

# BATTALION ORGANIZATION

by

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General Sir John FRENCH, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., K.C.M.G.,  
in the Chair.

IN venturing to offer some remarks upon the organization of an infantry battalion in peace and war, I trust that it may be understood that no claim is made for either originality of thought or novel discoveries. The subject is an old one, and has been mooted before in this Institution. I hope, however, that those who may have the patience to follow this lecture to the end will at least concede that a case has been made out for further investigation, and that our hard-worked General Staff may deem that the time has at last arrived when a close inquiry into the condition of our infantry battalions should be instituted.

It is only because I believe that the present is an opportune moment for reconsidering an old problem from a new point of view that I am willing to hazard the displeasure which is usually incurred by those who criticise a time-honoured institution with the object of improving it.

I agree with Captain Hereward Wake that something more than a mere preference is required to justify an important change: a change which will necessarily be applied to our big battalions in India, to the Expeditionary Force, to the Territorial Force, and to the national armies which the virile men of Australia and New Zealand are organizing by the method of compulsion.

The question can, of course, be approached from several points of view, including those of the economist and those of the academic student, but in this paper the subject will be dealt with in its practical aspect, as it presents itself to one who has commanded a battalion and a brigade and is possessed by a deep-rooted admiration of the qualities of our infantry officers.

Under existing arrangements, which are to be found in various regulations, I submit that these officers are not given a fair chance of performing their allotted task; that some of the most thoughtful of them are dissatisfied with the eight-company battalion, and wish for a change which will give more scope to leadership; and that this conclusion has been arrived at, in spite of their personal inclinations, by the logic of facts as they see them in their daily life.

Our quarrel is not only with the eight-company battalion, which we think mischievous, but also with the fact that a company

has no scientific organization to enable it to fight with advantage. A company of the Expeditionary Force cannot just muddle through somehow because our officers happen to be about the best in the world, and we assert that these same officers and their men could be made far more effective in battle, if the companies and battalions were more thoughtfully organized in Peace for War.

To give a clearer idea of my meaning, I will utter seven platitudinous military axioms, which are not put into practice merely because our existing arrangements forbid it:—

(1). The object to be achieved through organization is to facilitate, by forethought in peace, the difficult task of launching a battalion of a thousand men into battle and controlling them throughout it.

(2). Co-operative fire-tactics are the essence of good infantry work, and companies should be organized to facilitate fire tactics.

(3). The chain of command and responsibility should be clearly defined and habitually practised by all ranks.

(4). The best way to train young officers is to give them the responsibility of managing a definite command, as in the navy, the cavalry, and the artillery. The command of a half-company is not a definite command because the half-company is not a tactical or administrative unit.

(5). Every detail of mobilization should be arranged with a view to facilitate the transition from peace conditions to war conditions, without impairing fighting efficiency. To import into a battalion some six or more new company officers, on mobilization, is calculated to impair efficiency for immediate war.

(6). In an eight-company battalion the command of a section is entrusted to a sergeant in war. He should therefore train it in peace. There are 32 sections in a battalion: there should therefore be 32 sergeants in peace and war. Our present peace establishment provides only 15 sergeants to train 32 sections.

(7). It is not wise to keep 141 N.C.O.'s and men on the strength of companies if none of them will ever be available to fight in the ranks.

These plausible platitudes could be multiplied by anyone who takes the trouble to think the matter out and has experience in commanding a home battalion.

They are all violated under existing arrangements, but no one complains because it is the glory of the British officer to say nothing and to do his best. But, just think what that "best" would be, if you only gave him a fair chance of utilizing his acknowledged characteristics. He is compelled to-day to make bricks without straw, but what splendid bricks he could produce if he also had the straw! No one in the world loves responsibility and opportunities more than a company officer. This has been proved on the Indian frontier, in Soudanese campaigns, and through the length and breadth of Africa in

so-called times of peace. Why then do we deny him scope for his abilities in the training of British infantry?

Why render his task so difficult?

### THE BATTALION IN WAR.

Gentlemen, we have a new situation to face in Europe, one which did not exist when our army was distributed in its foreign garrisons and made up to war strength in them. The navy as you know has recently scrapped obsolete ships and concentrated in home waters. May I suggest that perhaps the army may have to scrap some of its cherished ideas in order to face the situation in its turn? And will you permit me to say that we have now to look nearer home than the Afghan frontier, or even the Mediterranean Sea?

If we are ever to fight a great battle in Europe, we stake our fortunes upon the Expeditionary Force, and the tactical handling of the infantry of that force will be a deciding factor as far as our army is concerned. Whether we fight along side of, and in close co-operation with, a European army, or whether we undertake a separate mission, as the ally of a friendly power, it is obvious that our Expeditionary Force must be ready to take on twice or three times its own numbers on the field of battle. We did it often enough in the old days of amateur armies, raised for each war and usually disbanded at its termination, and I am convinced we can face similar odds under modern conditions, if we evolve a system of fire tactics suitable to the characteristics of our people and devise an organization calculated to develop those fire tactics. At the present moment I submit that our battalion organization is many years behind our fire tactics, that the latter are as good as or better than any in Europe, but that we are failing to develop them along progressive lines, because we are hampered and thrown back by an eight company system, which destroys the initiative of subordinates without increasing the legitimate control of superior commanders.

A battalion is, therefore, more or less in a difficulty every time it deploys for attack, and the keynote of our tactics "no movement without fire" suffers from an unconscious conflict between theory and practice. The eight company battalion was very convenient when we fought in lines of two or more closed ranks, and the commanding officer and captains could be heard by every man in those ranks. But, it is unsuitable to the wide and deep formations which modern weapons compel a battalion to assume in an attack, and it is positively detrimental to co-operative fire tactics, which are based upon the initiative of individuals in the firing line backed by the supporting fire of their comrades behind. In other words the sections advance from fire position to fire position, in the confident belief that a plan has been pre-arranged for the covering fire of all neighbouring companies. With four or more companies in the firing line this pre-arrangement is extremely difficult and is

usually neglected, because there is no time or place for four or more captains to consult one another before they act.

Let me give an illustration of what I mean:—

An eight-company battalion, just mobilized to war strength, is about to be launched in its first attack upon the enemy in a European battle.

The commanding officer has been shown his objective, less than a mile to his front, and has been detailed by the brigadier to push home the attack in conjunction with another battalion of the same brigade, and in co-operation with another brigade on the flank. He has assembled his company officers, explained his orders and intentions, and has told off four companies as firing line and support, two companies in second line, and two in reserve. He accompanies the reserve.

The senior major is put in charge of the four leading companies, and this is where the first difficulty arises. How is the senior major to exercise any useful or desirable control over four independent companies, hotly engaged with the enemy and spread out along a frontage of nearly half a mile? He has no staff and no horse, so he probably attaches himself to one of the centre companies and either interferes too much with its captain or does nothing at all. On arriving in the first fire position he *may* be able to arrange for the further advance, but it is more than likely that he will never get into touch with the outer companies on the flanks of his firing line. My point is that the senior major is, under the circumstances, a good man wasted, because he has been given an impossible task. If, however, there were two big companies in the firing line instead of four little ones, the senior major's job would be to co-ordinate the general advance, and without interfering in details, arrange with the two company commanders for mutual assistance in the difficult operation of moving forward, under the enemy's bullets, from fire position to fire position. The attack would acquire an intensity which it at present lacks. In fact our infantry could strike much harder blows.

We will next turn our attention to, and follow the fortunes of, one of the four captains in this first battle, and see how he too is handicapped by our present organization and its unmethodical chain of responsibility. This captain, probably for the first time in his life, has two subalterns under his command in action, with one of whom he has an acquaintance of only a few days. His four sections are commanded by four sergeants, two or three of whom were only promoted a few days before, namely, on mobilization. Of the rifles actually in the ranks some 60 per cent. are newly joined reservists, and a small proportion are recruits who have never done a company training. The reservists were all discharged from the battalion in India, and may never have seen their section commander or officers before. They are a splendid body of seasoned men, a little rusty in fire discipline, but capable of magnificent soldier-work under trained leadership. Nothing should, therefore, be omit-

ted which can possibly foster and develop the training of the leaders.

Now, the first problem confronting our captain is how to arrange the duties of his two subalterns to the best advantage. Each subaltern is supposed to command a half-company of two sections, but for excellent reasons the two sections are not, and cannot be, permanently the same two sections, partly because a half-company is not a tactical unit and seems only to have been invented to give a nominal command to a subaltern, and partly because the four sections of a company take certain duties in turn and do not work in fixed pairs. In fact, infantry subalterns have no definite command, no real responsibility, no permanent job, as they have in the cavalry and the artillery; and this is one of the worst features of the eight company system.

The result is that our friend the captain has to improvise at a critical moment the rôles of his lieutenants; and he probably sends forward his trained subaltern with the firing line and keeps his untried subaltern with the supports under his own eye. It is the best he can do, but is nevertheless a makeshift arrangement which is avoided in a four-company battalion, as will be shown hereafter. We can therefore leave our battalion to prosecute its attack. We hope for a successful issue to the event, but I, for one, am convinced that its success will be gained in spite of an organization which handicaps it throughout.

For the fact remains and stares us in the face whenever we look closely into the question—that the controlled action of eight independent companies in the stress of battle is a hopeless undertaking for any individual. If he holds them tight he destroys initiative. If he lets them go they lose cohesion. The solution seems to be to delegate increased powers to fewer responsible officers in command of enlarged companies. Eight units are too many for co-operative fire tactics, which necessitate a study of ground and an intelligent use of it. To arrange for covering fire, to obtain the support of artillery and machine guns, to co-operate with neighbouring units, and yet to maintain the fire fight with the enemy, all these desirable objects are rendered more difficult of attainment by eight companies than by a lesser number.

