

On: 26 December 2014, At: 18:28

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered

Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41

Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Royal United Services Institution. Journal

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

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

The Training of our Recruits

Colonel G. Hatchell

Published online: 11 Sep 2009.

To cite this article: Colonel G. Hatchell (1891) The Training of our Recruits, Royal United Services Institution. Journal, 35:163, 953-969, DOI: [10.1080/03071849109416685](https://doi.org/10.1080/03071849109416685)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03071849109416685>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not

be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

The Journal
OR THE
Royal United Service Institution.

VOL. XXXV.

SEPTEMBER, 1891.

No. 163.

[Monthly Issue.]

Wednesday, July 8, 1891.

GENERAL GEORGE ERSKINE, Vice-President, in the Chair.

THE TRAINING OF OUR RECRUITS.

By Colonel G. HATCHELL, Commanding Rifle Depôt.

IN the great struggle to obtain young men to fill the ranks of our Army, it has seemed to me that once recruits have been secured a sort of reaction takes place, and they are allowed rather to pass out of mind and suffer from neglect, at any rate not to receive that attention which young soldiers both require and deserve.

For although the physical training of the soldier, from the gymnastic point of view, was very ably dealt with in this theatre three years ago by Colonel Onslow, then Inspector of Gymnasia, I do not remember that the general question of the best way of making the most of our raw material has ever before been brought under discussion in the Institution.

When, therefore, the Council were good enough to invite me, in the absence of a more competent exponent, to bring the matter forward, with many misgivings I consented, rather than that the subject should be postponed to another season.

I may say at once that I have no radical changes to propose, nor can I do more than offer for what they are worth the results of four years' experience in command of one of our largest depôts, where about 100 recruits joined every month, and about 300 were constantly under training.

To many, I am afraid, there will not appear to be much originality in my remarks, as, no doubt, the same ideas have occurred to them, and been put into practice, but I look upon this Institution as just the place for an interchange of experiences, and hope to hear to-day some valuable opinions and suggestions from Officers Commanding Regimental Districts and others who take a special interest in the subject.

The recruit's training naturally divides itself under two heads, the moral and the physical, and, as the former has, to my mind, hitherto received but scant attention, I propose to give more prominence to it by taking it first.

Moral Training.

Now these words will, no doubt, sound strange to many Officers, as somewhat beyond the scope of their professional duties, but I wish to use them in no narrow sense, but rather as embracing the whole of the soldier's education that is not physical, and while for generations past the recruit has been drilled and marched, and taught to shoot or perhaps instructed in gymnastics, what, I would ask, has ever been done to convince him that he has joined a noble profession, to arouse his nationality and patriotism, to kindle in him *esprit de corps*, in fact through him to raise the moral tone of the Army? I presume it will be admitted that if these qualities be instilled in the soldier, he will prove not only a more reliable man in the field but also a more exemplary character in quarters.

My experience of the recruit that joins in these days is that he is young, willing, anxious to learn according to his abilities, easily influenced, and grateful for any notice taken of him, with a keenness to get on, which, compared with many old soldiers, is quite refreshing.

Now what more promising materials can we have to work upon, and what a chance appears to be lost!

The recruits that join the Army may be broadly classed under two heads, (1) those who enlist because they always had a liking for soldiering, as they express it; and (2) those who are induced to do so from immediate pressure, being out of work. The first class, as one might expect, furnishes the better soldiers, and there is a larger number of them than many people suppose. They do not examine critically the recruiting posters describing the advantages of the Army, nor carefully compare notes as to the amount of pay and allowances they will receive, but take it for granted they will be adequately provided for, and in the Service afterwards they are not the grumblers. A large number of these come on from the Militia, where they have just had the experience of four hours' drill a-day to test their liking for the life! Of the other class, however, it is a great mistake to suppose that, because they are out of work, they are therefore the dregs of the population. It must be remembered that in all ranks of life the labour market is now and then affected, and numbers of respectable young men, such as shop assistants, servants, artizans, and clerks, even gentlemen's sons, owing to various circumstances, find themselves unable to obtain employment, and I think it is much to their credit that they enlist and lead an honest life instead of loafing about and living on their friends or on their wits.

The better class of these make excellent soldiers, and, with a little encouragement and gentle treatment, begin to like the life and show a desire to make the best of it. There are, of course, many other reasons of a more complex nature for joining the Army, and I know

the fair sex are responsible for a good share of enlistments, to escape from delicate entanglements! These men often do well, if they are left alone and their tormentors do not find them out. Indeed, it is impossible for anyone who has had to deal with the taking of recruits for his regiment not to be interested in each young lad, as he comes before him in his plain clothes, and, in answer to questions, gives an account of himself, and while the recruiting authorities devote their energies to ascertaining why the youth of the country do *not* enlist, it is the more genial task of the trainer of recruits to try and discover why they *do*.

For the recruit's moral training it is above all things essential to gain the sympathy and assistance of his company Officers. He should be taught from the beginning to look to his Officer as his best friend and adviser, and Officers should be required to know their men, and should take every opportunity of becoming more familiar with them by joining in their sports and amusements. They should also let the recruits see that they take an interest in them, and by the amount of interest they show they should be judged by their superiors. Hard words have lately been said of Officers at depôts by one of our legislators, that they go there to have an easy time and think there is nothing to be done, but my experience of Officers is that, although they will not, as a rule, originate work for themselves, they will always carry out with more or less zeal any task especially set them, and the mission of an Officer at a depôt is the moral education of the recruits of his company, while the Adjutant is held responsible for their physical training.

