideal of this officer is a very high one, much higher indeed than the majority of officers

who, as they say themselves, found that the former training in musketry was so meagre that the shooting of the men in South Africa as a rule went beyond their expectations. On this assumption a great many of my answers are in the affirmative, but it is recognised on all hands that we should have a higher ideal. In this connection an officer writes: "I should consider that the former musketry training was entirely on the wrong lines, much too much time being devoted to fixed targets at known distances, and in consequence the effect of rifle firing was no good. Fixed targets at known distances teach the individual man the preliminaries of rifle shooting, but to complete his instruction he must be capable of judging his own distances, and to be accustomed to moving targets." Another very justly observes: "I do not believe it is possible to say whether the men shot well or badly. How often did any one see where individual bullets were going?" Another officer says: "that at long ranges, say 1500 yards, and over, he found it difficult to make the men even fire."

On the whole, I should say that my correspondents are inclined to think:

The shooting on the whole was not bad; but the war, and not the previous musketry training, was chiefly responsible for it. At range finding the men were mostly faulty.

I have endeavoured in this series, as well as in some

others, to fix with some degree of certainty the most useful range to which a soldier could be trained. The new rifle has such tremendous power that it seems to me worth while making every experiment to find out the most effective distance for musketry training. In the South African war I met several colonials who were experts with their rifles. They were accustomed to shoot game up to 250 yards, and the result of their shooting was wonderful. This also could be said of the majority of the Boers, but beyond that distance it cannot be said that their firing was very effective. Beyond 500 yards the Boers took a considerable time to find the range, and in several cases where batteries were firing at a distance a little over 1000 yards they never succeeded in finding a range at all. Where they had prepared defences with their ranges marked beforehand their fire was most deadly; but in the guerilla warfare that ensued after the fall of Pretoria we found that their accuracy was by no means as great as we expected. A Boer commandant tried to explain this to me by saying that all the best shots had been killed; but I think that the true reason was, as I have said, that they never defended prepared positions, and had no reason therefore to mark their ranges.

The question I asked was :

4. *What range did you find most effective during the war both for defence and attack?*

The answers are various. Here are some of them. "Any distance at which a shot can be discerned should be decisive." "This opens up a large field. I was under the impression that in the late war the army shot better at ranges of about 1000 yards than when we got closer." "800 yards." "Hard to answer, as conditions varied, think greatest danger zone is 1200 to 600 yards. After that men are much too afraid of being shot to aim really well." "1200 to 1000 yards. If the attacker can arrive at 300 yards, three times out of four he will take the position." "600 to 800 yards, at least that is the distance at which the attack was usually directed." "For practical purposes all ranges up to 600 were equally deadly." "In frontal attack I do not think it justifiable to advance in open ground nearer than 800 yards." "On the defence I am in favour of fire being opened at long ranges, as it seems to produce a momentary hesitation on the part of the attackers, and the more bullets you can put among them the greater the hesitation will be." "In attack I should say the most effective ranges were from 500 to 800 yards." "The closer a man is the more chance there is of his being hit, the more bullets there are fired about his head the less chance there is of his shooting straight. The ratio of the one to the other decides the accuracy of fire."

On the whole the majority of my correspondents seem to be of opinion :

That the most effective range for defence is 800 to 1000 yards, and for attack 300 to 500 yards.

The next question that I have addressed touches upon perhaps the most important question of infantry training. The control of the officer over the men in the firing line has always been with the British infantry most admirably maintained. In all accounts of the Peninsular and Crimean wars the men have held their fire at their officers' command until they could pour it in with the deadliest effect. This control of fire goes under the name of "fire discipline" in the Army, and it is essential to know how far this control should be relaxed or maintained in view of the fact that the new rifle can shoot with great rapidity. It is a well-known fact that one of the great difficulties to be contended with in the firing line is the desire of the soldier to waste his fire. It seems to be the idea, deep rooted in every untrained soldier's mind, that it is the number of bullets he sends towards the enemy and not the accuracy of his fire which does the damage. Nervousness is nearly always accompanied by a great expenditure of ammunition. In the open extension which has been advocated (and indeed it seems to be absolutely necessary in future campaigns) it is obvious that the officer from the very fact of his men being extended beyond the immediate control of his eye and voice, cannot exercise this fire