#### THE NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER.

Now let us glance for a moment at the existing situation as it affects the non-commissioned officers.

Sergeants are wanted to command sections in war and they should therefore train them in peace. But, excluding colour-sergeants who have other duties, there are only 24 sergeants allotted to 32 sections in peace, and nine of these are employed as follows:—

- Band sergeant.
- Signalling sergeant.
- Sergeant shoemaker.
- Machine gun sergeant.

Master tailor.  
Transport sergeant.  
Mess sergeant.  
Sergeant's mess caterer.  
Provost sergeant.

This leaves only 15 duty sergeants for the 32 sections of a battalion, but does not exhaust the list of those who are employed away from their companies. How can anyone pretend that this is a satisfactory arrangement, when the fire discipline of a section depends upon the training of its commander?

I have a return before me of the section commanders of the four battalions of my brigade at the three important dates of company training, brigade training, army manœuvres (cancelled) this year, from which it appears that only 49 sergeants were actually available to train and command 128 sections.

Surely we ought to face these facts and not evade the issue?

Either sergeants are wanted to command sections in war or they are not. If they are wanted they should certainly train them. How, otherwise, are they to deal with the influx of reservists who will join their sections on mobilization? Year after year we very properly insist more and more upon the importance of section leadership, section fire control, section cohesion in the attack; we point out that modern battles may sometimes be influenced by the courageous commander of a single section, and we insist that section commanders are responsible for the lives of their men. The modern tendency is to delegate more duties and greater responsibility to section commanders. Yet all this time we seem to ignore the simple fact that there are not half enough duty sergeants for the sections. It is a most unwise economy and one which will cost us dear in our first battle against trained Europeans. In fact, this question of section commanders should of itself suffice to compel an investigation into our peace establishments.

#### **THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF PROGRESSIVE TRAINING.**

I now propose to point out how we unconsciously organize in peace time for disorganization in war. In fact, those of us who have to go thoroughly into this question are compelled to realize that, except during the period of annual company training, captains of British infantry have not now got a fair opportunity of carrying out their programmes of progressive training. This is a statement which can be substantiated by facts, and unfortunately the facts are painfully familiar to every infantry captain of the Expeditionary Force, and have been admirably set forth in the October number of the Journal of this Institution by Captain Scovell of the Cameron Highlanders. At the conclusion of company training and musketry, the programme very properly lays down a course of battalion, brigade and higher training, terminating in army manœuvres at the end of September. The programme is excellent, and those who do not look beneath the surface are convinced that all is for the best in the

best of all possible worlds. Special correspondents wax eloquent in the Press and Members of Parliament tell their constituents that the Army Council cannot discover a single item upon which another sixpenny bit could be usefully expended. The voice of the company officer is hushed in the land, for no one seems wishful to hear his side of the story. But let us for a moment look at it from his point of view and try to realize how his company is bled during battalion, brigade, and divisional manœuvres—that is, during the period of its higher tactical training for war. Below<sup>1</sup> is a list of the various calls made at different times and in varying degrees upon the best men in the companies. It is not a mere theoretical list, but is an example of actual demands which have to be met year in and year out.

Thus instead of about 70 men on parade the company commander sees his number sink to about 40 directly after his month's training is over. Then later on they begin to rise gradually, and he realises that the new comers are raw recruits totally ignorant of field work, and with a large proportion of these he proceeds to army manœuvres. The marvel is that the companies thus trained show up as well as they do, and this alone proclaims the power of leadership of the officers and N.C.O.'s, and the adaptability of the men. What company officer in a foreign army, where all recruits join the same day, has such a difficult task? It is true that foreign recruits are enlisted for only three or two years, but they remain for the whole of that period in the same company, and under the same instructors who train them in peace and command them on mobilization for war. Our men enlist for seven years with the colours, but are shifted from the dépôt to the home battalion, thence to the battalion abroad, are then discharged to civil life and finally mobilized into the home battalion. This seems to emphasize the desirability of maintaining a war establishment of officers and non-commissioned officers in home battalions in peace time.

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<sup>1</sup> (1) Instructors to drill recruits. I know of two battalions which had each 170 recruits and instructors on the barrack square when their brigade marched out to train last summer, and they were not peculiar. (2) Instructors for recruits at musketry. (3) Acting bandsmen and acting drummers return to their music. (4) Signallers return to their signalling. (5) Machine gun men to their machine guns. (6) Shoemakers and tailors to their work. (7) Clerks to their offices. (8) A party of men to a mounted Infantry course. (9) A non-commissioned officer to a gymnastic course, or to Hythe, or to a garrison school, or to mounted infantry. (10) Non-commissioned officers to mark at Bisley, as gate-keepers to tournaments, pageants, etc. (11) A provost sergeant, or sergeant's mess caterer. (12) Men to the Brigade Communication section. (13) Various garrison employments of a permanent nature. (14) A subaltern to another employment, or to a course, or to India, etc. (15) The captain of the company to act as umpire, to be attached to artillery, to command the brigade machine guns, or to be galloper to the brigadier. About half the captains are thus withdrawn for one good reason or another.

### THE HEADQUARTER SECTION A NECESSITY.

It is not, however, desirable to greatly alter the conditions of service of our army, and it is probable that we must stick to the Cardwell system for the infantry. My object in pointing out its inconveniences and drawbacks is merely to emphasize the desirability of lightening the task of company commanders so as to minimize the difficulties inherent in the Cardwell system. Now, one way of doing this would be to create in every battalion a Headquarter Section, under the command of the senior major, into which would be drafted all those officers, non-commissioned officers and men who will not be available to fight in the companies in war. They need not, therefore, be trained in them in peace. A table has been worked out—see Appendix—from which it appears that no less than 141 officers, N.C.O.'s and men could with advantage be permanently transferred in peace and in war to this Headquarter Section, thereby simplifying their own special work and relieving the fighting companies of tradesmen, clerks, musicians, signallers, bandsmen, etc., etc. In peace time, I advocate that certain other non-commissioned officers and men should also be placed in the Headquarter Section in addition to the 141 who will belong to it in war. The total in peace would then stand at 213—see the Appendix which gives full details.

### RECAPITULATION.

Let us now summarize for a moment what has been urged so far. It will then be easier to deal with the remedies which will be put forward for consideration. My criticisms can best be tabulated under the two headings (A) those which are inherent in the eight-company battalion; (B) those which are caused by false economy or lack of forethought.

(A). *The following are due to the eight-company system as we know it :—*

- (1). Once launched in an attack, a battalion loses cohesion owing to the excessive number of its companies and sections.
- (2). The companies, being too numerous, fail to combine their fire tactics or to generate intensity of fire at critical moments.
- (3). In a company no proper chain of command is established.
- (4). Young officers do not command men, as they should. They are merely assistants and onlookers.

(B). *The remainder are the result of economy or lack of forethought, and are not peculiar to the eight-company battalion :—*

- (5). Officers and sergeants are not kept at full strength ready for mobilization.
- (6). Non-combatants are retained on the books of companies instead of being transferred to a Headquarter Section.



(7). Understudies are not provided to fill the places of unit commanders who are withdrawn for various reasons; or, when provided, it is done at the expense of other units.

(8). No provision is made for thoroughly instructing the recruits of the Expeditionary Force without destroying the programme of progressive training in the companies.

(9). The question is not squarely faced of providing military music without depleting companies of serving soldiers. There can be no decent band or drums without acting bandmen and acting drummers.

Here are nine definite criticisms, none of which are invented by me. I have looked at them for many years, but can find no solution which does not involve reorganizing the battalion. Most of the points apply to all battalions whether serving at home or abroad, but some obviously only concern battalions at home. We will therefore proceed to sketch a new organization and to indicate how it will tend to abolish or mitigate the evils complained of.

#### THE FOUR-COMPANY BATTALION WITH HEADQUARTER SECTION.

There is nothing new in the idea of a four-company battalion, nor is there any magic in its composition. Nevertheless, the result of clearly thinking out a system and adapting its component parts to the tasks they have actually to confront is almost magical, when we are dealing with human beings. Therefore let us build up our battalion, starting with the squad as our fire unit for war purposes. This squad should, in my opinion, be commanded by a corporal, and should consist of one lance-corporal and ten to twelve rifles (privates). That is the greatest number of men whose collective fire can be controlled by one non-commissioned officer. In this paper I am taking the squad at :—

1 corporal.  
1 lance-corporal (unpaid).  
10 privates.

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Total 12

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Four such squads would be a convenient number in a section, commanded by a subaltern. He should have a sergeant to assist him and take his place whenever he is absent. He will be held responsible for the training and well-being of his section, under the personal supervision of the company commander.

Four such sections will make an admirable company, commanded by a major (mounted) with a captain as second in command, who should be specifically in charge of company administration. A colour-sergeant, a quartermaster-sergeant, one lance-sergeant, and other details will complete the company staff. Total war establishment all ranks 224, as shown in the table given below.

There should be four such companies in a battalion, commanded by a lieutenant-colonel, with the senior major as second in command who should be specifically in charge of the Head-quarter Section (141 of all ranks) see the Appendix.

To simplify reference I give the war establishments of a company and a battalion on this page.

It will be noticed that the proportion of officers to men remains unchanged in the companies. This is an essential feature of the new scheme. If a four-company battalion entailed a reduction in the present proportion of officers to men, I would oppose any change on that ground alone.