This apportionment of the duties of Officers is rendered necessary by our voluntary system of recruiting. In conscript armies, of course the whole of the recruits of the year join on one day, and are handed over to their company to train, but when they keep dropping in all the year round this system cannot be carried out, owing to the inconvenient number of squads there would be for drill; consequently, it is better to relieve the company Officer of the responsibility for their drill, but make him answerable for their interior economy and instruction in all their duties as soldiers, excepting physical training.

A most welcome step in the direction of giving an impetus to this moral training was taken by H.R.H. the Commander-in-Chief about two years ago, when a circular was issued enjoining the practice of giving oral instruction to recruits at depôts, but I should be glad to see the idea carried further and given more system and reality. The subjects of instruction suggested, though well chosen as far as they went, seemed to invite further development, so, acting on the spirit of the circular, with the assistance of some of the Officers and sergeants, I compiled a course of lectures or oral instruction to serve as a guide to the subjects to be touched upon. They are by slow degrees being printed in the depôt press, and I think I may say that the lecturers find them convenient to refer to. The system found to answer best was to post all the recruits who joined in the first half of a month to one company, and those in the second half to the next company, and so on. At the end of each fortnight, a course of sixteen lectures was

commenced, one by the Officer and one by the colour-sergeant every week for eight weeks, when the recruit is due to go to his battalion. In this way the recruits went regularly through the course, neither missing nor hearing one twice. The lecture was given instead of a drill, and was, therefore, perhaps more appreciated. I have a set of these lectures by me here, should anyone care to see them, but will only just allude to some of the headings to show the great variety of subjects that may usefully be dealt with. The contents of each are summarized as follows:—

First Week.

Officer: Commands, ranks, &c.—Organization of dépôt and of battalions—Clothing and necessaries—Barrack damages—Local orders—Cleanliness—Ambition.

Sergeant: Names of Officers—Manner of making complaints, &c.—Various local orders applicable to recruits—Duties of orderly man.

Second Week.

Officer: Oath of Allegiance—Loyalty—*Esprit de Corps*—Sources of recruiting—School—Gymnastics.

Sergeant: Cleaning and care of arms, &c.

Third Week.

Officer: History of the regiment (first part).

Sergeant: The Rifle—History of arms generally—The Martini-Henry—The magazine rifle and its advantages.

Fourth Week.

Officer: Honours and rewards—The various medals and decorations—Good-conduct badges—Prizes for good shooting—Paid appointments and employments.

Sergeant: Cleaning, care, and fitting of clothing and equipment.

Fifth Week.

Officer: Advantages of the Army—Privileges of the soldier.

Sergeant: Soldiers' accounts—Various charges and credits—Regimental savings bank—Pocket ledgers.

Sixth Week.

Officer: Further history of the regiment.

Sergeant: Bugle calls and how to act on them.

Seventh Week.

Officer: Read and explain Army Act.

Sergeant: Further bugle calls—Orders for dress, &c.

Eighth Week.

Officer: Discipline—Drill.

Sergeant: Duty—Guards, &c.—On the march—On board ship, &c.

I may say they are entirely for regimental and local consumption, and could not be adapted for general use without considerable amendment.

The more important of the subjects touched upon are those that tend to make the recruit believe that he has raised rather than lowered himself by choosing the profession of arms and serving his Queen and country. The men I have been accustomed to are mostly town-bred lads, with much intelligence, and I have heard sufficient to know that the seed is sown in good soil, and that even in the first few months of their service it is possible to cultivate a certain amount of *esprit de corps* and self-respect, which produces excellent results afterwards.

A promising feature in the recruit of the present day is his desire to improve his education by going to school. His attendance is, of course, voluntary, yet, after completing four hours' drill at 3 o'clock, half an hour later about 50 per cent. of them fall in again and are marched to school. Every encouragement is given, and the school hours are changed in summer and winter to suit their convenience.

Now for a few suggestions. I am not one of those who think that everything the Germans do in military matters must be superior to our insular methods, but there is one and only one point in the education of their recruits that I would be glad to see adopted in our Service, and that is the prominence and solemnity that are given to the taking of the oath, which is made a most imposing ceremony. The German conscript is not sworn in until four days after he joins, and part of each day is devoted to preparing him for the ordeal. He and his comrades are then marched to church and solemnly pledge themselves on the colours of their regiment.

How different is it in our Army, and can anything be less likely to impress a recruit than the manner in which he is sworn in a recruiting office? The value of ceremony should not be underrated, and in my opinion everything calculated to stamp on his mind and senses the importance of his act and to arouse his enthusiasm should be brought into play. We cannot wait a week for the recruit to take the oath on attestation, but is there any reason why during Divine service every Sunday the recruits of the past week should not come to the front and repeat the oath of allegiance on the colours or badge of their regiment in the presence of their Officers and comrades? Even the wording of the oath itself, I would humbly suggest, might be made less formal and more hearty and intelligible to a recruit's understanding.

I find there is a good deal of laudable ambition or keenness to get on among the majority of our recruits, which it is very desirable to encourage, and an excellent way of stimulating this feeling is to promote liberally to the rank of temporary lance-corporal, that is,

only while at the *depôt*. They are very proud of getting the stripe, and almost invariably rise to the responsibility thrust upon them, which is proved by my seldom having to revert to the ranks a temporary lance-corporal for misconduct as a non-commissioned officer, and so well have they as a rule turned out that Commanding Officers of battalions have occasionally on my recommendation allowed them to keep their stripes on joining, and all are placed on the roll of those next for promotion.

Another recommendation I would make is to keep a register, in which to enter the names of those recruits who on joining appear to be "promising," by reason of their respectability or any special qualifications, or who produce testimonials to character. It is a great help to taking an interest in a man to see him in his plain clothes and ask him questions, before he is lost in uniform among his comrades, and the Officer of the company taking recruits should be invited to be present. It brings to light any accomplishments a man may possess, and will be found a useful record afterwards. I have here a few pages taken at random from my book.

