

With regard to the training of officers, I am sure the classes of instruction that have been held in the various centres during the past year have had in many cases good results, but I am quite aware of the almost insurmountable difficulties that lie in the way of making the courses thoroughly practical. The officers were in such very widely separated stages of knowledge and experience that it was probably impossible to avoid beginning a short course of a few days with elementary drill, and ending with the duties of an officer in command of a force of all arms. I understand that in future the seniors and juniors will be in separate courses.

Then, again, there are no troops available with which to train the officers, and though much can, of course, be done by staff rides and regimental tours, yet that alone will never enable officers to handle forces in the field if they never work with troops. To quote one of the finest authorities on the subject of training officers, Colonel Henderson, in his "Science of War," says with regard to regimental officers,—

"The four things necessary are,—

"(1.) To train the judgment of the officers so that when left to themselves they may do the right thing;

"(2.) To make use of the most difficult ground available;

"(3.) To avoid the constant practice of normal formations;

"(4.) To train the individual skirmisher."

Referring to the groundwork of an officer's training, he says, "Let him learn how the individual soldier, the individual section, company, and battalion is expected to act in every phase of active service, and the knowledge he has thus acquired will render it easy for him to learn the art of independent command." "Skill in placing his men in a good position for using their rifles, in leading them from cover to cover, in knowing when to close and when to extend during an attack, is of infinitely more value to the regimental officer than a knowledge of how Wellington crossed the Douro, or Steinmetz passed the defile of Nachod. Four weeks' company training is a better education for a company leader than a year's study of Hamley." Also he says, "Theory, if it is to leave an impression on the mind, must go hand-in-hand with practice, and a system of instruction which overlooks this consideration is not only useless, but revolting to common-sense."

It is sincerely to be hoped that means may be found to make the courses of instruction for officers thoroughly practical.

THE READINESS OF THE FORCES FOR WAR.

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