discipline with the same amount of effect as before. In order to know on what lines this discipline should be exercised in the future it seemed to me to be highly necessary to know how, under the new conditions of the South African War, the men conformed to the exigencies of the change. As in a former question, an officer pointed out that under the new conditions it became almost impossible to bring up ammunition into the firing line, on open ground, it becomes highly necessary that the husbanding of ammunition should form a great part of the soldier's training. I have, therefore, asked the following question :

5. *Had you any reason to modify your views of fire discipline during the war ?*

In the old days the volley fire on the word of command of the officer was a most effective way of doing damage to the enemy, and, in this respect chiefly, the question of fire discipline arises. Most of my correspondents seem to think that volleys have no longer the same importance as before. The following brings out this idea : "Volleys can seldom be used, neither are they often of value." "Volleys in European warfare would not be used except at long ranges or at ambush at short ranges. I think in heavy engagements men must be taught to exercise their own sense as regards fire discipline, which in the late war was very bad at close ranges." "I no longer consider volleys as effective as I

previously expected them to be. Independent firing I think is best." "Every man should be trained to use the kind of fire which the situation demands." "I have always been in favour of independent firing in contradistinction to volleys." "With regard to the waste of ammunition, there seems to be a tendency on the part of the men to waste ammunition, and they require at times a good deal of holding in check." There are some who recommend that subalterns and non-commissioned officers should be allowed the control of fire up to a certain extent, but there are others who consider that it is more important than ever that the company or section commander should have the full control. On the whole, I should say that the answers show that :

In the late war there was a great waste of ammunition. Owing to the extended order, control was very difficult. It is recommended that for the future the men must be taught individual firing, while the officer in command by signal or otherwise should suggest the range and direct the fire to any particular spot.

The modern rifle not only possesses an extraordinary range, which has to a great extent changed many of our infantry tactics, but it has an additional advantage of being practically a quick-firing arm. In the Boer War

the enemy was armed with a Mauser rifle, which was loaded by clips, holding five cartridges at a time. These clips are small tin frames, very light in weight and very inexpensive in make, which hold together the cartridges in such a way that the whole five can be inserted with one movement of the hand. When the cartridges have been fired, this clip, now rendered useless, falls automatically to the ground, and it is necessary to put in a fresh clip before using the rifle. It is true that the rifle may be loaded by single cartridges, which, however, have to be taken from the clip for that purpose. Nearly all Mauser ammunition is issued in packets of ten, which contain two clips of five cartridges each. With us the system was somewhat different. We did not possess a clip in the same sense as the Mauser, but each rifle was provided with a small metal case, which could be filled with ten cartridges fitting into a spring receptacle under the rifle in front of the trigger guard. If the ten shots were fired off, it became necessary to either fire single cartridges from the breech of the rifle or to laboriously fill in, with its full complement, the metal case, called the magazine. Just above the case a piece of steel is fixed into the rifle in such a way that by pressing it home it prevents the automatic working of the magazine, which throws a cartridge into the breach as it is required. This is called a cut-off, and it enables the soldier, by having his magazine filled to its utmost capacity, to use the rifle as a single-loader. The advantages and disadvantages of each system are these: With

the clip loader of the Mauser it was found that the Boers as a rule wasted a good deal of ammunition because they did not possess a cut-off, and in the heat of action they fired off the whole clip in order to put in a fresh one, and so have the maximum number of charges in their rifle ready for emergencies. With our men, on the contrary, we adopted the system of having the magazine filled, the cut-off pushed home, and the rifle was treated as a single-loader until the necessity arose, which was not frequent, of using the contents of the whole magazine. In order to find out the opinion of practical soldiers on the point of the advantages or disadvantages of the different systems, I asked the following question :

6. *Are you in favour of the clip loader or the single cartridge loader ?*

An officer in answer to this writes : " I am in favour of a clip loader if some cut-off can be arranged for safety purposes, as much greater intensity of fire can be developed when required." Another says : " Provided that troops have been highly trained and well disciplined I am most certainly in favour of the clip loader, not only for convenience of loading but also for collecting ammunition from casualties and for supplying men in action."