**WAR ESTABLISHMENTS.  
An Infantry Battalion.**

<i>Detail of one Company.</i>	Personnel.				
	Officers.	Warrant Officers.	Staff Sergeants and Sergeants.	Rank and File and Drummers.	Total.
Major .. .. .	1	—	—	—	1
Captain .. .. .	1	—	—	—	1
Subalterns .. .. .	4	—	—	—	4
Colour Sergeants .. .. .	—	—	1	—	1
Quartermaster Sergeant .. .. .	—	—	1	—	1
Sergeants .. .. .	—	—	4	—	4
Drummers or Buglers .. .. .	—	—	—	4	4
Corporals (1 Lance-Sergeant) .. .. .	—	—	—	17	17
Privates .. .. .	—	—	—	191 <sup>1</sup>	191
<b>Company total ..</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>224</b>
<i>Detail of one Battalion.</i>					
Head Quarters (see Appendix) .. .. .	6	1	13	121	141
Four Companies .. .. .	24	—	24	848	896
<b>Battalion Total ..</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>969</b>	<b>1037</b>

The above battalion total of 1,037 compares with the present authorized total of 1,016, and involves an increase of 21 only

<sup>1</sup> The 191 privates of a company are made up as follows:—

Unpaid Lance Corporals .. .. .	16
Rifles (16 squads of 10 rifles each) .. .. .	160
Drivers for pack animals .. .. .	4
Stretcher Bearers .. .. .	4
Groom to Major .. .. .	1
Batmen .. .. .	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>191</b>

### THE PEACE ESTABLISHMENT.

The difference between peace and war establishments will be that in peace the number of privates, as given above, will be greatly reduced. The other ranks will remain unaltered, so as to retain our chain of command, a priceless asset on mobilization. And here a question may be interpolated to which I have never seen an adequate reply. Our present peace establishments allow for a battalion serving abroad—29 officers and 46 sergeants, but for a battalion at home only 25 officers and 39 sergeants of all kinds.

Yet just consider the situation of each on the outbreak of hostilities.

The battalion abroad departs for the war with seasoned men, not a single recruit, not one reservist, no chain of command snapped, all in apple-pie order. Good! But the battalion at home, short of officers, short of sergeants, short of men, with the barrack square crowded with recruits, has nevertheless to incorporate into its ranks, on mobilization, 400 to 600 reservists at one day's notice, and then go and fight for its life and for England's life within a couple of weeks. Can anybody call it either reasonable or excusable to allot such a task to a home battalion, and yet deny it the staff which is indispensable to a foreign service battalion? *Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat*. So much for the war situation: but how does the matter stand in peace? Why, in peace time the home battalion wants officers and sergeants more than the battalion abroad, for the simple reason that its time is spent in training young soldiers, and fitting them to go abroad. And this is another reason for suggesting that our future organization shall retain its full *cadre* in peace time, and that the peace reduction shall be in privates only.

At this moment, the peace establishment allows 680 privates to a home battalion and I propose to retain it at that. The battalions abroad to have the war establishment of all ranks as detailed above, or as they now possess.

Thus my proposals amount to an alteration in the peace establishment of battalions of the Expeditionary Force as follows:—

Increase, Officers—5 subalterns.

Increase, 32 corporals, of whom 4 will be in headquarter section.

Decrease, 2 sergeants.

### THE BIG COMPANY AT WORK.

Having established these fine big companies, and provided them with a logical chain of command from major to corporal, we must see to it that the company commanders of the future be given a free hand to train their units on their own lines throughout the year, under the personal supervision of the commanding officer. At present, a captain may be said

to command his full company during only one month, after which it dwindles away, and loses cohesion during eleven months. No individual is to blame for this unfortunate state of affairs, which is the outcome of a battalion system instituted many years ago for a totally different set of conditions. To illustrate the working of this system, let us take a concrete example from every-day life.

Officers must have winter leave, and N.C.O.'s and men furloughs, all of which are at present arranged for in the battalion orderly room. But under our new organization nothing should be settled by the battalion commander which could be better left to the discretion of the company commander. Thus the officers' leave, and the men's furloughs could be worked in and out, so as to interfere as little as possible with winter training. No one but the company commander is in a position to arrange these matters to the general convenience of all ranks and the consequent efficiency of the service. Then again, section training, now neglected in home battalions, could become a feature of the winter work, when the subaltern would take charge of his section at full strength, and learn to instruct it in elementary subjects. He would consequently be more fitted than he is to instruct and command men. Moreover, he would be always dealing with the same men, instead of being shifted about from company to company as is unavoidable with eight companies kept permanently short of four subalterns, on the present peace establishment. I know of no individual more capable of rising to the occasion than the British subaltern when he is given a real job to do, but under present conditions, he has few opportunities of showing his value. The little company as we know it is a "one-man" show, and if it happens to be commanded by an exceptionally able captain, the result is wonderful, considering his difficulties. He makes superhuman efforts, and grapples daily with the inconveniences of our faulty organization, but the same energy might well be devoted to a better cause. Yet how often have we seen such a company fall to pieces as soon as its exceptional commander leaves it? Our big companies, on the other hand, will depend for their efficiency not only on a good major and a first-rate captain, but also on the quality of four section commanders; and the battalion C.O. will be afforded a real opportunity of judging the merits of his subordinates, and forming an opinion as to their fitness for promotion.

#### **INCREASED RESPONSIBILITIES INVOLVE INCREASED POWERS.**

If the commander of the enlarged company is to produce a really good result, he must no longer be treated like a child. Men are made or marred by the treatment meted out to them by their superiors. Under existing regulations, majors commanding companies, that is to say, men of upwards of 15 years' ser-

vice, are not trusted to appoint a private to lance-corporal, or even to reduce an inefficient lance-corporal to the ranks. We must therefore, postulate for increased powers of reward and punishment if our majors and captains are to command and train companies of 220 men, and convert them into a fighting machine. This applies with particular force to battalions serving abroad, and completed to war strength.

With these increased powers, it stands to reason that either the major or the captain must always be available for duty with the company—not any major or any captain, but *the* major or *the* captain of the company. This means that majors must in future be promptly seconded on appointment to the staff, and necessitates the speeding-up of the machinery of promotion, especially in battalions abroad. Perhaps the electric telegraph might come into more general use for this purpose?

#### THE RECRUITS OF THE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE AND ACTING BANDSMEN AND DRUMMERS.

We now come to two points which are not in any way connected with the system on which the battalion is organized, but nevertheless affects the efficiency of companies, whether they be eight or four. As regards recruits, what we should like for the whole army are the conditions which obtain at the Guards' Depôt at Caterham, whereby no recruit is allowed to leave the depôt until he is actually fit to take his place in the ranks of his company. This result is produced in the maximum time of 16 weeks. Thus, in battalions of the Brigade of Guards there are no squads learning to salute on the barrack square. But this, unfortunately, is not the rule in the majority of Line Battalions, owing partly to the lack of accommodation at their depôts, and partly to their inadequate staff of N.C.O.'s. We must therefore discover some alternative method for dealing with the incubus of the untrained recruit after he joins the battalion. This we propose to do, in a partial degree, by means of the Headquarter Section. A reference to the Appendix will show under the heading, "Peace Establishment. Proposed additions:—Recruit Training and permanent employ 4 Sergeants, 50 Rank and File." A portion of these N.C.O.'s will be selected for their special aptitude for teaching barrack square drill and elementary musketry. Their particular duty will be to train such recruits as are not yet sufficiently instructed to join the ranks of their sections, and we shall thus avoid the withdrawal of section and squad commanders from their legitimate work.

As regards acting bandsmen and acting drummers, all of whom are taken out of the ranks of the companies, I think the time has come for facing a delicate problem, and on the whole my views coincide with those of Captain Scovell, as given in the October number of the Journal of this Institution. But, as he has not suggested a remedy for the evil, I will venture upon a proposal.

We infantry soldiers look upon the Drum and Fife (or Pipe or Bugle) Band as of the very essence of soldiering. No old soldier can hear it unmoved. We want to hear it constantly in peace and in war, but its authorized establishment must certainly be increased, say to 30 of all ranks including boys. No acting drummer should then be permitted.

The Brass Band is a different story. Its authorized establishment is 21, but no good music can be produced by this number, which is usually inflated to over 50 by stealing men from the companies, and calling them acting bandmen. We thus have over 7,000 men in the British infantry employed in making music, in addition to the Drum and Fife Bands. Can we afford it in these days—not so much from the point of view of money as of the expenditure of men? Would it not be wiser and more economical to substitute for these 146 infantry bands a much smaller number of permanent stationary bands, enlisted as musicians only, in our various military garrisons? The officers and men would hear them oftener than they do the existing ones, which are perpetually absent fulfilling civilian engagements. How would it be to attach to the headquarters of every division a magnificent band of 60 musicians, and allow travelling expenses for out-stations under certain limitations?

#### CONCLUSION.

When the tentative suggestions which have been put forward to-day have been investigated and sifted by the General Staff, I am confident that it will be found that the main proposals can be carried out without any great expenditure of money or grave disturbance of individual officers and non-commissioned officers. With careful forethought the changes could probably be brought about in the course of a week, and if the selected week were either before the commencement or after the termination of collective training, the inconvenience would be reduced to a minimum. The necessary corrections in our various military manuals need not constitute a serious difficulty, and the experience gained after the transition would enable us to amend future editions with advantage.

Let us now look at a battalion as it will stand under its new conditions in the Expeditionary Force of the future. In war we claim for it primarily a capacity to strike hard, and strike with cumulative intensity throughout an attack, by reason of the cohesion which its commanding officer will maintain between his four companies, and by reason of the co-operative fire effect of the sections in the firing line.