I think it is also a judicious thing to remind Officers, especially young Officers, when they join a *depôt* for the first time, that recruits require a different treatment from the old soldiers they have been accustomed to, and that, in dealing with minor offences and irregularities, every allowance should be made for the thoughtlessness of youth, ignorance of the gravity of the offence, temper, and inexperience of discipline, which has *gradually and temperately* to be instilled into them by explanation and advice. The same precepts should also be constantly impressed upon the non-commissioned officers, as they are not found, so far as I am aware, in any regulations. It is hard, I think, on the recruit to have a page of his defaulter sheet filled with entries for trifling irregularities, which, with more knowledge and experience, he never would have committed, and I recommend, therefore, that Officers be enjoined to award, for minor neglects, either admonition, one day C.B., or an extra fatigue or parade, which do not entail an entry in the defaulter book, when considered sufficient to meet the requirements of discipline.

I should not like to omit mention of a part of the recruit's moral training, which can only be productive of good results, and that is the practice of giving him a personal introduction to his Chaplain. Once a week, at a fixed hour, the recruits of the past week attend in the Chaplain's room for registration; that is, to enable him to ascertain whether they have been baptized and confirmed, and to give him an opportunity of speaking to them individually, and showing the interest that is taken in them. I am not sure if this is generally done by Chaplains, but it seems to me a practice deserving of commendation; in fact, it is only fair to any clergyman, who is earnest in his work, that he should have such an opportunity.

And I think you will agree that the recruit's moral training would scarcely be complete were not some means taken to inculcate temperance. Many Officers are apt to think lightly of temperance societies and their works, and I, myself, until quite lately, have never

taken any prominent part in this cause; but when I am aware, from recent experience, that the recruit is generally a sober lad, and when the canteen steward tells me that it is the old soldiers that support the liquor bar, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that a large number of sober young men learn intemperate habits in the Army. Our aim and our duty should be, at any rate, to keep them as sober as when they joined, and when I mention that I know it to be a fact that in one of our garrisons nearly 200 out of 400 recruits are members of a temperance society and total abstainers, it shows a desire to keep away from drink, with a knowledge of its mischievous consequences, which is worthy of every encouragement. And yet I am sure many will be surprised to hear that there is not one temperance society for the Army at home, which soldiers of every religious persuasion can join with the full approval of their clergy! I think it high time that an Army Temperance League be established with branches in every barrack, and beginning with the dépôts, which should be unsectarian, and not only for the benefit of a particular creed; and I would be glad if some of those who are more conversant with the organization of these societies than I am would take the subject in hand, with a view of filling up the gap that undoubtedly exists.

And now, having given the recruit as much moral training as we can in ten weeks, in drafting him to his battalion, in order that his good points may not be lost sight of, I would suggest the desirability of company Officers being requested to send in the names of any who have brought themselves to notice and developed any useful qualities, and that these reports, with the Colonel's remarks, be forwarded to the Commanding Officer of the battalion. Recruits, in one of the lectures, should be told that these reports are sent forward, as it acts as an incitement to them to do their best; and I am told Commanding Officers are glad to have them to refer to in the selection of men for non-commissioned officers or various employments.

I will now turn to the second part of my subject, the recruit's

Physical Training.

The system of drilling recruits during the first three months of their service has undergone little or no change for generations. It was simply drill, perpetual, monotonous drill. It was not till about thirty years ago that gymnastics were introduced into the Army, and after the recruit had completed his drill and became a duty man, he was, when available, put through a three months' course of gymnastics, if there happened to be a gymnasium in his station; but two years ago a few lines quietly inserted in the new Queen's Regulations introduced a happy change in the system, which I for one had long looked forward to, and that was the order for a short course of gymnastics, concurrently with his drill, to form part of his dépôt training. No sounder move in the right direction was ever made, and now that the principle has been established, I only hope the means for carrying it out will be provided at all dépôts where the usual gymnastic appliances are not yet available.

The value of gymnastic training to the recruit was so thoroughly gone into by Colonel Onslow, in his lecture here three years ago, that I need not repeat any of his arguments or facts, but I am glad to be able to give my testimony to the satisfactory results produced by the new system, as not only is the recruit's chest and muscle well developed, and he himself made nimble and self-reliant, but, from the hardiness and activity he learnt in the gymnasium, he picks up his drill with much greater facility.

The only defect of the course is that it is too short, lasting only six weeks, and consisting of about thirty attendances of an hour and a half a day; however, it may be interesting if I mention that, from careful measurements of several classes, I find that the average increase in chest, even after this limited course, is $\frac{3}{4}$ inch, of fore arm $\frac{1}{4}$ inch, and of upper arm $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, but in weight only 4 oz.

I feel inclined here to say a word with reference to the town-bred recruit, of whom I have had a very large experience, and whom some Officers are ever ready to decry. If it were a question between a big, sturdy, country lad and a town man of inferior physique, doubtless I would take the former, but it must be remembered that in these days we cannot pick and choose, but must take any recruit that offers himself, provided he is up to the standard, and the town and country recruits' measurements being equal, I infinitely prefer the town man. It seems to me, quite independent of his intelligence and better education, that there is a greater capacity for expansion, especially among those engaged in non-laborious occupations, in the town-bred man than in the agricultural labourer who is accustomed to hard work; in fact there is a quantity of latent strength and muscle which has never before been brought into play, and which it only requires fresh air, exercise, and plenty of food to develop. In short, the town lad will improve in physique more than his brother from the country after joining. Moreover, their quickness and faculty for receiving instruction contribute to make them, if not such machines as the agricultural labourer, certainly more useful soldiers. Did not a battalion of city men take part in Roberts's march from Kabul to Candahar, and will anyone say that in the work they did, or hardships they endured, they suffered in comparison with other regiments of the force?