The majority of opinions expressed are without any question in favour of the clip, and I found that there are various reasons given besides the convenience of

loading. Many of my correspondents point out that the loss of ammunition by carrying single cartridges is very great. "Men dropped single rounds constantly, or left them on their camping grounds. To a great extent this would not have happened had we had a clip." "I am in favour of the clip, certainly. The main reason is that, with clips, ammunition is not lost so much." "Most undoubtedly a clip loader should be adopted in order to take full advantage of the fleeting opportunities which occur in the battle field. With our present magazine the difficulty and slowness of charging it makes one chary of employing it in case some overwhelming necessity should find one unprepared. Ammunition is more easily handled by the soldier during action if in clips, and is no more difficult to carry, and is less liable to be lost." "Clip loader preferable, quicker to load, will prevent loss of cartridges." Among all my answers there is but one single officer who expresses an opinion in favour of the single cartridge loading. He says: "I account for the bad shooting of the Boers on several occasions to the fact that they 'loosed off' the whole of their clip without aiming after the first shot. I am in favour of the single cartridge loading, and the magazine should be difficult to replenish."

The opinions are overwhelmingly in favour of the clip. With some modifications I should say the following expresses the general view :

In favour of the clip with a cut-off.

The next question in this series touches upon a subject of vital importance to the infantry officer and soldier. Under the old system, where troops remained in close proximity to their officers, their control was quite easy. A company advancing to the attack was directly under the captain's eye, and every man could be reached by the voice of the company commander. In the new formation, rendered necessary by the power, range, and rapidity of fire of the new rifle, this is no longer possible. I have seen in South Africa a company covering over half a mile of ground. This was, no doubt, an abnormal condition of things, but as war is chiefly a preparation for abnormalities it might occur again at any time, and the good infantry soldier should be prepared for such an eventuality. It is obvious in such a case that the control of the officer commanding the company, and even of his two subalterns, is barely sufficient for the proper direction of the company. There must be no division of command if an operation is to be successful. At the same time certain functions which formerly belonged to an officer commanding a company will have to be delegated to his subalterns and to his non-commissioned officers.

A company officer holds a position of extreme responsibility not only in action but also on the march and in camp. These duties are very often of a most arduous nature. He is responsible that his men are comfortable, warm, well fed, kept from insanitary water, and also that they are properly clothed and equipped. Take the case of a typical company commander in the

late war during the march up to Pretoria. He had to be up as early as any of the men, he had to see that they had their breakfasts, that their effects were packed, and that they were ready for the march. When the advance took place he often marched with them enormous distances, twenty or twenty-five miles being not infrequently covered during the day. On arriving at the camp he had to furnish outposts, sentries, see to the feeding of his men and to their comfort during the night, receive orders and transmit them, and long after his men were sleeping the sleep of the tired he was busy about his company duties. Many of those who have practical experience of warfare say that these duties combined with the hard work of marching are too much for any one officer, and it is suggested that he should be mounted. With a view to eliciting the opinions of the regimental officers on all these points I asked the following question :

7. *Advancing in open order under fire what would you consider the greatest number of men that an officer can handle with advantage, and to what extent would you be prepared to delegate the command to your non-commissioned officer? Should the company officer be mounted?*

This question has been answered fully by nearly every officer, and I quote from some of the replies. "In open order an officer can handle from about twenty to twenty-five men, but can control up to a company of 100 men. Hence all section commanders should be trained to act on their own initiative, as the moment and situation require, in furtherance of their company commander's wishes, looking to him for such guidance as he may be able to give and keeping him informed of what they are doing. In the same way all non-commissioned officers should be able to act, in case their section is split up or, owing to casualties, a command of a section devolves on them." "I am quite prepared to delegate command of a section, say of fifteen men, to a non-commissioned officer in whom I had faith." "Ten or a dozen. Non-commissioned officers should have same powers as the captain." "The number of men an officer can handle must depend entirely on the frontal line."