We claim that by transferring tradesmen and others to a permanent headquarter section, we shall free the companies of an incubus which paralyses their wellbeing for eleven months in the year, yet compels them during the twelfth month to train non-commissioned officers and men who will never fight in their ranks. We claim that the new companies and sections will be

organized military units, capable of performing duties, undertaking fatigues, and mounting guard under their own officers and non-commissioned officers, instead of being broken up, as they inevitably are at present, whenever a detail has to be provided. We wish to break through over-centralization in the orderly room, and delegate more power, responsibility and opportunity to the companies.

We claim, by the method of a logical and simple chain of command from the C.O. to the private, to facilitate the supreme act of mobilization, and enable our infantry to pass from peace to war without confusion, and to incorporate their reservists without indigestion.

We claim that, notwithstanding the ever-increasing extra-regimental duties of peace and the inevitable losses occasioned by war, every unit commander, from corporal to colonel, has his second-in-command on the spot, trained in his ideas and ready to step into his shoes: yet these substitutes are each allotted specific duties for which they are continually held personally responsible.

Finally, we commend this scheme to the consideration of the higher authorities with the conviction that they will sooner or later adopt its general principles. We officers who are daily concerned with the training of troops are beginning to realize how much has been done for us during the few years that have elapsed since the General Staff came into being. We recognize how immense their task has been in re-organizing the higher commands of the army, and in modernizing our methods, and we are lost in admiration of their latest production, the Manual of Infantry Training. It breathes the true spirit of British infantry, and has dissolved any doubts we may have had regarding co-operative fire tactics. We hope the General Staff can now turn their attention to battalion organization, and thereby greatly increase the fighting value of our infantry.

My last word will be—either do this thing quite thoroughly or do not touch it at all.

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## APPENDIX.

## WAR ESTABLISHMENT.

## Headquarter Section for All Battalions.

Detail.	Officers.	Warrant Officers.	Staff Sergeants & Sergeants.	Rank & File.	Total.
<i>(a.)— Allowed for by existing regulations in war only ..</i>					
Lieutenant-Colonel ... ..	1	—	—	—	1
Major ... ..	1	—	—	—	1
Adjutant ... ..	1	—	—	—	1
Quarter-Master ... ..	1	—	—	—	1
Signalling Officer ... ..	1	—	—	—	1
Machine Gun Officer ... ..	1	—	—	—	1
Sergeant Major ... ..	—	1	—	—	1
Quarter Master Sergeant ... ..	—	—	1	—	1
Orderly Room Clerk ... ..	—	—	1	—	1
Sergeant Drummer ... ..	—	—	1	—	1
Pioneer Sergeant ... ..	—	—	1	—	1
Sergeant Master Cook ... ..	—	—	1	—	1
Transport Sergeant ... ..	—	—	1	—	1
Signalling Sergeant ... ..	—	—	1	—	1
Sergeant Shoe Maker ... ..	—	—	1	—	1
Transport ... ..	—	—	—	10	10
Orderlies Medical Officer ... ..	—	—	—	2	2
Batmen ... ..	—	—	—	6	6
<i>(b.)—Proposed additions—</i>					
Officers' Mess ... ..	—	—	1	3	4
Police ... ..	—	—	1	6	7
Sanitary Squad ... ..	—	—	—	9	9
Pioneers... ..	—	—	—	10	10
Signallers ... ..	—	—	—	32	32
Machine Gun Section ... ..	—	—	1	14	15
Band (stretcher bearers) ... ..	—	—	—	21	21
Buglers ... ..	—	—	—	2	2
Colour Sergeant ... ..	—	—	1	—	1
*Quarter Master Sergeant ... ..	—	—	1	—	1
*Officers' Grooms ... ..	—	—	—	6	6
Total for War ... ..	6	1	13	121	141

\* The colour sergeant and quartermaster sergeant are the staff of the Headquarter Section which will not be an easy unit to administer owing to its varied employments The colour-sergeant will also be musketry instructor.



## PEACE ESTABLISHMENT.

## Headquarter Section for Home Battalions.

Detail.	Officers.	Warrant Officers.	Staff Sergts. & Sergts.	Rank & File.	Total.
<i>Total for War, (a) and (b) above, less 6 transport men ...</i>	6	1	13	115 <sup>1</sup>	135
<i>Proposed additions in peace only—</i>					
Band Master ... ..	—	1	—	—	1
Band Sergeant ... ..	—	—	1	—	1
Orderly Room Sergeant ... ..	—	—	1	—	1
Sergeant Master Tailor ... ..	—	—	1	—	1
Officers' Mess (additional) ... ..	—	—	—	2	2
Sergeants' Mess ... ..	—	—	1	2	3
Clerks ... ..	—	—	—	4	4
Quarter Master Staff ... ..	—	—	—	3	3
Workshops ... ..	—	—	—	8	8
Recruit training and permanent employ ... ..	—	—	4	50	54 <sup>2</sup>
Grand total for peace ... ..	6	2	21	184	213

<sup>1</sup> This will be only 115 in peace because 6 transport men required in war are not wanted in peace.

<sup>2</sup> This will be the maximum allowed; it will be less in some stations and will be regulated by local conditions, under orders of the G.O.C.

NOTE.—Every N.C.O. and man in the above Headquarter Section will, if he has less than 5 year's service, be attached temporarily to a company during its period of company training; when he has over five years service this attachment may take place or not, at the discretion of the commanding officer.

Every N.C.O. and man in the Headquarter Section will, if he has less than 12 years' service, perform an annual course of musketry unless specially exempted; when over 12 years' service his musketry will be at the option of the commanding officer.

## DISCUSSION.

**Mr. C. Harris, C.B.**, (Assistant Financial Secretary, War Office) : I have been invited to say a few words on the financial aspects of General Maxse's proposals. I should like to say, first of all, how profoundly I feel that the object we all have at heart—i.e., the production of the maximum military efficiency from a given sum of money—is to be attained not by concentrating more and more attention upon the control and regulation of the details of expenditure, but by the study of organic problems such as those that have been brought to our notice this afternoon.

## THREE CATEGORIES OF PROPOSALS.

A long experience of proposals for military reform leads me instinctively to classify them under three heads. First of all there is the reform that gives you increased military efficiency for less money. I need hardly say that I welcome that with open arms. These two things are not so incompatible as might seem at first sight, because I think if we look at the actual experience of the last five years we shall find that whereas the Army Estimates have been very substantially diminished, the total military power of the country stands higher than it did either when we went into the South African War or immediately after it.

Then comes the second class of reform, which gives more efficiency for the same money, and that also I welcome. Then one comes to the third class, and that is the reform that gives increased military efficiency but at the cost of greater expenditure, and to that my instinctive attitude is necessarily a little colder.

In speaking in the first person I am not representing my individual opinions, but am speaking for my Department as the focussing point for the collective wisdom of the Army Council when it devotes itself to financial problems. The problem constantly before the Council is to provide for a highly elastic expenditure out of a very inelastic income, and it is a sufficiently anxious problem at the present time, and indeed at any time. I have no secrets as to the intention of the Government to divulge, as to whether there is to be in the near future an increase in the Army Estimates or whether there is not, but I will put it in this way: that, even if there is an increase, the advocates of any particular reform would do well to present their case as though they could not count on the increase being devoted to the reform they had at heart, because whatever sum of money is available, it is ultimately a great military question whether the particular reform under consideration is the best possible way of expending that sum. I am aware that that is rather a heavy clog to attach to the leg of any reformer, but in this imperfect world I am afraid there is absolutely no escape from it.

## THE COLONIAL BATTALION ESTABLISHMENT.

Coming to the proposals that have been made this afternoon: To bring the Colonial Battalion Establishment up to war establishment or, what is practically the same thing, to Indian establishment, would be to add 100 rank and file to each of 22 colonial battalions. I will not attempt to deal now with the recruiting problem which that would produce, the question whether we could get, with our present recruiting machinery, the necessary number of men to maintain the larger force. I will simply say that if you add 2,200 rank and file of the infantry to the army you add a cost of something in the neighbourhood of £125,000

a year, which is a sufficiently substantial sum. The difficulty of dealing with the infantry is that it is a big body and that directly you attempt to do anything to it the results are on a large scale. What struck me in listening to the paper was that after all that recommendation was something in the nature of an *obiter dictum* rather than an organic part of the reforms proposed. The essence of the paper is, I think, the Home Battalion, and if I may presume to make a suggestion it would be that General Maxse will be well advised not to attempt to drive those two coaches abreast, but should allow the question of the Colonial establishment to fall behind and deal with the Home establishment first.

#### THE HOME BATTALION ESTABLISHMENT: OFFICERS.

Coming to the Home battalions, the first question is as to officers. Of course if we give 30 officers to the Home battalion of the line we should have, ultimately, to give the same abroad and in the Guards. That means, therefore, a total increase of about 400 officers. Now, it ought to be easy to say what that increase would cost, but as a matter of fact it is not at all easy, and the first difficulty arises from the pension question. Officers' pensions are a very important subject, on which I have occasion to reflect a good deal and which causes considerable anxiety. The pension votes are growing at the rate of £40,000, £45,000, or £50,000 a year, and with an inelastic income, that creates a very serious position. To put it somewhat picturesquely you might say that the pension votes are eating up the firing line of the Army at the rate of one battalion or one brigade of artillery every year. Therefore it is difficult to exaggerate the importance of this pension question. Now it is possible no doubt to arrange to add 400 officers on such conditions that none of them would ever see a pension. I do not mean that the 400 particular individuals would not receive pensions, but that no more pensions would be given to officers than are given at present. If that can be done the pension cost falls out. But I think there would be grave difficulties in the doing of it, because what it really means is that you would be decreasing the average expectation or remuneration of the Army officer, and standing as we stand to-day I doubt whether that is a practical proposition. A similar question arises as to the ranks that these extra 400 officers should be allowed to attain. It is possible to say that they should be always second lieutenants, but if you say so it means that the time before the average man gets his step to lieutenant will be so much increased. There is already a tendency to demand that the step from second lieutenant to lieutenant should be given after a certain lapse of time and not by promotion to fill an establishment. You will intensify that difficulty if you add all these officers in the rank of second lieutenant only. However, putting it very roughly, I may say that if the officers to be added have the same expectation of pension as the officers now in the Army, in corresponding regimental ranks, the cost would not be less than £300 an officer, or £120,000 a year. If you can so contrive that those officers fall out without drawing a pension then you may put the cost at about £50,000 a year. That again is without going into any secondary question as to the difficulty of getting officers enough to fill the present establishment at our present rates of pay, or anything of that sort.

