

1 GEORGE V., A. 1911

The physique of the men is excellent, they ride sufficiently well, and the class of horses seen by me is quite suitable to the work of mounted riflemen in a close country. Their inefficiency is owing to faulty methods of training and instruction.

Squadron officers are not sufficiently grounded in their duties as leaders and instructors. As a rule they cannot lead properly, nor are they sufficiently instructed themselves to train and instruct their men.

There is nothing like enough troop and squadron drill instruction, and regiments are brought together under the commanding officer before squadrons are fit to work as part of a regiment.

The ability of all ranks of the cavalry to carry out the rôle which they will have to fulfil in this country is, so far as I have been able to judge, very much below what it should be.

Having regard to its great importance I strongly urge the necessity of increasing their annual camp attendance from 12 to 16 days, as is the case with the artillery.

For the rest, it is for the training department of the Militia Council to lay down a syllabus of training which is applicable to what is expected of that arm in war, and then for the officer charged with the inspection of the cavalry and Cavalry Brigadiers to enforce the constant practice of the syllabus, and to see that there is absolute uniformity of method throughout the whole force. The Inspector of Cavalry must make himself thoroughly acquainted with the qualifications of the brigadiers, commanding officers and squadron commanders, and report fully upon any whom he considers unfit to fill these positions.

Great care must be taken in the selection of young officers and non-commissioned officers, and they should receive a more extensive preliminary training, both theoretical and practical, than appears to be the case at present.

The methods of field training adopted in the field artillery seem to be sound and good and, so far as I saw them, they appear to lead to the best results. There can be no doubt that the standard of training efficiency in this arm is very high, considering the few opportunities they have of coming together and their untrained horses.

So much depends upon sound supervision and inspection that I cannot avoid again referring to the excellent work which has been done for the Canadian militia by the officers of the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery.

With regard to the peace training of the infantry, I am of opinion that far too much attention is given to the practice of ceremonial exercises and evolutions. In fact, the greater part of the time available for training appears to be devoted to drills of a type which in respect of training for war are nearly obsolete. A certain amount of drill in close order is necessary to inculcate steadiness and accuracy of movement, but considering the very limited time available for training of all kinds, I consider that such practices for the militia should be confined to company drills, and that the time expended in battalion and brigade ceremonial parades is largely wasted. Moreover, I have observed that the excessive practice of ceremonial—and the neglect of manœuvre—have apparently cramped both the initiative and the intelligence of the officers and men when employed in field manœuvres, with the result that mechanical, barrack-square accuracy is attempted without regard to the condition of the ground or to the effect of the enemy's action.

I can understand the natural desire on the part of the militia to make a good appearance on ceremonial parades. Even for this end, the true basis of training is the company, and practice in battalion and brigade, with insufficiently trained companies, will add nothing to ceremonial smartness. But elasticity and freedom in manœuvre are of infinitely greater value than any mere parade smartness, and these cannot be attained unless companies have opportunities of engaging in manœuvre on suitable ground and under conditions which simulate, in some way, an operation of war. It seems to me that, at present, smartness in drill is looked upon as an end to be attained instead of merely as a means of acquiring efficiency in manœuvre, which is the real preparation for war.

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