"In action a private in the firing line will generally know better than the general in the rear whether an advance is possible, and a great deal must be left to the initiative of the men." "Advancing in open order under fire twenty-five is the greatest number a man can handle with advantage." "In attack, choice of ground for defence and outposts, &c., I find most non-commissioned officers unreliable. I should not be prepared to expect them to lead men without receiving the initiative from an officer." "In South Africa I should say twenty-

five men was the greatest number he could thoroughly control in the fighting line. Officers cannot be efficiently replaced by the non-commissioned officers, who are apt to be too young, often younger than the men they command." "Thirty men is as much as an officer can handle with advantage. Responsibility to be delegated to non-commissioned officers depends entirely on the individual." "I should say that the present wide extension of a section is the greatest number of men that an officer can handle with advantage."

It will be seen from these replies that there is a fair amount of unanimity on the subject. With regard to the question as to whether a company officer should be mounted I find without exception that my correspondents would recommend this. They point out that the work of a company officer is of such an arduous nature that a horse is an absolute necessity. Most of them add, however, that horses should be abandoned on coming into action. Taking the replies altogether I should say the following would correctly express the views of my correspondents :

In extended order the greatest number of men that an officer can handle properly is from fifteen to twenty-five men. A non-commissioned officer can take command of smaller numbers only in cases where he has given

proof of qualities as a leader of men. The company commander should certainly be mounted.

In order to obtain from practical officers who know exactly what they are talking about some hints as to the equipment of the foot soldier, I asked the following question :

8. *Were you satisfied with the equipment of your troops during the campaign, as regards head and foot gear, rifles and bandoliers ?*

I take a typical reply. "The only disadvantage we found in the helmet was its liability to break up. The ammunition boot as issued in South Africa was good. The great drawback of the Lee-Metford rifle is that the bolt is liable to get lost. Bandoliers if made of leather are best."

Another says : "Regarding foot gear I would recommend a much larger number of sizes than are at present issued. Some men go through their service without ever having a properly fitting pair of boots, because their feet are not quite normal though otherwise quite sound for marching. A liberal allowance of grease for keeping the leather soft should always be issued."

It was well known that during the South African war

men lying down to shoot found that their helmets gradually were jerked over their eyes, because the projecting flap on the back touched their shoulders, and it was no uncommon sight to see men either with their helmets placed the wrong side foremost or taken off altogether. With the adoption of the slouch hat this did not occur, as the soft brim gave to the pressure of the shoulder and did not work the hat forward. All my correspondents are in favour of the slouch hat, but of course they recognise that in countries of great heat it does not afford sufficient protection against the sun, and they recommend for such countries a form of helmet which will not have the defects which I have just described. With regard to the rifle a great number of officers say that the sighting was defective, and some recommend a better guard for the foresight. It is also pointed out that the sights are not fine enough, and it is obvious that in the opinion of my correspondents there is room for great improvement in the sighting of the rifle generally. Many urge that the telescopic sights should be given to skilled marksmen in each company. There is general complaint of the gear issued for the purpose of carrying the cartridges. The original pouch arrangement shed cartridges all over the veldt, while the web bandolier without flaps which were issued later on were equally useless. When they became wet they were too tight to allow the cartridge to be pulled out, and in dry weather they became so loose that the cartridge would not stay in.

The following, I think, is a correct interpretation of the aggregate of the answers received :

The helmet as issued was bad and seriously interfered with the shooting of the men. Boots on the whole were good but a larger number of sizes required. The rifle was somewhat defective in sighting arrangements, and until the introduction of the leather bandoliers with flaps, none of the equipment issued for carrying bandoliers was of any use whatever.