#### THE HOME BATTALION ESTABLISHMENT: RANK AND FILE.

Then we come to the corporals, lance-corporals, and sergeants. I think, if I may say so, that while the paper was absolutely clear on

the subject of war establishments, which were the establishments with which General Maxse was primarily dealing, it was not perfectly clear to me on the subject of peace establishment—whether the net result of the changes was to be an addition of 30 men to the Home battalion in the rank of corporal, or whether 30 existing lance-corporals were to be made into corporals and not—so to speak—replaced among the privates. If there are 30 men to be added to each Home battalion it comes to very much the same sum of money as adding 100 men to each of the Colonial battalions, something like £125,000 a year. But I imagine that General Maxse does not propose that, but really proposes to readjust the ranks within the existing total peace establishment of a battalion. If that is so, the effect of making 32 corporals, reducing two sergeants, and totally abolishing the paid lance-corporal—always supposing they are practicable propositions—would be about £10,000 a year. That I think gives very roughly the immediate financial effects of the proposals that have been made, and that is really all I have to say on the subject.

But before sitting down I would go back one moment to my classification of reforms under three heads. The third head, namely, the class of reform that gives you increased military efficiency for increased expenditure, is sometimes capable of being converted into the second class, which gives you still increased efficiency, but for no greater expenditure than at present. Now, when different propositions for changes in the Army are in competition, the second class has an enormous advantage over the third, and the final question I would suggest to General Maxse is whether he can so re-cast his scheme as to bring it from the third class into the second.

**Major-General H. W. Lawson, C.B.** (G.O.C. 2nd Division): I rise to express my entire concurrence in and support of what the Lecturer has so ably put before us to-day, and I base that upon what I have read and seen of active service and on what my experience has been in commanding a brigade of infantry and my present command of a Division. The matter the Lecturer has dealt with comes before us every day of our lives, and I think the picture he has drawn is not a bit overdrawn. I thought it would be interesting, two days ago, to find what view some of those in my command took of the proposals. My two brigadiers were away so that I could not consult them, but I consulted the colonel of the General Staff, my D.A.A.G., my two brigade majors of infantry, both rising experienced staff college officers with war experience, and the eight battalion commanders, and it is interesting to state that four of the eight battalion commanders were in favour and four against it, and all the staff officers and myself were in favour of the scheme.

#### RESPONSIBILITIES OF OFFICERS UNDER THE SCHEME.

As far as I could understand, I think you will find the real objection on the part of the battalion commanders and company officers against the scheme is that they think the officer will suffer by being delayed in arriving at the rank of commanding a company until he is a major. I do not think there is any real ground for that, if they only consider the facts, because you have to take the officers as a whole. Under General Maxse's scheme the subaltern officer will undoubtedly have a demand and responsibility thrown upon him in a way he has not got at present, and in that way he will be very much like the present subaltern of the artillery and cavalry. It is true that when he becomes a captain he will become second in command of a larger organization, but there he is

on exactly the same footing as the captain of artillery, who does not find that a dull position, or the captain of a cavalry squadron. It will be an opportunity for him to attend courses and fit himself for the higher responsibilities when he becomes a major. It has also to be remembered that he will have a great deal of interesting and useful work to do in supporting his major. I believe that what we want, as far as the officers are concerned, in order to convince them, is to show that under this scheme the officer himself, right through his service, will have more experience and that his work will be more interesting.

With regard to the scheme itself, of course there will be objections to it; there has never been a reform worth carrying out to which people have not made objections. These things are all a matter of the balance of advantage, but I feel confident that if you sum up the pros and cons, the balance is entirely on the side of General Maxse, and I do hope that those who take his side will remember that objections exist only to be argued against and overcome, and that when people stand up and point out objections they should not think that the mere fact of these objections existing is a proof that the scheme is not a good one—I believe the balance of argument to be in favour of a four-company organization.

**Colonel the Honble. F. Gordon, D.S.O.**, General Staff Officer, 1st Grade, 2nd Division, said he had spent over thirty years in the army, and twenty-two of them as a regimental officer in the infantry, and served as an adjutant, company officer, and commanding officer, and he therefore knew something of the British infantry and the present organization. The British infantry with the eight-company organization, much as they loved it, was, he believed, not constituted for modern war. He supposed that 100 years ago, when the third rank of the British infantry was dropped, and the British infantry was formed for the Peninsular War in two ranks, the old soldiers who fought under Abercrombie in Egypt must have objected to the loss of their third rank, but by the time they got to Toulouse they had seen the advantage of the two ranks. He was prepared to give up the eight-company organization they had had for so long because he honestly believed that in the four-company battalion they would have something very much better.

#### THE SECOND CAPTAIN.

Some commanding officers were rather prejudiced against the proposed change because they thought the second captain would be a cipher. He used to think that himself four or five years ago, before he went to Aldershot, where for four years his battalion trained in double companies. After that experience, he had no hesitation in coming to the conclusion that the second captain, if there was one—there was very often not a second captain—did not become a cipher, but his work became very much more real. They must remember that neither the British major nor the British captain, in the infantry, remained permanently with his battalion; one day he was off to Egypt, another day an officer was going to the Territorial Force, or to the Dépôt, or to West Africa. All these various forms of extra-regimental employment were of enormous advantage to the armed forces of the Crown as a whole, and to the individual officers, and they gave the captains most valuable experience. General Maxse's proposal did not mean that the captain was to be tied to the apron strings of the major. The major would be very lucky if he had him at his apron strings, he was much more likely to have one of the subalterns instead.

### THE HEADQUARTER SECTION.

The only vital detail upon which he did not quite agree with General Maxse was the "Headquarter section." He was inclined to think that to have a battalion "Headquarter section" would be to have rather an unwieldy formation. He quite admitted that something of that nature was required, but he thought it was on too large a scale, and he would suggest that each of the four new companies should have a company headquarter section, in which the men who were not strictly available for service in each of the four fighting sections should be kept together, and looked after by the captain of the company. He did not wish to see the senior major or second-in-command of an infantry battalion saddled with an enormous mass of men such as the battalion headquarters section would be, which he would have to look after more or less. The senior major had other duties to perform, and if he did his work he was much better employed in helping his commanding officer.

### MOUNTED COMPANY COMMANDERS.

Objections had been raised to the four-company commanders being mounted. People said that it was no use to increase the numbers of mounted officers because everyone would dismount when the battalion came under fire. That also he admitted, but he was thinking of the time when a battalion was not under fire. Active service did not consist entirely of battles, there were long marches, outpost duties, advance and rear guards, and so forth, and the advantage of having four mounted officers whom one could summon to explain how the deployment was to be carried out before one came under fire, would be enormous. One could not do that at present; one had, for instance, to wait until the captain of the rear company came up, or else to explain it to the company commanders one by one as they came up. If they were all of them mounted, one could easily assemble them at once, ride forward to reconnoitre, then form one's plan of attack, and the whole thing could be satisfactorily started. For tactical and administrative reasons, therefore, he was decidedly in favour of a four-company battalion.

**Major-General W. P. Campbell, C.B.** (G.O.C. 5th Division): We have had discussions of this sort many years ago, and I have always made it plain that I am dead against the four company battalion. Sir John has very kindly said before that I have always stuck to my opinion. I have had the experience of commanding a battalion of over 1,000 men in the late war, and I have also once seen a battalion of the Bedfordshire Regiment which came to my brigade at Aldershot, a battalion that was formed in four companies, and I could not see anything in that battalion's working that showed it was any better than the eight company battalion. The only good, if any, that I could see was in the interior economy. When this question was raised in 1905, I was very strong against it and I should like to read one or two of the points then made. In the first place we are cramping the individuality of four of our present company commanders; that is to say, if we adopt the four company battalion, an excellent, very zealous captain may find himself under a senior not nearly so capable or energetic, and thereby may lose his keenness, his individuality, his self-reliance, and his initiative. Again, it may take a man fifteen years to become one of the four company commanders, and all this time he is in a subordinate position and losing his sense of command, and I consider that when tried in the field he will not be nearly so good a man as he would have been if he got command of a unit after

eight or ten years' service. Then everyone likes to run his own show, and the earlier in life this chance is given, in my opinion, the better a man will be. Again, with eight companies a commanding officer can find out more easily if a man is of any use to command than he can with four. Those were some very strong points which were made at that time, and the Chairman and I have always had words about them' whenever we met; but still I stick to those opinions.