But to return to the question of drill, here again we are confronted, and to a greater degree, with the inconvenience of men dropping in daily. In actual drill this difficulty can be fairly well surmounted, as there are squads suited to every degree of proficiency and awkwardness, but when a man has to go through courses of musketry and gymnastics it requires much management to make everything fit in.

Experience shows that, besides his gymnastics, a recruit practically does not attend more than ten drills in the week in summer and nine in the winter. He also loses valuable time from vaccination, and perhaps sickness, and also from bad weather.

Under these circumstances, in his first ten weeks' service it requires all the energies of the drill instructors to make him pro-

ficient in Infantry Drill, Parts I and II; Rifle Exercises, except bayonet exercise; Infantry Drill, Part VIII up to Section 15, and Part X, Section 12 (duties of sentries). If more be attempted, I do not consider the result will be satisfactory; pushing on a recruit too fast is a common but short-sighted practice, and the mischief thus done is afterwards seldom, if ever, repaired.

The recruit's progress in drill depends almost entirely on the efficiency of his instructor, and on this subject I should like to say a few words.

Very great care is necessary in the choice of non-commissioned officers for depôt duty, and the regulations are strict on that point, but the selection generally rests with Commanding Officers of battalions, who are naturally interested in keeping their best men with them; the consequence is that now and then a man totally disqualified to deal with recruits by reason of a quick temper and rough manner, though otherwise deserving, finds his way there, and does more harm than good. Non-commissioned officers should, I think, come to the depôt on probation, and if found unsuited after three months' trial should be remanded to their battalions. There would be no expense incurred, as they would travel on duty with drafts.

The essentials of a good drill instructor are three. First, *he must know his work*, that is, he must study his drill book, and learn thoroughly those sections he is expected to teach. Not learn it by heart, far from it, but be able to explain in his own language what to do, and how to do it. The old habit of rattling through long cautions in the words of the book should be strictly forbidden, and it should be explained to him that these cautions are only intended for *instructors*, to describe how certain motions and practices are to be done, and are not to be repeated to the squad. I am afraid this obnoxious habit must have had its origin at Hythe, where I believe no non-commissioned officer used to be considered qualified for a certificate, unless he could repeat all the cautions without a mistake, and hence it came to be considered the correct thing to do on all occasions! The best way to show a recruit how a thing is done is for the instructor to do it himself, drawing his attention to any points that may be necessary in words of his own, and the fewer the better. If there are awkward men, they should be taken in hand individually, while the squad is standing at ease, but to keep a whole squad waiting, perhaps in some constrained position, while the instructor goes round and corrects three or four men, is a method much to be condemned, as making drill most unpopular. Besides, what recruits require is *practice* at a movement, and these constant corrections only waste time.

The second qualification for a drill is *a good manner*, which includes a good temper. He must seem to take an interest in his squad and in his work, and try to interest the men in what they are doing, and keep them in a good humour. The old bullying drill sergeant of former days, before whom recruits trembled in their boots, I am glad to say, has almost disappeared, and we find we can get on just as well without him. While the squad is standing at ease, the instructor

should talk to them on matters of drill, explaining the reasons for each practice or movement, what muscles it is intended to call into play, &c.

The third essential is, of course, a *good word of command*. Every one knows what a good word of command is, but many from carelessness fail to cultivate it, and constant supervision by the Adjutant and sergeant-major must rectify this omission. I will not go further into this, as it is explained in the drill book, but I have ventured to mention the other requisites of a good drill, as they are not alluded to in the official instructions, and non-commissioned officers require to be reminded of them.

Another important point in drill is not to change men constantly from one squad or instructor to another, like going to a higher class at school. My experience is that it is a better method to allow the instructor to bring on his squad through all the sections of drill to a certain point, and then hand over the men to the senior drill to be finished. Awkward men can be dropped out and smart recruits, who have learned drill before, can be pushed on, but by this system the instructors take more interest in their squads, and, what is valuable, it creates competition, and enables one to compare the work done by the drills and to keep them up to the mark.

It is also desirable that about twice a week the senior squads should be taken out and drilled on grass, to accustom them to keep step when they cannot hear their footfall, and to teach them light drill.

The method of individual instruction is one that should be constantly practised. By this I mean causing each man of the squad to march past the instructor singly, and correcting his faults. It should be done in full sight of the rest of the squad, so that they may be led to criticize their comrades, and learn to avoid their defects.

When recruits become further advanced the smartest of them should be exercised occasionally in drilling the squad, more especially the temporary lance-corporals, to give them confidence and train their word of command. It is called in the drill-book "*mutual instruction*," a name it scarcely deserves.

As regards running drill, I would rather postpone it until the recruit joins the ranks of his battalion; it is a matter of training rather than of instruction, and his time at the *dépôt* is better employed with other exercises. Moreover, he should have a fair amount of running in his applied gymnastics, climbing, jumping, and *escalading*.

And now to turn to the third branch of the soldier's physical training, his instruction in musketry.

There seems to be no record of any regular system of training before 1855. In that year I am informed a course of instruction was instituted, when the Enfield rifle was given to the Army, and with constant modifications it has continued to the present time; but, unlike gymnastics, it is now relegated to the period after the recruit joins his battalion. A slight move, however, has latterly been made in the direction of grafting some musketry on to the recruit's other training at the *dépôt*, by absorbing what used to be called "*position*"

drill into the firing exercise, which must be preceded by aiming drill. The latest revision of the Red Book, among other things, abolished the time-honoured "one, two, three" motions for strengthening and suppling the arms, and this I can only account for by the supposition that his previous gymnastic training renders them unnecessary. I would, however, venture to say that the weak arms of most of our recruits of the present day require more than a six weeks' course to fit them to handle a rifle in a way to produce effective shooting.