In the last question of this series I have put forward for the consideration of my correspondents a suggestion which has been made with regard to the infantry organisation and the infantry regiment. I asked :

9. *Do you concur in the suggestion that the present companies should be amalgamated into double companies each under a Major? Do you think if this was done better results in training, &c., would be obtained?*

I give the answer of a very competent officer in full, as it covers the ground of a great many others. He

writes: "I think this suggestion most unfortunate in every way, and if carried into effect I think it will seriously lessen the willingness of the junior officers to accept responsibility. If an officer who has reached the rank of captain is not capable of training his company thoroughly—well, he should be got rid of; if he is capable and keen, you will take away a great deal of his interest and keenness and therefore lessen his capabilities by putting a major in charge of him. You will not make a bad officer a capable and good officer by taking responsibility off his shoulders, and why take responsibility from a capable officer? The younger a man is when he has responsibility thrust on him the better, and it should be the object of all Army reformers to give more responsibility to junior officers. It is a pity that there is no job for an officer in the Army such as the command of a torpedo boat offers to the young naval officer. If the training at present given to companies is not as good as it should be, the system is at fault. The captain of a company should have more absolute command of his men and should be freer to train them as he thinks best. His method should not be interfered with, and he should be judged by the results of the training of his company, and the man who cannot train his company up to the required standard would be better out of the combatant branches of the Army altogether."

This question has opened up the whole subject of Infantry training, and the answer I have just quoted practically covers the ground of most of the others. It

is curious to notice how the Infantry officer is anxious for early responsibility, and I think that this is a question that deserves to be thoroughly thrashed out. It seems to be the opinion of most officers who have gone through the war that, until they reach a very high rank indeed, they seem to feel that no scope is given them for their capacities. They appear perfectly frank about one aspect of the case, and that is that the earlier responsibility is given to an officer the sooner will his incapacity be discovered, and they are all willing and anxious to stand by the results of this test. At the same time there are a great number of my correspondents who are in favour of the suggestion. One officer, whose experience is a very large one, answers as follows: "Advantages (a) commanding officer would have less units to deal with, an important matter; (b) much better from an administrative point of view. Disadvantages (a) if introduced, the number of officers in a company would probably be reduced on the score of economy; (b) a smaller company is better suited to our small wars. On the whole, if no reduction of officers can be assured, I am for the double company of which the commander will be mounted. The training would be productive of better results."

On the whole, however, I think the majority of my correspondents, although the opinion is not a very decisive one, seem against the suggestion. I should interpret the answer as follows:

There are many advantages in the sugges-
tion that the present companies should be
amalgamated under double companies, each
under a major, but the possibility under such
a system of the junior officers enjoying less
responsibility than even at present is con-
sidered by the greater number of my corre-
spondents as a great and overwhelming
argument against it.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

*Let us admit it fairly, as a business people should,
We have had no end of a lesson : it will do us no end of
good.*

KIPLING.

THOSE who take an interest in the state of the Army, and desire to see the nation equipped with proper means of defence, will admit that the application of real practical reforms is the only way of attaining this result. As in the human body, disease will show outward signs sooner or later, so the defects in our Army organisation have become apparent, and we must admit that something is wrong. I think that any one who has read the foregoing pages must see that there is nothing the matter with the raw material with which we have to deal. It is good, and has remained good in spite of many difficulties. Against much unfair adverse criticism the regimental officer has striven hard and successfully to keep up the splendid traditions of his arm. But all the same we must admit the presence of a disease. Changes are difficult to bring about even where the necessity for them is clearly recognised. I think that my correspondents—often unconsciously—have diagnosed the disease correctly. It is in the defective government of the Army.

Any business man will freely admit that a system which gave excellent results fifty years ago may be, and generally is, perfectly useless to-day. If he is a progressive and intelligent man he will change with the times, and keep his organisation abreast of his newer rivals. In England we possess a conservatism which, although it undoubtedly has great advantages, is often too slow for practical purposes. Take an example from the Infantry. Every single person who has had experience of warfare

condemns certain articles of equipment as being absolutely useless. Nobody can controvert this because actual experience in the field has proved that they possess not a single advantage which could be urged against twenty disadvantages. I take it that at the War Office this is recognised as freely as by the iconoclast subaltern. Yet I doubt whether they will be abolished, for the simple reason that the Treasury would not allow the expenses of a new equipment as long as the old stock is not used up. A War Minister might feel that the presence of fifty or sixty thousand pounds worth of unused stock would lay him and his colleagues open to the terrible charge of wanton extravagance. Indeed, it would be only too easy to prove to a public, not having a knowledge of the subject, that it was a useless, senseless extravagance. If an Army Board of independent men, however, recommended the complete introduction of a new equipment, irrespective of the presence of any unused stock of the old antiquated pattern, the War Minister of the future would, I imagine, be able to carry through the reform without difficulty.