#### THE WORKING OF DOUBLE COMPANIES.

With regard to the working of double companies in toto, I am of opinion that the smaller the army the smaller should be the unit. In war time double companies will be at least 200 strong, and that is too much for one man to command, especially when he has to get off his horse at probably 1,500 yards from the enemy. In an attack we lose an enormous amount of elasticity, and four double companies are more unwieldy than eight. On outpost duty the line held, especially at night, would be too much for one commander to look after properly, and the same applies to wood fighting. Also there is an enormous amount of "*esprit de company*" in the British army, and it would be a great pity to do away with it. I am quite certain that if you have 200 or 250 men to look after in an outpost line it is too much for one major to do. I noticed that very particularly in the late South African War. Some of us perhaps are getting past our prime, but we have seen the thing happen in war and in peace, and I am quite certain we had better stick to the old eight company battalion. Perhaps we might have seven ordinary companies and one headquarter company, but I am quite certain we ought to stick to the eight company battalion instead of adopting the four.

Major G. C. M. Sorel-Cameron, Q.O. Cameron Highlanders, said that in spite of the eight-company system a battalion was generally organized, for purposes of communication and control, into four double companies, both in attack and in defence. Under modern conditions of tactics the less the number of units to whom orders and explanations had to be given the better and quicker the results. It was the custom in the infantry for the companies to take their turn daily at the head of their battalion; consequently, with the double company organization, no two companies were ever together, or commanded by the same officer on two successive days. Supposing a battalion was acting as an advance guard, the two companies forming the vanguard were either commanded by the senior captain or by an officer specially detailed to command them, generally the senior major. Under the scheme suggested by the Lecturer there would be a compact unit with its own commander and officers ready for the task.

#### DIFFICULTIES OF CONTROL.

The difficulties of exercising control of the first line of companies deployed in the attack, under the present system, were enormous. By control he meant general control that could be exercised in the sending forward of supports and reserves into the fire line and the meeting of counter attack. This would be a difficult matter at any time under fire, but as it was laid down in the training manuals that the longer control could be exercised the better, why not organize with a view to obtaining it up to the last possible moment?

### THE BATTALION IN THE DEFENCE.

Considering next the case of a battalion in the defence. Under normal conditions half became the firing line and supports, half local reserves. With the eight-company organization the battalion commander had to divide his portion of the defensive line into four parts; with a four-company organization he had only to halve it, a much simpler matter. Into whatever detachments the commander of one of these four companies might wish to divide his unit, each had its commander, because from the major, to the corporal in command of a squad, everybody had got his second in command. Divide that big company into half and you got 3 officers and 8 squads to each half, just as elastic an organization as the present one, but with this great advantage, that instead of having a scratch double company which had not been trained together you had got two halves of a complete unit, which, from having been trained as a whole, were one in thought and action.

### EIGHT UNITS OR FOUR?

In conclusion he would like to ask those in favour of retaining the eight-company system whether they considered eight units or four the best organization for exercising communication and control in the field? Would any brigade commander like his brigade to consist of eight small battalions instead of four large ones? Would any divisional commander prefer an infantry division organized in six small brigades instead of three large ones as at present? The principle was the same whatever the size of the unit.

The eight-company system had not been tested by the British Army in European warfare since the days of the Crimea, when they still fought in two ranks shoulder to shoulder. Since that time all the big Continental armies had been organized on the four-company system. The latter system had been tested in war, both with close formations (1870) and with modern extended formations (1904). As a result of the test of war the nations which had adopted the four-company system were retaining it. The argument that the latter system had only been adopted because it economized officers, was an argument in its favour. For if a big company could be handled satisfactorily with less than the number of officers proposed by General Maxse, it stood to reason that it would be more efficiently handled with the actual number proposed by him.

**Captain R. J. Kentish**, Royal Irish Fusiliers, said he believed the chief cause of trouble in the Home regimental system was the want of men in the ranks for training purposes. But did General Maxse really mean that he could get more men by his four-company system? He understood him to say that the establishment in peace time, with the four-company system, would be the same as to-day, 680 privates. Deducting from this the headquarter section (184 privates), there remained 496 men, making four companies of 124 each. The four sections of a company would have 31 men each and these would give four squads of 8 men each. General Maxse had made no mention of recruits, of which there was always a permanent number, generally about 15, in each company. In a four-company system there would be double, say, 30, and these, spread over 16 squads, would bring the squad down to about 6. Then again, there were always men wanted for transport, mounted infantry, and other courses, and so General Maxse's squads would be practically brought down



to nothing! He could not really see how this four company system was going to give a company officer any more men than an eight-company system.

#### THE POSITION OF THE CAPTAIN.

The captains to-day had very little responsibility and would like a bit more. But General Maxse proposed to take away the bit they had now and to give them practically nothing in return. He would like to see a reformed eight-company organization, and he believed that if a Commission could be appointed, to consist not only of Staff Officers, but of some regimental officers with 15 or 16 years' service, they would eventually evolve, not a perfect eight-company system, but something very much better than what they had to-day. And if this could be brought about without any change in our present organization, the great majority of regimental officers would be devoutly thankful.

**Captain A. H. Mackintosh**, Q.O. Cameron Highlanders, said that the indefinite nature of a subaltern's command under the present system was not only unsatisfactory, but might become a positive danger. The section commander's initiative was cramped by the knowledge that he was under a control with which he was not in immediate touch.

Some company commanders, realizing this defect in the system, discouraged their subalterns from acting as half-company commanders and used them rather as their immediate assistants; this was a great waste of power, which General Maxse's scheme would go a long way to obviate.

He would like to see the principle of giving each regimental leader an understudy extended to clerks and quarter-master's assistants. At present these men were merely on loan from their companies, and did their training like other men. But when mobilization was ordered, all these assistants, to the full number, would be required in their respective offices in the orderly room and the quarter-master's office. It must be remembered that on mobilization a battalion had to send at least two fully qualified clerks to *each* regimental depôt; also, a detail company had to be formed, and its commander had to take over a lot of documents from the orderly room and the whole of the quarter-master's department, including his equipment and clothing. It was absolutely necessary that he should have a fully qualified staff. The organization of a battalion should provide for understudies in these departments, and he thought that the formation of a headquarter section would give facilities for some continuity in the training of this important personnel.

**Captain H. Wake**, D.S.O., K.R.R., said that the proposal to collect all the specialists—signallers, stretcher bearers, band, and so forth—into a headquarter section under a commanding officer was a very attractive one at first sight, but it appeared to him that it might be carried too far. As these remarks applied equally to an organization of eight companies as to one of four he hoped they would not be taken as an objection to a four-company organization.

#### THE HEADQUARTER SECTION.

For work in the field they might either make each company self-contained and self-supporting, or they might leave it with only its fighting men and collect all the specialists under the commanding officer. He submitted that although in battle there were no doubt advantages if the commanding officer could have all the specialists under his hand—his signallers, for instance—and distribute them as the exigencies of the

moment might demand, yet, in war, so far as interior economy and administration were concerned, this arrangement was not so convenient; and there was nothing in the present system which prevented these specialists from being used collectively when occasion demanded. In peace there were several serious objections to this headquarter section which it would be well to point out. First, it did not solve the "employed man" difficulty, for the Lecturer admitted that they must be attached to other companies for training, and this would, apparently, involve more unsatisfactory arrangements than the present system did, both to the company commanders and to the adjutant. They must be relieved by men of the fighting companies, and therefore the officers would not have their men with them. Secondly, specialists were never permanent, and when they returned to duty they would be inadequately trained. There would, also, be continual transfers from the headquarter section to the companies and vice versa. Thirdly, the reservists who belonged to the headquarter section when with the colours, would come back into the ranks on mobilization as ordinary fighting men, and would be inefficient as such because they had not received the same training. Again, the men belonging to the headquarter section would lose much of the interests of daily life in barracks. They could not be allowed to take part in the shooting competitions and games, etc., with the others because they would win everything, having over 200 of the best men in the battalion. With regard to discipline, pay, clothing and interior economy generally, this section commanded by the senior major and run by the adjutant assisted by the signalling officer, the machine gun officer, and the quarter-master, would present endless difficulties, especially as the personnel would be continually changing. He would like to ask a regimental accountant what he would make of the pay list of this headquarter section of 200 men. On the whole, he submitted that, however attractive it might sound to company officers to get rid of the employed men, it was very doubtful if it would work in practice. The company officers complained now that they never saw their employed men. Under this system they would complain that all their best men were taken from them and that they were left with nothing but inferior men and recruits. At present most of the employed men, at any rate, slept in the barrack-room and helped to keep things going there more than some people supposed, but the colour sergeant knew it.

#### THE FOUR-COMPANY ORGANIZATION : TRAINING.

With regard to the four-company organization he believed that he was truthfully expressing the opinions of a large and daily increasing number of regimental officers in saying that they were grateful to General Maxse for bringing forward this question of the present organization of the infantry. It was a subject that was being discussed at the present time by every battalion in the Service. They did not believe for an instant that the difficulties under which they laboured would be entirely removed by the adoption of a four-company organization. These difficulties were due to a large extent to their peculiar conditions, especially in having to feed an oversea army with drafts, and the fact that under a voluntary system recruits did not join at convenient times. Those drawbacks and their results would remain whatever the organization. But many of them were at least convinced that the small company system was directly responsible for much that was unreal in their training, that with small companies they could not carry out the principles laid down in the train-

ing manuals, and that with four companies they should attain a far higher standard of efficiency. That was good enough, he thought, whatever the feelings of the four junior captains might be who complained that they were deprived for a short time of their responsibilities.

#### THE FOUR-COMPANY ORGANIZATION : TACTICS.

So much for training. As regards fighting he thought it must be admitted that the present small company organization was designed to meet fire conditions which had entirely changed. He only wished to supplement General Maxse's remarks on this subject by saying that control of groups of fire units in battle—the sort of control which influences the result—could not be exercised laterally; it must come from the rear and work forward; the captains of small companies in the firing line were too near the front; those of companies in support were independent of companies in front. If they had larger companies their commanders would be with the reserves or supports in rear up to the last moment—in fact, in a position where they could receive the orders of the battalion commander, control and influence the result of the fight by the use they made of their reserves, and arrange for ammunition supply and for co-operation with neighbouring companies, and even with artillery. He thought they should base their organization on their tactics instead of trying to adapt their tactics to an organization which they happened to have inherited.

