HINTS TO OFFICERS

ON

COMMAND, DISCIPLINE,

AND CARE OF THE MEN

By Authority:

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HINTS TO OFFICERS

on Command, Discipline, and Care of the Men.

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These Hints to Officers are intended for the information of Lieutenants Commanding Platoons, or similar Units of other Arms, but they are also to some extent applicable to the duties and responsibilities of Non-commissioned Officers.

These Hints will also be useful to Senior Officers in instructing their juniors. The actual command of the men is properly exercised only through the Lieutenants, so that it is most important that they should realize their responsibilities, and learn how to meet them.

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Melbourne, 1st March, 1916.
HINTS TO OFFICERS
ON COMMAND, DISCIPLINE, AND CARE OF THE MEN.

I.—EXERCISING COMMAND.

An officer newly commissioned has much to learn besides his training in the field. He is ignorant of the art of command, of discipline, of his proper relations to his superiors or his men. He can hardly be alive to the responsibilities laid on him, and knows little of his moral duties, which are not laid down in Army Manuals, and cannot be tested by examinations or inspections.

Many a young officer seems to think that to be an officer simply means receiving salutes, getting more pay, a mess to feed in, and better quarters, and that his duties are to come on parade at the right time, and drill or march with his men. A man who so thinks has no idea of the responsibilities of his position or the duties he has undertaken. Until he realizes both, he is no use whatever as an officer.
The fact is that an officer has powers delegated to him by the State, and corresponding duties and responsibilities. All officers going on active service should remember that men by enlisting have placed in the hands of their country their liberty, their comfort, their health, and perhaps their lives, for which the Government is responsible. The Government delegates to its officers authority to control and dispose of the troops, and this authority carries with it responsibility for the exercise of that authority in a proper way, with due regard to the needs of war and the welfare of the troops. Any misuse of this authority has a bad effect on the moral and physical condition of his command, and makes it a less contented and effective machine for war, which tends to diminish the efficiency of the whole army.

The right use of this authority consists in exercising command well. An officer is really an individual whose trade is to exercise command, and if he will not learn that trade he is only a sham officer, a well-paid impostor carrying badges of rank. He may be a fighting man and might make a good private in the ranks, but as an officer he is really worth nothing to his country.

Let us therefore consider what exercising command means. It does not, as probably civilians think, mean merely getting obeyed. What there
is beyond mere obedience in exercising command may be easily seen. You hear that one unit is well commanded, another badly; this does not mean that in the one orders are obeyed, and not in the other, but that the officer commanding the better unit is getting the most out of the men, that they are doing better work without friction or shouted orders and reprimands. That unit will be contented and efficient, and a dependable instrument in war.

In the other company the captain will be shouting, reprimanding, and harassing his men to little effect. He gives orders without due thought, and later forgets or countermands them; he impedes his subordinates' action, blames them when he has made a mistake, is obstinate when he should give way, and weak when he should be firm. He demoralizes his company, hinders its training, ruins discipline, and spreads an atmosphere of discontent and disloyalty to the service. He will never have in hand the dependable company his comrade has understood how to form. One knows how to command; the other does not, and is like a bad workman using force awkwardly, spoiling his material, failing in his job, and then blaming his tools. The latter characteristic is typical of a poor officer, who invariably puts the failure on to the incompetence, disobedience, or want of loyalty of his subordinates.
A well commanded unit is not an automaton played on by its commander, but a living organism, where the officer impresses his will and personality on his command, and the men collaborate with him in doing what they have to do in the best way. Their mere obedience goes but a small way towards that end. If a unit is to do efficient work, each soldier in it has to do much more than merely obey orders; he has got to "play the game" willingly and intelligently, and so contribute his share to the common task in the spirit that his training has taught him, and his orders have indicated.

The right exercise of command will be discussed under three heads:—

I. The officer's character and his relations with his men.

II. Discipline.

III. Care of the men.
II.—THE CHARACTER OF THE OFFICER.

F.S.R. says:—"An officer requires a clear mind and a strong character to command the respect of his men." This respect is the foundation of efficient command, and the officer should realize that it is not possible that he should be truly respected by his men unless he has to some degree qualities for which his men can respect him.

The first of these qualities is undoubtedly the power of leading men—that inexplicable combination of charm with masterfulness which great soldiers have always possessed.

The next quality required in an officer is knowledge of his work. Men will respect their officer, and therefore have confidence in him and render him ready obedience, when they find out that he knows more about his job than they do. They certainly will not respect him if he knows less.

The next quality is sense of duty and devotion to its performance, without which the former qualities in themselves do not suffice to make a good officer. It is conceivable that a man might be gifted with the art of leadership, and clever enough to know his work well, and yet be always looking after his own interests, and not really devoted to his duty. That man, with all his powers of leadership and intelligence, will not be a good officer, whereas a man not so gifted by nature may
yet secure the respect of his men when they realize that he is actuated by a sense of duty in everything that he does, without thinking of his own interests, comfort, or safety.