I will now conclude with some general observations on the training of our recruits, as affected by the existing *depôt* system, and offer a few suggestions, which I hope may be taken into consideration and subjected to discussion.

No good object can be gained by diving into ancient history, and bringing to light the various *depôt* systems that have been in force for the last thirty or forty years up to the present time. The territorial system having been established and barracks built at the headquarters of regimental districts, we may presume that there is little prospect of any radical change in the present arrangements taking place for some time to come. Consequently the suggestions I propose to offer are only made with the view of carrying out more perfectly the existing system. The present practice, I may mention, is for all recruits, wherever enlisted, to be sent to the *depôt* of their regiment for training for a period of ten weeks, including a six weeks' course of gymnastics but not a recruit's course of musketry, and every six weeks, such men as are trained are drafted to the home battalion.

Now I am afraid there is little doubt about it that Commanding Officers of battalions at home are by no means satisfied with a system that sends them drafts of half-trained recruits, upon whom they must set to work to put the finishing touches for another month or so before they can safely place them in the ranks of the battalion; but their greatest grievance is that they have to put all these men through a recruit's course of musketry before they can undergo their annual training with their companies, and before they are eligible to form part of a draft to the battalion abroad. Some Commanding Officers go even so far as to say they would rather train their recruits with the battalion from the very beginning.

Now I must confess I think this complaint is a very reasonable one. If a *depôt* is established for the reception and training of recruits, it should do its work thoroughly, and send them to their battalion completely trained in musketry and gymnastics, and fit for all ordinary drill and duties. Moreover, the recruit, too, has reason to complain, for, however well he may be drilled at the *depôt*, on being turned over to new masters in the middle of his training, he gets little credit for what he has done, and has to go over much of his drill again, perhaps having just finished a couple of months' training with the Militia before enlistment.

My suggestion is that recruits should be allowed to remain fourteen weeks (instead of ten) at the *depôt*, and that no man be sent to join his battalion until he has completed a ten weeks' (instead of six)

course of gymnastics, his musketry course, and learned all ordinary drills and duties. There are some few subjects he cannot be properly instructed in at the dépôt, such as battalion drill, outlying picquet duties, &c., but I have made a careful diary of the work and have tried the experiment, and find it can be done, if the necessary appliances are at hand.

In theory I do not anticipate there would be any official objection to this proposal. There would be a slightly increased accumulation of recruits at the dépôt, for whom, I have little doubt, accommodation could easily be provided, but a more formidable obstacle is the absence of rifle ranges and gymnasia at many of the headquarters of Regimental Districts, although the latter, at least theoretically, are supposed to exist. The War Department has, however, at several dépôts erected temporary sheds for gymnastic exercises, which answer the purpose fairly well, and in the schemes for new rifle ranges I hope the requirements of the dépôts will not be overlooked. At any rate, the recruits will have the same facilities for musketry as the trained soldiers of the dépôt, and, although inconvenient, they might be detached for their twenty-one days' course, as they often are, after joining their battalion.

Let us suppose that at the dépôt of a double battalion regiment, 6 recruits join every week. At the end of 4 weeks there will be 24 men available to begin a course of gymnastics, which will go on for 10 weeks concurrently with drill and later with musketry, drill or musketry being performed in the morning and forenoon and gymnastics in the afternoon; 6 weeks later, or at the end of the 10th week, this same squad will commence its musketry, concluding it by the end of the 14th week.

What I wish to see introduced is a system, where, instead of the old method of doing gymnastics at one time and nothing else, or musketry and nothing else, gymnastics and musketry should be blended with the recruit's drill and work concurrently, producing at the end of his tour at the dépôt a soldier fit to take his place in the ranks of his battalion. But to carry this out, I have a suggestion to offer, which I trust will meet with support from the Inspector of Gymnasia. The difficulty at present is to obtain instructors and gymnastic accommodation for the large body of recruits under training at dépôts, but I maintain that that these highly trained gymnasts who perform wonderful feats on the horizontal bar are not needed for a simple recruit's course, and that every company non-commissioned officer, or at any rate a large proportion of them, should be required to undergo an easy course of gymnastics, sufficient to enable them to put a squad of recruits through when necessary. A non-commissioned officer has to obtain a drill certificate in musketry; why should he not be obliged to instruct recruits in gymnastics as a matter of course, as part of his duty? In this way, where there is no gymnasium or regular instructor, much outdoor work and dumb bells might be got through by recruits under their own non-commissioned officers.

I think we exact enough from our young lads in giving them from 4 to 4½ hours' physical exercise in a day. The German recruit, who

must be got ready for work with his battalion in 12 weeks, including instruction in musketry and gymnastics, has to perform 5 hours' drill and practical work daily, with an hour's oral instruction, and some lessons in cleaning and mending to fill up his evenings! I see no occasion to adopt such ideas. I like our recruits, for instance, to have time to go to school or voluntary gymnastics, and to have leisure to amuse themselves at manly sports, all which must be impossible in the German service.