#### READINESS FOR WAR.

General Maxse had pointed out that it was not only the conditions of the battlefield that had changed but the conditions of the existence of the Army at home had changed. As he pointed out, the Army at home no longer existed merely as a machine for training drafts and manufacturing a reserve. These 72 Home battalions were the Army destined to fight in the West of Europe for the preservation of the Balance of Power, which was another term for the existence of this country as a nation, the existence of the Empire. Under these vital circumstances they would surely all agree with General Maxse—especially if, as he said, they were to fight two or three times their own numbers—that their organization, as far as means permitted, should enable them to start on equal terms with the enemy. As far as sergeants were concerned the Lecturer's proposals would remedy this drawback, and they were within our means, financially, for they involved a decrease of two sergeants to the peace establishment of each Home battalion and an increase of 32 corporals. He would go further than General Maxse. He was so convinced of the necessity of a larger company organization that, even at the price of reducing the proportion of officers and non-commissioned officers to other ranks, he would have the change. At the same time, if the General Staff considered that their fighting efficiency depended on a certain proportion of officers and non-commissioned officers, it was unlikely, in face of this opinion, that the proportion would be reduced in consequence of a change in organization.

**Lieutenant-Colonel Alsager Pollock** said he wished that reformers would concentrate on essential points instead of occupying themselves with matters of comparatively trifling importance. If they would, all of them—whether in the Army or retired from it, but especially those who are at the very top of it—unite in telling the British public what things were vital to the security of the Empire, there would be some chance of get-

ting them; but so long as they allowed red herrings to divert them from the true line they would effect nothing. With reference to the question of battalion organization, let them look back into history and reflect on how the "Centurion System" made both Rome and England, remembering that it had stood the tests of Zama, Albuera, Waterloo, Inkerman, and countless other battles; and before they rejected that system think well whether what they proposed to substitute was certainly better. A system that had stood such tests must surely have qualities not easily to be surpassed. Meanwhile let them leave aside for the time such minor matters of organization and devote their energies to issues really vital to the Empire. A crisis would be reached within the next five years, and if the result should be disastrous what would their descendants say when they read—perhaps in a foreign language—the history of this epoch? Would they blame most the Ministers who had neglected to make adequate preparations, or the soldiers who had neglected to insist upon the necessity for those preparations?

**Colonel Sir T. S. Cave, K.C.B.:** I will not for a moment attempt to enter into the arguments for the four company system beyond saying that what General Maxse has said very much appeals to me, but I should like to say that, should it be adopted by the Regular Army, I see no difficulty in its also being adopted by the Territorial infantry. On the contrary, I think much advantage might ensue from it.

**Colonel Sir Lonsdale Hale:** I rise to express my utter amazement at the line this discussion has taken, and also at the line that my friend the Lecturer has taken. I have here a letter, written to me in 1886, when this same question of large companies, either in the form of double companies or single companies, came up as a burning question, and much influence was used to change our organization from eight small companies to four large ones.

#### LORD WOLSELEY'S OPINION.

It so happened at that time that Lord Wolseley was Adjutant-General, and the Duke of Cambridge was Commander-in-Chief. I am sorry to say that the name of Lord Wolseley now means to many of you something that has passed and gone, but at that time he was only fifty-three years of age, and was in his mental and bodily prime. Those of us who knew him as I did said that Lord Wolseley possessed all those great qualities which go to make a great general. But unfortunately some little time before the South African War an illness, from which he still suffers, began, and so the great opportunity was denied him of leading an army in a great war. I was always on terms of intimacy with him, and he knew I was quite a safe man, and in 1886 he wrote to me with regard to small companies. He was very determined against any change to large companies. He says that by the eight small companies we shall beat any of these nations who are simply following the example of Prussia, which has gone in for large companies, and, as he points out, as we all know, it was no tactical reasons which led Prussia to have large companies, but, I believe, the dearth of officers. I will read you a few lines from the letter just to show you why I am astonished at what has happened, or, rather, what has not happened this afternoon:—

"I wish you to believe that I cling on to small companies as the result of my little personal experience of leading men under fire, of watching its effect upon them,

and of study of works written by others of great personal experience on that point, besides considerable thought upon *the* " (he doubly underlines the word " the ") " great tactical question of the day: ' How to get alive at your enemy. ' "

That was at the bottom of Lord Wolseley's thoughts; not what organization would give you a headquarter section, or a non-commissioned officer extra or less, but what would be best fitted to get alive at the enemy. And which gentleman who has spoken this afternoon, even the Lecturer himself, has told us anything whatever about the superiority of these big companies over the small companies in getting alive at the enemy? You have never referred to it, and it is a vital point. I cannot remember the exact words which my friend General Maxse uses in the paragraph where he says something to the effect that the Commander would combine the four companies. General Maxse assumes that the four big companies would work together.

#### BIG COMPANIES IN 1864, 1866, AND 1870.

I ask you to give me from the experiences of war—that is, all we can go back to—instances to show that four big companies will work together as satisfactorily as a battalion as would eight small ones. You can only go back to 1866 and 1870, and I know a little bit about those wars. 1866 was the first time practically that the large company business of Prussia was brought into the field. There was just a little war in 1864, but they tried their big company system on the field of battle in 1866. If you will take the Battle of Kissingen, on which I lectured once, you will find four big companies constituting a battalion going together, and working together as a battalion quite as well as eight small companies would have done. If you take what happened at the wood of Maslowed, you will find some twelve company columns coming in at the north, and going out at the south side, almost in the order in which they entered that wood, and not a single company broken up. You would have said from that war that these large companies were a splendid thing. But the company commanders of 240 men each had not felt their feet then, but by 1870, they felt their feet, and I will refer you, first of all, to the Bois de Givodeau at Beaumont.

#### EXAMPLES FROM BEAUMONT AND WÖRTH, 1870.

The 26th Regiment in 1866, before the company commanders had felt their feet, walked through that difficult wood of Maslowed, and came out to the other side practically intact. At the Battle of Beaumont they entered the southern edge of the Bois de Givodeau, and the man who commanded them had been a major in the battalion in the former case. But look how the regiment came out now. It was absolutely broken up, simply going through a wood. All idea of keeping together was flung to the winds. Not only were the battalions knocked to pieces, but you will find one first battalion company at one place, another battalion company away at another place, and companies themselves broken up in separate and separated *Zugs*.

Now, I will point out the danger of this big company system by going to the Battle of Wörth. That was the first trial of the big company system in battle, I might almost say, and the very best account of that is given by the German writer Kunz, and he points out how things went to

pieces. It was the breaking up of control. It extended even to the generals commanding corps, and went right down to the lower divisions, and at last got to battalions, and companies. The moment the battalion went into action, and under fire, the tendency of each of those four company commanders was to say, "Now I have got these 240 men, I can do something on my own account—I do not mind the battalion—I do not want assistance from the other companies—I am 240 strong, and there is something to be done, and I will leave my battalion in order to do it." The temptation was too strong. Each wanted to win, and away the company went. But he reckoned without his host, for the company was formed of three *Zugs*, each 80 strong, and the subalterns, in command of those *Zugs* 80 strong, the moment the company went forward, thought there was a change of doing something, and off went the *zug*. I do not say that this always happened, but that was the tendency. It was owing to the large size of the units of which the company was composed that in that battle a company would break itself up, cease to be a company, and cease to be part of the battalion.

I have never seen a shot fired in war, but yet I think I know a great deal more of what happens in war than many of you do. I merely say that the result of that experience is that if you do not wish to retain battalion command, by all means turn it into four companies of 250 men each. They will go away to have little battles on their own account. But if you wish to keep the battalion control—and I should think, starting at the long distance you do from the enemy, you would like to keep control as long as you can—have small companies, 100 men, which will soon whittle down to even less. Accustom them to think of each other. They will know they cannot do anything very big by themselves, they will think of the people on each side, and I venture to say you will find corroborated the opinion of my old friend Lord Wolseley that if you want to win battles, you should have your battalions in organization not of four, but of at least eight companies.

**The Lecturer**, in replying on the discussion, said: For fear my friend Sir Lonsdale Hale might go away before the proceedings terminate, I should like to observe that I pretend to no such detailed knowledge as he possesses, but think it must have occurred to many of us that this four-company system which (he says) met with failure in 1870, is still maintained by that very scientific people, the Germans. Therefore, the German General Staff does not agree with Sir Lonsdale Hale.

#### THE FINANCIAL ASPECT OF THE QUESTION.

We are all glad to have seen Mr. Charles Harris here, and I think it was most satisfactory that he, being an authority on finance, was able to tell us that we can carry out the principles of this scheme, if it is approved of by the military authorities, for about £60,000 a year. That is satisfactory because some thought it would cost more.

#### THE "DISPOSSESSED CAPTAINS."

Two or three officers have made a criticism which was anticipated. It expressed the view that there will be four "dispossessed" captains in the reorganized battalion. I should like to answer it in this way—I agree that during company training the four junior captains will be working under the four majors, and I think it is essential they should; they will, therefore, not have a show of their own during this one month

in the year, but they will gain a great deal of experience of the company's work, and greatly assist its training. Now we come to the other eleven months of the year. If you look at any brigade at Aldershot, and I presume in other places also, you will see that about half the company commanders are taken away for various good reasons, such as attachment to artillery, umpires, and so on, with the result that many of them disappear for several months of the progressive training period. Taking any one company, it is pretty certain that either the major or the captain will be taken away for some other duty. Now, I put it to Captain Kentish most particularly, and ask him kindly to consider the point that a captain, although he has not had the command of the company during the one month, will have a thorough grasp of its units, and (when his major goes), will have a fine command during the summer season, including brigade and higher training.

