

enlist for a shorter term with the colors ; to tie themselves down to a fixed service as it were, for a shorter term, became a necessity, and from it sprang the idea of amalgamating the color service with a period of reserve service. Men were found to be not unwilling to bind themselves to a shorter term with the colors, and then by giving them a small retaining fee, as it were, they could be kept on in the reserve, available for service on emergency.

I can well remember the storm which this radical change raised in the minds of those who had been brought up in, and were accustomed to the old system. All sorts of evils were prophesied ; the men with the colors were to be mere recruits, half trained, immature, with no *esprit de corps* ; the reserves were to be a shadow, not to be found when required. But time has shown the fallacy of many of these prophecies of evil. I do not mean to imply that we have reached perfection, even now, but I do certainly assert that I have lived to see the benefits of the short service system, and to believe in it, on the whole, as a system. We English are slow to move in the way of improvements ; there are many things yet which are wanting, and where we might improve, but the system is sound nevertheless. And, year by year I have witnessed a steady but decided improvement in the *status*, physique, education, intelligence, and respectability of the men who enter our ranks.

It is happily nowadays very rare indeed to find a recruit who cannot read or write, yet in the old days the exceptions were all the other way. So with education comes always a higher form of respectability, and the old, terrible curse of drink is fast disappearing.

When I joined, there was the one canteen in every barracks, where practically nothing but drink was sold, and this canteen (it seems curious to think of it now) was run by a contractor, who took away all the profits, and these profits were enormous. Then the brilliant idea occurred of each regiment running its own canteen, but still the old system was partially clung to, and I can perfectly remember the system of making some old sergeant, canteen steward,

within some few months of his discharge, with the avowed intention of enabling him to go off into private life with a good "nest-egg."

The officers in those days had little to do with the canteen. It was a sort of licensed place within barracks where unlicensed conduct might be permitted, and it was a sort of creed that non-commissioned officers should keep away from it, lest men who had had too much drink should be insubordinate, and crime be engendered.

Nowadays, we have in every regiment the wet canteen, as it is called, where beer only is sold, and this is as carefully superintended by the committee of officers as it is possible to be, and every penny of profit goes to the canteen fund, which is in the hands of the commanding officer, to be spent in the interests of the men. This is also most carefully checked by the divisional general in his inspection, and the manner in which this fund is expended is most carefully watched by him. But in addition there is the dry canteen, or coffee bar, as it is sometimes called, and it would surprise many a civilian to see the vast number of comforts and luxuries sold there : it would surprise him still more to see the enormous sales that are made there. In a good regiment nowadays much larger sums pass over the counter of the dry than over that of the wet canteen. The soldier of to-day is tempted to eat, and he does eat, and inferentially does not drink as he used to do.

Then there is the cooking. The soldier of former days cared but little for his food. In all my young days I can scarcely remember a single complaint being made when I went round on duty ; and I confess I looked on this duty as almost superfluous, and almost a matter of form.

But now the cooking is most carefully looked into, the regimental cooks are most highly trained, most carefully supervised. The bone is cut off, and excellent soup is given free *gratis* at certain times of the day or evening. The dripping is as carefully cherished as it would be in the home of the most careful housewife, and it would certainly surprise civilians could they see