There are several other questions connected with the early life of the recruit, although not immediately with his training, which I should like to have touched upon, but the present subject is large enough, nor do I intend to go beyond the day when he leaves the depôt to join his battalion, but I cannot help feeling considerable interest, I will not say anxiety, in his career, and should be sorry to think that his moral training, in the broad sense I have used the words, came to an abrupt end on his ceasing to be a recruit, and joining the ranks of the old soldiers. I will therefore conclude by expressing a hope that some battalion Commanding Officer will take up the thread where I have left it, and tell us another day by what system he proposes to cultivate, strengthen, and maintain in the trained soldier his loyalty, patriotism, sense of duty, sobriety, and *esprit de corps* during the remaining years of his service.

Colonel R. S. LIDDELL (Commg. 23rd Regtl. Dist.): General Erskine and gentlemen, I have no intention of criticising the valuable lecture that we have heard to-day, as I am sure we are all most grateful for the many hints which have been given to us; but I think it is our duty, all of us who are commanding regimental districts, if we can, to supplement in any way what has been told us in this lecture by Colonel Hatchell. Colonel Hatchell spoke of Battalions not always sending their best Non-commissioned officers to their Depôts. Where that is the case, I certainly agree with him it is most reprehensible. Fortunately for myself, the Battalions in which I am interested could not be more generous than they are to me; they send me everything of the very best, and they look on their Depôt as the commencement of the career of every man in the Regiment. Therefore I can speak for myself, and I have no doubt there are a great many other Commanding Officers who can say the same thing. Still if there are, and I have heard of it, Regiments who are so foolish, I was going to say, as not to view their Depôts in the right light, I think it is only cutting their own throats; still it is a great misfortune. Fortunately mine is not one of them. Colonel Hatchell spoke of the promotion of young recruits to be lance-corporals, which I know to be a most valuable step in the way of rousing emulation among soldiers. I have not only obtained permission to make lance-corporals at the Depôt, but I have allowed them to go on pass to their homes as lance-corporals, which shows the youngsters in the village they come from how rapidly a man of good character, intelligence, and education can get on, and it helps recruiting. I certainly think it is a most valuable thing, and if all Commanding Officers behave as well as my Commanding Officers always do, and allow a man to remain a lance-corporal when he gets to the battalion, it makes it more valuable still. Colonel Hatchell spoke about reading the Records of Regiments as part of the instruction given by the Officer every week. The Regiment I am connected with, the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, has only just published its Records, so that it has only lately been done, but it does give the men an immense interest in their own Regiment. "Barrack damages," that is a thing we ought to go into most thoroughly. A recruit comes to the depôt for a short time only, ten weeks. On joining he has his crockery, amongst other things, to pay for, and his share of breakages in the monthly "barrack damages." He then goes to his battalion and has it all over again. Perhaps some of the barrack damages have not been assessed during his time, and they come on to the

next quarter. He may get off cheaply, but the next lot of recruits that come fall in for the damages that two lots of recruits ought to bear. This is only one out of many instances; but by careful watching barrack damages can be decreased enormously. Colonel Hatchell gave us some very valuable hints on the subject of punishments. Company Officers are very apt to think that the scale of punishment they deal out in their battalion should be dealt out to recruits, which, of course, is a mistake. I would go even a little further than Colonel Hatchell does. I really should like the Commanding Officer of a Regimental District to have the power of tearing up the company's defaulter sheet altogether on a man joining his Battalion. I would leave it to his discretion to tear it up, and let the man go away with a clean sheet. A young fellow perhaps gets a punishment that makes him careless, and he gets another. Then he goes back to his regiment with his sheet spoilt; whereas if we had the power to tear up the company default sheet he could make a fresh start. Colonel Hatchell, I think, did not allude to the subject of food. The young soldier wants more of it than the old soldiers. A bit of food in the early morning is a most important thing for the recruit. He cannot wait for his breakfast. He, perhaps, has a drill in the early morning, and a young boy of eighteen or sixteen—as he very often is, thought he ought not to be—wants a little something. I think it would be a great advantage if some one went round from the coffee-shop with biscuits and a coffee can, and gave the recruit some little thing that he could eat quickly and drink before going out to his morning drill. Then on other point. In my district, North Wales, many of the recruits only speak Welsh; they cannot speak English, and, therefore, they like to keep amongst themselves as much as possible. I think, if it can be done, a recruit on joining should be asked what company he would like to join. He very often has friends in a certain Company, and I think, if there is no great objection to it, that the recruit should be given the option and allowed to join some particular Company. I thank Colonel Hatchell for many valuable hints, which I shall act upon at once, on my return to my Depôt.

Brigade-Surgeon MYERS: Although not a Commanding Officer, I have for many years taken very great interest in the training of troops, more especially the Guards, and I have certainly seen injury done to our soldiers by over-training. I consider it of very great importance indeed to keep this subject constantly before us, and therefore I have to thank the lecturer for bringing it again to notice. He said he had nothing very new to say, but he has given us some very important hints. On one or two points I cannot quite agree with him. In the first place, I think he would wish that Officers Commanding should more especially attend to the moral training of recruits, whereas the Adjutant should attend to their physical training. No man feels more than I do the importance of the moral training of the troops. It is probably not so much attended to even now as it ought to be, although far more than it was. I quite agree that the Commanding Officer of a Recruit Depôt should watch over the moral training, but he should certainly not withdraw his close attention from the physical training, and leave this to the Adjutant, because sometimes Adjutants are more zealous than cautious, and, in their anxiety to train the recruits and make them look smart and know their duty before joining their regiments, they are apt to over-train them. Very great keenness is shown by some young Officers, who, when they want to make their men march well, put their strongest men in front, whereas older men know how injurious that is to the weaker soldier. I merely point this out as evidence that Officers in command should be most careful that enthusiastic Adjutants and drill sergeants should not over-train their men. I believe the lecturer remarked that it required extreme energy on the part of the drill sergeants to make the recruit efficient. The important thing is that they should not be too energetic, for they should allow the recruits to be trained gradually. With regard to his reference to the Chaplain, I have never heard that question publicly mooted before, but privately I have frequently drawn attention to it. I think the Chaplain is a most important person at the Depôt. The recruit comes there raw; he wants a friend, and there is no man who can stand so much in the light of a friend to him as the Chaplain, and possibly the good that he does in a moral sense is retained sometimes through the whole of the recruit's service. He is the first real friend the recruit can go to and consult in time of difficulty. I certainly do feel that the