**Captain R. J. Kentish** said that he could not agree with the Lecturer.

**The Lecturer:** Then I fear I cannot persuade you; but I put it to the meeting as being a consideration of importance in connection with the argument of the "dispossessed" captain, that we must think first of what will be best for the company.

#### INCREASED INTEREST IN TRAINING IN BIG COMPANIES.

General Lawson made a point I should like to emphasize tremendously. There is not the slightest doubt that the work in the big companies will become very much more interesting. I do not wish to make a sweeping general statement, but cannot help feeling that we are getting a little bit into a groove with regard to our training, and that is an opinion I have heard expressed by those who know much more about it than I do. I think that, if we had the four companies, the work would be more interesting to the officers, and especially to the subalterns. Just think of the pride of a subaltern going off on his own to train a section of 24 men. With regard to General Campbell, I know his views, and have nothing to say, except to ask one question of the meeting:—

#### THE COMMAND OF A BIG COMPANY IN THE FIELD.

It was suggested by General Campbell that a big company cannot be commanded by one man—a company of 200 men. I ask anyone here: Can a company of 100 men in the deep and wide formation of a modern battlefield be commanded by one man? I say he cannot personally command 100 men now. He may command four section commanders, but he cannot command 100 men. As he cannot command 100 men, obviously he cannot command 200. But by means of an organized chain of command he can produce results with 100 men now, and he will produce results with 200 men in the future. Therefore, I do not think that argument is a strong one, because the width and depth of formations at the present time do not enable any single man to command 100 individuals.

#### A CORPORAL'S COMMAND IN A BIG COMPANY.

I quite agree with Captain Kentish that my scheme will not produce more men; it does not pretend to produce more than our present 680 privates, but it arranges for placing them in units suitable to their work. Captain Kentish made a good point about the recruits when he reduced the squad, which is the fire unit, to eight men, less the recruits. I take his figure, which I think is a very fair one, namely, 15 recruits per double company on the average.

**Captain R. J. Kentish** said that he was referring to a single company.

**The Lecturer:** There are not 120 recruits on the average all the year round in a battalion. I have looked into it, and think 60 is a fair number taking it all the year round. I am very glad Captain Kentish brought out that point, because I want to emphasize it. We have to train for war. One of my points is that the new corporal is going to command a squad of 12 men in war, even if he only commands six men in peace. For, after deducting the recruits, the corporal will be commanding a squad of six real men, not paper men, and that corporal can learn to command men if he has six under him all the year. At present he has none, except during company training. Therefore, when his six are augmented to 12 men in war, the future corporal will be a trained leader, and that is the essence of the proposed plan.

#### THE HEAD QUARTER SECTION.

I am sorry to differ from Captain Wake with regard to the head-quarter section. He seemed to imply that this was a body of men who would be marching about like a company, but it is nothing of the sort. It is only an administrative unit; it never acts as a body; it has a colour sergeant and a quartermaster sergeant to look after its accounts, discipline, etc., etc. It consists of men who are extremely useful, but are not in any way a unit in the fighting line. I am thinking of the point he made that the senior major ought to be doing something more useful than looking after these men. He will, of course, only be called upon to settle questions when they arise in peace; he will not be marching these units about. On service he will be in action. Let us look through the Appendix and see who are in the Headquarter Section? The machine gun section—are you going to dot them about amongst the companies? Certainly not; what you want is to have machine guns handy. Then the officers' mess and the extra police—you must have them out of the companies in war. You want to keep water pure or do something or other, and this will not require the major's help. Then there are the pioneers. Whenever the C.O. wants a job done, he sends for the pioneer sergeant, and says, "Do me that job." If the pioneers are together in a headquarter section, the pioneer sergeant goes off and says, "Smith, go and do that carpenter's job." But, if you put the carpenter with one company, the plumber with another, and so on, these men have to be collected from the companies for each job of work. With regard to signallers, one or two should, perhaps, be with each company. But if you want signalling done on an ordinary field day, I maintain that the only way to get it done with any rapidity is to order the signalling officer to do it, and then the signalling officer should not be compelled to go round and collect the signallers from the companies. He should have them all handy and detail them rapidly, or the occasion for signalling will have gone before he is ready. The next people referred to are the band, and I do not see the use of putting them into companies?

**Captain H. Wake, D.S.O.,** said that he had criticised the arrangements in peace time, not in time of war.

**The Lecturer:** I want to organize in peace as in war. If a thing is good in war, it is good in peace. If it is bad in war, do not let us have it in peace. Everything must be put to the test of war. It seems to me more convenient, from my experience of commanding a battalion, to have



the specialists centralized so that you can use them when you want them and not have to run round the companies to collect them.

#### THE CHAIN OF COMMAND IN A BIG COMPANY.

There is one little point which has not been mentioned by anybody. In the four-company battalion you get rid of a fifth wheel of the coach in each company. For instance, an order goes to the men from the captain. In the eight-company system it goes first to the subaltern, from the subaltern to the section commander, and from the section commander to the squad commander—namely, through four unit commanders. In the four-company battalion it will go from the company commander to the section commander, and thence to the squad commander, that is through only three unit commanders. Thus we get a saving of one, because the bigger company is more scientifically organized. Yet, in each case, the squad has the same number of rifles.

**The Chairman:** I am delighted to see so large an attendance and to have heard so full a discussion of this most important subject. The case for both sides has been well represented and argued, and little remains for me to say.

Sound organization being at the root of all military efficiency, the importance of the subject cannot be over-stated.

I must, in the first place, heartily congratulate General Maxse on the fair and temperate tone, the lucidity of argument, and the clear and concise methods he has adopted in placing the issue before us.

There is an article in the October number of the *Army Review* on this subject of Infantry Organization. The author points out that the proposal to substitute four companies for eight is one which cannot be lightly adopted. It would entail the re-casting of all our mobilization arrangements, the amendment of our Regulations and Training Manuals, and many other important changes, which would take time and careful consideration to carry out. He adds, truly, that war might occur while the process was going on, and dwells rightly on the disadvantage of having to use the machine before it was working smoothly. We must all thoroughly agree with him in thinking that the evidence in support of the change must be conclusive before the risks which it entails are incurred. It is in that spirit we must approach the consideration of the subject.

#### THE SQUADRON SYSTEM IN THE CAVALRY.

Now I can call to mind very clearly a time which perhaps some few of you can also remember, namely, the introduction of the squadron system into the cavalry. I was myself an ardent advocate of that system, and the arguments used on both sides became very familiar to me. The principal point relied upon by our opponents was then, as now, the fear of a reduction in the number of officers and non-commissioned officers. As to this, I would only say that, although nearly twenty years have elapsed since the introduction of the squadron system, there has never been any hint of an intention or desire to reduce the number of officers or non-commissioned officers from any quarter. I would add that, in the opinion of those most competent to judge—an opinion which I think may now be said to be universal—the change has had a very marked effect, and has led to much increased efficiency.

I am not using this as any unanswerable argument in the favour of the Lecturer's proposals. I am quite aware that, so far as tactics

are concerned, an organization which suits the cavalry may not suit the infantry. The success which has attended the change is, however, a fact to which we would do well to give due weight, especially as the squadron system is found to work just as well when, as is so frequently the case in these days, the cavalry is called upon to act dismounted.

I see before me an assembly including some most eminent and capable infantry commanders, and as a cavalry soldier, I feel much diffidence in offering any opinion on a subject on which they are, perhaps, much more capable of forming a correct opinion than I am. Judging, however, from that standpoint, and in view of my own personal experience both at Aldershot and as Inspector-General of the Forces, the arguments in favour of a four company battalion seem to me very difficult to answer.

I am much perplexed by this difficulty when, as Chairman, I am called upon to sum up the case.

While such important advantages as what I would term economy of brain power, chain of responsibility, tactical requirements, and increased peace training facilities, are all ensured by the four company organization, we have it urged on the other side that the captain loses his independent command, and the subaltern many opportunities of learning to bear responsibility and acquiring initiative. The writer of the article in the *Army Review*, to which I have referred, answers this latter objection with a trenchant remark to the effect that officers exist for the regiment, not the regiment for the officers. But, apart from that, it seems to me to be open to question whether both captain and subaltern will not find themselves in a position much more favourable to their military education and development under the four company system than under the eight.

The formation of double companies for peace training only is, at best, but a tentative and evasive arrangement. For there can be no doubt as to the necessity of training units in peace as they are intended to go to war.

#### COMMENTS ON OBSERVATIONS.

If we are to judge by all we have heard to-day there can hardly be much doubt in the mind of any unprejudiced person as to which way the balance of military opinion inclines on this subject, and the whole matter seems to me to resolve itself into a question as to whether, or not, the case for a four company battalion has been so urgently brought home to us as to warrant our incurring the undoubted risks and disadvantages which must await the adoption of any far-reaching and drastic reform.

We all most heartily concur with General Maxse in his mention of the splendid work done by the General Staff during the last few years, and in the grateful recognition of that work by brigade and regimental commanders, and I feel sure we may confidently leave the problem we have been discussing in the same able hands, in the firm assurance that the best possible solution will be arrived at.

I know I am only expressing the opinion of everyone in this room when I tender our heartfelt and grateful thanks to General Maxse for his most interesting and valuable lecture.

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