The truth is that the public has lost confidence in the government of the Army, and it will require a sweeping reform to regain it. This has been done, and I feel constrained to re-echo the insistent suggestion of nearly all my soldier correspondents, that every scheme should be examined on its merits and not as a party measure, to be attacked or defended to order. We shall never get the Army in a proper and fit state unless it ceases to

become a bone of contention between the "ins" and the "outs."

The great point brought out by the various answers to my questions is the need for accurate rifle-shooting. There is evident a desire on the part of all practical soldiers to see greater efficiency than ever was attained before. It will be the duty of the public to keep up this feeling to its proper level. There is always a tendency to relaxation after a period of strain, and the Army, being after all only a human organisation, is as liable to it as everybody else. But if we can fix a "standard of excellence," and severely criticise any falling off, I think that the results would be the ideal Army. There is a solid *vis inertiae* in the Army in the shape of prejudice, inter-arm jealousy, and precedence to be combated. It is acknowledged that skill with the rifle is the essential need of the soldier of the future (and, indeed, it always has been), yet who ever heard of an inspecting general taking haphazard twenty or thirty men out of the ranks, marching them up to the butts, and making them shoot before his eyes? There is a vast amount of chicanery still practised at the ranges, and men are often returned as marksmen who are indifferent shots. All this should be reformed, and generals in their tours of inspection should look with a lenient eye on a little lack of "smartness," provided the men know thoroughly how to shoot.

In my chapter on Cavalry, I have tried to elicit the best opinions on the changes which have seemed necessary

in the light of our experiences in the recent war. On the vexed question of lance *v.* sword, I have, I hope, shown that nearly all practical soldiers entirely approve of the abolition of the former. That there is nothing new under the sun is a very true saying, and I never realised it so much as when my attention was drawn to a book called "Cavalry : its History and Tactics," by Captain E. L. Nolan, of the 15th Huzzars. It was published in 1853, and is worthy of perusal by every cavalry soldier. I think he settled fifty years ago the vexed question of sword and lance, and I cannot refrain from quoting him. On pages 123, 124, 125, he writes :

"*The Lance and the Sword.*—Formerly it was a received opinion that the lance was particularly formidable in single encounters, that the lancer should be a light, active horseman, and that space was required wherein he might manage his horse. . . . All seem to forget that a lance is useless in a *mêlée*, that the movement a lancer pulls up and the impulsive movement is stopped, that instant the power of the weapon is gone.

"The 16th Lancers broke into the Sikh square at Aliwal and in the *mêlée* that ensued these brave men attacked the lancers sword in hand and brought many of them low, for they could effect nothing with the lance.

"In the second Sikh war I have been told that our lancers often failed in driving their lances into a Sikh because they had shawls wrapped round them. I could tell them a better reason ; it was because those who

failed did not know that it requires speed to drive a lance home and that it must be carried into the object by a horse.

“I have often seen, when hog-hunting, men with spears sharp as razors unable to drive the weapon through the hog’s hide, whereas others (old hands) would send a spear in at one side and out at the other through bone and all.

“This shows that the lance is not a dangerous weapon in all hands and therefore unfit for soldiers.

“All experiments with blunt lances on fresh horses go for nothing in my opinion, for many of the thrusts would not go through a man’s jacket; and in a campaign, when horses are fatigued, and will not answer the spur, even the skilful horseman is helpless with a lance in his hand.

“At speed you can drive a lance through anything, but not so at a slower pace; and at a walk and a stand you become helpless, as the thrust can be put aside with ease or the pole seized with the hand.