Chaplain's position is one of the greatest importance if he is allowed opportunities to get hold of the recruits. There was one point which struck me with surprise, viz., that during the six weeks' gymnastic training (I suppose the last six weeks) the recruits only increased about 4 oz. in weight. That to me is very small. I have been at the Guards' depôt some two or three years, as well as at other times, and certainly, ten or twelve weeks after joining, I am much surprised if a healthy man has not increased in weight 4 to 8 lbs., sometimes 10 lbs., or even a stone.

Colonel HATCHELL: After what time?

Brigade-Surgeon MYERS: From the time he joins to the tenth or twelfth week, so that, if requisite, they can be discharged under the three months clause. I have instructed the Medical Officers to be careful to keep their weights most accurately, and the mere fact that a man does not increase in weight is a point of consideration whether he is likely to become an efficient soldier, because healthy recruits are almost sure to increase in weight, certainly 4 or 6 lbs. I should almost imagine that an average increase of only 4 oz. points to too much training. Then, again, with regard to town and country recruits, I do not think there can be a shadow of doubt that, given men of equal size and weight, the town recruit is a better man, a cleverer man. I think in this room Lord Woleley stated that he preferred the town recruit. But then it was not only a question of men of equal strength, but whether the weaker man, when a town recruit, was not as good as a stronger country recruit. Taken all round, I should think more of the weaker recruit if healthy than of the heavier country lad; we could make more of him in course of time by good feeding. Then, as to the question of running drill, I am very glad to hear the suggestion that running drill should not be encouraged much at our Recruit Depôts. There is no doubt they have plenty to do; the tendency is to overtrain them. I should like to see at least sixteen weeks instead of fourteen for their training. The man has to be vaccinated, and if the results are not satisfactory he has to be revaccinated, and that means a loss of time. Then, with regard to the gymnastic instructors, I should be very sorry to see them superseded in any form by other men. It is a very important training, and requires great care, and if it is divided and certain portions given to sergeants who have not been well trained, I think the recruits might be injured thereby. I certainly think, although a man has only to train to a certain point, he should be a well-trained man himself to begin with. Of course we all agree that if a young recruit is worked hard he should have extra food, and I should like to see more food given to the young recruit. Speaking of recruits of the Foot Guards, they do supplement their food very largely. Instead of drinking beer, they spend a great deal of money in even bread, and I presume this is equally the case at other depôts. With regard to the condition of the German recruit, the lecturer says he has to be completely trained in twelve weeks, including musketry and gymnastics, and has five hours' drill and practical work daily, &c. Is it not a fact that they start with men of better physical strength and training?

Colonel HATCHELL: Oh, no.

Brigade-Surgeon MYERS: I have not had any experience of them myself, but thought it might be scarcely fair to compare the training of the German recruit with that of the English recruit at the present time.

Colonel HATCHELL: General Erskine and gentlemen, I am very grateful to you all for the notice you have taken of the paper I have read, and also for some of the suggestions and kindly criticisms that have been made on it. Colonel Liddell alluded to one or two subjects which I left out, as I thought the lecture was long enough. There are several other points, such as food, clothing, the disposal of bad characters, &c., connected with recruits, which I did not go into, as I thought I would limit myself to their training only. I should like to take notice of the remark he made about his good non-commissioned officers. I should be sorry to imply that I have been badly treated in that way; but still, occasionally, instances do occur where you get some man who is very good in his battalion—a sharp, smart, non-commissioned officer, but not at all the sort of man for dealing with recruits. They require special qualifications, and though he may be a very good man, still, when he goes to the Depôt, we find that he does not suit. In such a

