

subordinates to guard against the faintest shadow of a preference for Sikh over Pathan, or Goorkha over Hindustani, betraying itself in their treatment of their men. As I have already said, favouritism kills justice, and where there is no justice, discontent prevails, and discipline suffers.

IV.—COMMANDING OFFICERS. PART II.

A commanding officer's rule should be consistent, firm, and benevolent; just, but considerate. In an article by "Trobador," in *Colburn's United Service Magazine*, mention is made of an officer, "who, when about to get his battalion, did not hesitate to confide to his friends, that he intended to be pretty strict all round, because he would rather, he said, he thought a brute than a fool?" Alas, for the regiment whose commanding officer pursues a policy of severity, to conceal his own short-comings; a policy which is, I fear, followed more frequently than is generally supposed. I heard an able and experienced officer the other day say calmly, that he believed discipline amongst British soldiers could only be maintained by the exercise of extreme severity. I wonder if he had ever heard of the "ferocity" of discipline, which disgraced our military administration at the beginning of the century, when our maddened soldiers "sought," so Sir W. Napier tells us, "by a variety of devices, evincing extraordinary resolution and subtlety, to escape from their unhappiness, with the result that thousands of the finest men were lost to the Service." And what is *extreme* severity? It means *undue* severity, which is nothing more nor less than injustice.

Few commanding officers seem to recognize how injurious to the discipline of a regiment are the habits of extravagance that too often prevail among its officers; and yet they must know, by experience, that nothing affects the morale of an officer so much as the burden of debt; it depresses his spirits; it destroys his interest in his profession; it kills his ambition, in many cases it drives him into drinking. A man whose mind is entirely pre-occupied by his private anxieties, cannot possibly throw himself heartily into his duties, nor exert any good influence over his men. A commanding officer, jealous for the honour of his regiment and keen to maintain its discipline intact, should, not only by example and precept, set his face against extravagance, but should try to help any young officer whom he knows or suspects to have got into debt, out of his difficulties. Having gained his confidence, he should inquire into the nature and amount of his liabilities and how they were incurred, if at cards, or in racing, he should exact a strict promise from him to forswear gambling of every kind. He should then ascertain what means he has at his disposal and how those means may be best utilized. If necessary, he should write to the young man's friends, explain matters and urge on them to give the requisite help, especially if the debts were not due to vice or folly. Parents and other relatives, when they find that a commanding officer is interesting himself in the matter, will be more ready to come forward with the required pecuniary aid, for his doing so is a guarantee that their money will be used to the best advantage. Should the application to the friends fail, then a judicious circular letter to the creditors will often effect much. Creditors will rarely refuse to accept a reasonable compromise, when the proposal comes from the debtor's own commanding officer. As a last resource, there are the banks. A loan at a moderate interest, if properly secured by a life policy, may almost always be negotiated with a respectable bank. I have known the late Sir Charles Macgregor do all this and much more. His stern appearance concealed a most kind and generous disposition.

I am so strongly impressed by the close connection existing between debt and discipline in the army that, before leaving the subject, I will point out a few of the causes of extravagance among officers, and suggest some ways of putting a check upon them. Gambling and expensive enter-

tainments are the chief of these causes, to which, in India, polo may be added; for officers who play polo—and many of them have to play *volens volens*, especially young men in the cavalry—must keep three or four polo ponies, if they ever hope to send up a regimental team to the inter-regimental polo tournaments; the keep of four ponies, added to their original cost, is no slight drain upon a young officer's resources. The game is a good game, but it costs a great deal of money to play it; and where it is made the chief object of life, it is detrimental to the efficiency of the service. A general officer, when recently inspecting a cavalry regiment, expressed himself very much pleased with the polo ponies, but very dissatisfied with the officers' chargers! The fact is that in some cavalry regiments the officers' first consideration is their ponies, not their chargers. Commanding officers should see that expenditure on this game is kept within reasonable bounds! Polo, too, leads to a number of casualties among officers, whose absence from duty must indirectly affect the discipline of their regiments. But this, to some extent, is remediable, as many of the accidents are due to the non-observance of the rules of the game, or to rash and foolhardy riding. A player who wittingly breaks the rules should be disqualified from playing for a period commensurate with the gravity of the offence.

Gambling, I am sorry to say, is too common in the army, both in England and abroad—more common, perhaps, in the hill stations of India than anywhere else. Year after year, old and young flock up to these hill stations during the hot season, and I do not exaggerate in asserting that many officers lose during one visit enough to cripple them for life. Yet I believe that the late Lord Strathmairn is the only Indian Commander-in-Chief who has ever tried to put a stop to this disgraceful state of things. He dismissed one of his own aides-de-camp, and ordered him and other officers to join their regiments and commands. One was a brigadier, who, it was said, lost no less than £10,000! The remedy for this scandal is to face it boldly, and to make an example of some of the senior officers who are directly responsible for it, and whose bounden duty it is to set a good example to their juniors in this matter.

As for entertainments, I agree with the late Sir Herbert Macpherson, who once remarked with his usual good common sense, "if champagne were forbidden, it would be unnecessary to limit entertainments." The reply to this was, "Such a restriction would be an interference with the liberty of the British subject," the subject in this case being an impecunious subaltern, who, perhaps, never saw champagne on his father's table.

Some years ago in Umballa, the Carabiniers introduced the very sensible mess rule that no champagne was to be opened on guest nights. The rest of the garrison quickly followed in their steps, with the most happy results, as there was more hospitality and less extravagance. And why should officers consider themselves bound to give champagne to every stranger who may call at their mess? Let them ask him to dinner by all means, but I can see no reason why they should offer him what many of them cannot afford to give. In the army champagne should only be seen on the Commander-in-Chief's table, and, perhaps, on a general officer's. I am not recommending parsimony—parsimony is, in my opinion, even more ignoble than extravagance—but I would have every officer regulate his expenditure by the length of his purse. Indeed, officers with private means, while in the service would be doing a kind and unselfish act if they were to regulate their expenditure by the length of their comrades' purse, and not by their own. Example, or false pride, would not then tempt poor men to live beyond their means, and thus many a good soldier, who is now absorbed into that body of ex-officers whose pursuits and manners of living is a mystery to most of us, would be saved to serve, with honour, his Queen and country.