“If the advantage of the lance is in its long reach, the longer the weapon the more formidable. The French gendarmes, whose lances were eighteen feet long, suffered such dreadful defeats that they gave up the weapon altogether.

“Gustavus Adolphus took the lances away from his cavalry in the Thirty Years’ War. He had practically experienced their inefficiency.

“Let us allow, for the sake of argument, that a lance

of a proper length, handy, well-poised and held at its centre, reaches further beyond the horses' head than the point of a sword held at arm's length, in what way can this conduce to success when it is universally acknowledged that it is the superior impetus and speed of one of the advancing lines which overthrows the other, the weapon only coming into play afterwards. . . .

“The failure of the 7th Hussars in the retreat from Quatre Bras, against the French lancers, jammed close together in the streets of Gemappe, was attributed to the lances of their opponents. Of what use were the lances to the French a few minutes after, when a regiment of Life Guards (without cuirasses) went at them sword in hand and drove them through the town and out at the other side—riding them down and cutting them from their horses in all directions ?

“Just after the battle of Waterloo, lancer regiments, for the first time, were formed in England !”

I feel that in some respects in the preceding chapters it has been difficult to avoid the use of a certain amount of technical phraseology, but as far as possible I have tried to make them easy of comprehension by the peaceful citizen who has not gone into the question of military science very deeply. For the sake of those who wish to keep in mind the leading points only I recapitulate here the main recommendations made in each arm or department.

In the Staff, officers should return to their regiments

at intervals in order not to lose touch with regimental life. The best regimental officers only should go to the Staff College. An independent Army Board should take over the duties of Commander-in-Chief as at present understood.

In the Artillery arm, if possible, something should be devised to allow batteries to act in more open formation without the officer commanding losing full control.

Cavalry should be taught to use the rifle as their principal weapon. They should also be trained to shock tactics in the use of the sword. The lance should be abolished.

A permanent force of Mounted Infantry should be formed as an instructional force, and it should train efficiently one-eighth of our Infantry.

Infantry training should aim at making as many men as possible skilled marksmen. Skill with the rifle is the be-all and end-all of an infantryman's duties, provided he is taught to march and the new open formation of attack.

If we are to take advantage of our war experience, which, as I said before, should be looked upon as a great national asset, the principal reforms advocated by my correspondent should be insisted upon. The infinite trouble taken by so many officers in preparing their answers convinces me that the British officer is most anxious to do all he can towards attaining the ideal of an efficient army. It is a great mistake to think that he is indifferent, but he has felt that for a long time he has

been preaching to deaf ears. Now that the public attention has been directed towards the Army, he has come forward and given the nation the benefit of his experience without any idea of self-advancement or self-advertisement, and I feel that I owe it to my correspondents to draw attention to the results of their thought, being convinced that the eminently practical nature of their suggestions will appeal to a nation which prides itself on being practical above all things.

There are several departments in the Army upon which I have not touched in the preceding pages. The Army Service Corps, the Royal Army Medical Corps, and the Veterinary Branch are all parts of the organisation very essential to its well-being. With regard to the first-named there is really nothing to say. Their work was so excellent, and the feeding of the Army so perfect as far as this corps was concerned, that it would be almost an impertinence to suggest reforms. There are several small matters, however, about which there is a difference of opinion, but if the corps keeps up its reputation for efficiency and thoroughness which it justly acquired during the late war, there is every reason to believe that these little difficulties will be quickly overcome in the businesslike way which is characteristic of the organisation.

The Royal Army Medical Corps has had its own Commission and its recommendations are being carried out. The members of the corps have always appeared to me to come up to the ideal of a British officer,

hardworking, devoted to duty, and keen to make the best of things. I am convinced that they have learned the lessons of the war just as much as any other branch of the Army.

The Veterinary Department possesses able and competent officers, but it is undermanned and underpaid. There should be a strict inquiry made into this branch of the service with a view to increasing the number of officers required. I think that it will be found that had their recommendations in the late war been carried out we should have had a much smaller wastage of horses.

FINIS

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