case it does not necessarily reflect on the Commanding Officer sending him back after three months. As to barrack damages, which were also mentioned as being very hard on the recruit, I may make a suggestion. It is one of those trifling things; but I know that in the last four years I have reduced barrack damages, per head, from about 6*d.* a month, which the men used to pay, to about 2*d.* I think that is chiefly done by having little notices printed and hung up in every barrack room, warning recruits about barrack damages. There is a useful order in the barrack department, which says that, if any article of barrack furniture is lost, you have to pay for it; but if you can produce the handle of a mop, or the half of a brush, you have not to pay for replacing it. By impressing these little things on the recruits, and telling them that by hunting up the pieces at the quarterly or monthly inspection, they will not be charged, we find a wonderful effect produced in reducing the barrack damages. Food is a thing also which I did not go into, as there is a great deal to be said about food; but I quite agree that the recruit does not get enough to eat; however, we give them every facility for getting as much as ever they like out of their own pockets. I have arranged a system of giving credit in the coffee-shop, which I find is very largely availed of by recruits. Every recruit, by going to his pay-sergeant, can get a 3*d.* ticket, so that if he has no money in his pocket—having spent it all—by getting the 3*d.* ticket he can go and hand it into the coffee-shop, and get a very good supper for 2*d.*, and a bottle of ginger beer, or something of that sort. A large number of these tickets are taken every day, so that the recruit can never say that he is without food. As to coffee in the morning, there is always a table spread just at the door in the barrack square, with cups of coffee at $\frac{1}{2}$ *d.* and 1*d.*, and a couple of biscuits, so that the soldiers can always get food, without trouble, in the barrack square. Of course it is only fair, as Colonel Liddell suggested, that a man should go to any Company he likes, and if he makes an application of that kind it is always complied with, if he gives a good reason. I am very pleased, especially at the way in which my observations about the moral training of the recruit have been taken. I think that is what has been most neglected in the past, and I cannot help thinking any well-matured scheme for the moral training of our young soldiers would have the best effect for good in their future life, either in the field or in quarters. Brigade-Surgeon Myers, I think, may trust to me, as I have said, towards the end of my paper, that I thought four hours' drill was quite enough, that recruits will not be overworked, and, as I said, that four hours' drill a day really resolves itself into only about nine or ten hours during the week, besides gymnastics. The fact is, these recruits think nothing of it. I came across a letter from one to his mother the other day, in which he said, "I have only had four hours' drill to-day." As to the gymnastic instructors, I am sorry Colonel Fox, the Inspector of Gymnasia, is not able to come here to-day; but I got a very satisfactory note from him. He is, unfortunately, abroad now, but I told him what I was going to suggest, and he was good enough to write that he thoroughly concurred in all my proposals, and that he was working hard himself to get a system of gymnastics established in every depôt where there are none at present. Dumb bells can always be used, and what is also of great use to recruits, is a sort of obstacle course, with jumps, like a steeplechase course, to practise the recruits. All that is easily got up at a very trifling expense. As regards the 4 oz. increase of weight, my weights were taken from the gymnastic measurements, that is to say, there was only six weeks difference between the two weights. They probably increased more in the month after they had joined than they did in the six weeks afterwards. No doubt the increase in three months would be considerably more. I do not think there are any further points I have to remark upon. I shall be satisfied if I have only aroused some sympathy for our recruits, and some interest in them, and if this sympathy should lead to some practical steps being taken afterwards in the direction which I have indicated in my paper.

The CHAIRMAN (General Geo. Erskine): Gentlemen, Colonel Hatchell has told us that he was invited by the Council to read a paper on the subject that we have had before us this afternoon, and I must say that he has responded in a way which is worthy of the character which he holds in the Service. He has produced a paper which, to my mind, is conceived in a most excellent spirit, and is full of wise suggestions which are the result of his experience in carrying on the various

duties devolving upon him in command of a large Depot Battalion. I am sorry that he has not had a larger audience this afternoon, but I would say to him that he must not be discouraged on that account, because I call to mind that, when Lord Brougham delivered in the House of Lords that great speech on the abolition of slavery which is an historical event, there were, I believe, only about half a dozen peers sitting on the benches before him. However, the reporters were present, and that was quite sufficient for his Lordship, and his speech has gone down to posterity. As I listened to the description of the way in which Colonel Hatchell carries on the duties of his Depot Battalion, I could not help contrasting what he said with what I recollect as being in vogue when I entered the Service. In those days, recruits were drilled, I should say, just as efficiently as they are in the present day, but their training was carried on in quite a different style. They were not encouraged to use their natural intelligence, rather discouraged I should say. I remember when I was a Subaltern in my regiment observing a squad of recruits being drilled. I believe I was being drilled at the same time myself. One of the squad made a mistake, and the sergeant who had charge called him to account for it. The man in his simplicity commenced making the excuse, "I thought," upon which he was taken up short by the sergeant, who said: "You think! What business have you to think? Colonels and Captains are paid for thinking, but you are not. Don't let me hear you talk any more about thinking." That is not the way in which Colonel Hatchell drills his recruits, and I think his plan is much superior to the old one. Of course you must not infer that what the sergeant said on the occasion to which I am alluding is a type of the feeling of all the Officers of those days, but it gives you an idea of what was very prevalent in the system at that time. Colonel Hatchell has said that he considers from 4 to 4½ hours' physical training quite sufficient in the day, and there I agree with him entirely. Then he goes on to say that he would propose extending the time of training at the depot from 10 weeks to 14. I think he stopped short too soon. For my own part, I would extend the time much further, even further than Brigade-Surgeon Myers has suggested, which, I think, was 16 weeks. Of course I speak with some diffidence in the presence of an Officer who has come fresh from a training establishment, as my experience goes back to some long period, I am sorry to say; but still let us consider what has to be done with a young man when he joins the Depot, at least, what should be done. I think before he is sent to take his place in the ranks of his Battalion, he should be thoroughly and completely trained individually, and I am quite sure that if some longer time than is allowed by the Regulations at the present period was devoted to that instruction, it would tell to the advantage of the Service in the end. It is a great mistake, I think, in all education that the first steps should be taken perfunctorily. The first steps are generally the most tedious, and they should have the greatest attention paid to them. I was much impressed by the concluding remark in Colonel Hatchell's lecture. Supposing that the young soldier is trained in the way which he describes as prevailing in the Winchester Battalion, I cannot help thinking it would be deplorable that when that young man was sent to take his place in a Battalion of his Regiment at some other station, all the moral training which he had received should come to an end, and I do not see that there is any reason than that should be the case. In fact, I see every reason why it should not be the case. Colonel Hatchell has said, in connection with that remark of his, that he would like to see the subject further discussed in this theatre, and I hope it will be, so. He suggests that it should be taken up by some Officer commanding a Battalion and I would like to propose an amendment upon that suggestion, to the effect that the work should be taken up by Colonel Hatchell himself, and I think most of those present, after having heard what he has said on the present occasion, will endorse my view. I think, gentlemen, now, that it only remains for me to express to Colonel Hatchell on your behalf, our thanks for the trouble that he has taken in preparing the very valuable paper which he has read to us, and coming here to take part in the discussion which followed.