The officer must have self-respect. It is presumed that no man holds a commission unless two things about him are certain—that he will speak the truth, and that he will obey orders. It is never thought possible that an officer will tell a lie, in speech or writing, or be guilty of direct disobedience of orders, or flagrant neglect of duty. Of course, all officers will not be perfect; their duty may be badly done; they may be weak or careless and have other faults; but it must be possible to take for granted their truthfulness and obedience.

The reason why self-respect on the part of the officer is so important is that he must be capable of feeling ashamed of bad work, neglect of duty, or of anything going wrong for which he is responsible. That sense of shame, when you come to think of it, is really the only means senior officers have of controlling their juniors. It is because this is taken for granted that officers in the British service are trusted, and for them there are no minor punishments as there are for officers in most foreign armies. It is assumed that their sense of duty and honour will prevent them being guilty of even small derelictions of duty, if
only because small faults will probably escape notice and punishment. Officers are thus on their honour to carry out their work properly, without being constantly watched, and should feel so ashamed of any failure that they will try and avoid it at all costs.

It will now be clear that the right exercise of command rests on character, which is more important than even intelligence in an officer, as on it largely depends his personal influence over his men.

**Officers’ Relations with the Men.**

Officers of every unit in the Forces of the Empire should try to keep up the high standard of good relations between all ranks which has always marked the British Army, where officers and men understand, like, and respect each other. In no country in the world could officers box and play football with their men, as they always have done in the British Army.

The following hints might be taken to heart:

Remember there is no gulf between officers and men. All are comrades in arms—that is, fellow labourers at a common task—to beat the enemy. Familiarity, we know, breeds contempt. In intercourse with your men, do not be too familiar nor yet aloof; try and take the middle course, which demands tact, good nature, and ease of
manner, and is impossible for a self-conscious, vain, or petty nature. The right attitude is given in *Field Service Regulations*—"Officers should be firm, but kindly."

Encourage comradeship in all ranks, and pride in the unit they belong to. Therefore, keep up the dignity of your command, however small, for it has a personality of its own, worthy of respect, and a real factor of energy in war. Approach your command in taking charge as if you were proud of it. Be courteous to it, but soldierlike, in word and bearing. When you inspect, look the men in the eyes; do not merely walk down the ranks. When you dismiss your men, do not turn away as if you had dropped a tiresome burden. Never humiliate your command, nor any individual in it, by sneering or looking supercilious. Never allow yourself to be irritable. Never be lackadaisical and casual in the presence of the men. Never loll about when they are at work. Do not walk on a footpath while they march on a rough or muddy road. Do not smoke, eat, drink, or talk, unless the men are allowed to. Do not loosen clothing or belts, or wear great-coat, unless the men may too. Return every soldier's salute. The man has a right to that, though he cannot well exact it. Not to do so is to abuse your position, and disobey regulations; in a word, to show yourself both rude and undisciplined.
Always have consideration to your men in training or on the march. Exercise constant forethought about their wants. Never have to say, "Oh, I forgot." Do not worry them over trifles. Avoid unnecessary fatigue in hanging about waiting. Do not expose them needlessly to bad weather, which gives trouble in cleaning kit, and causes ill-health and discontent. Then, when special efforts are demanded and unusual hardships to be faced, your command will respond to your call. Give praise sparingly, but when it is deserved, let it be genuine. Perpetual blame is disheartening. In reprimanding or punishing, be calm and impersonal. Remember to punish is a duty, not a privilege, and is the last resource to be used to keep up discipline.

The men are good judges of their officers' characters, and are constantly watching and criticizing them. This should deter officers from showing themselves fussy, undecided, selfish, or conceited. They should avoid affectation, and never pose in attitude, voice, or manner. That is a sure mark of a second-rate man. It never deceives the men, even if it does their brother officers, and is always rather ridiculous. Now ridicule is detrimental to respect, and thus injures discipline. Do not be pompous to inspire awe which your proper character would not warrant. Do not put on the masterful pose by being
brusque and overbearing. On the other hand, avoid "smooging" and popularity hunting, and do not try to humbug people. The men will see through it all.

It is sometimes possible to hoodwink your superiors as to your personal worth, and the way you do your duty, if you have some intelligence, enough artfulness, and few scruples; but you will not impose on your men, nor conceal your ignorance or your weakness. Pose is deception, and is unworthy of an officer, who should never try to seem other than he really is.

It is hardly possible for men to render willing obedience, or listen patiently to an officer whom they find arrogant, pompous, or fussy, and suspect to be ignorant or foolish. If an officer is preoccupied with his own personality, and is governed by egotism and vanity, or worse, by his interests and petty ambitions, and is self-seeking or spiteful, his duty will suffer. Exercise of command is a public responsibility, and not a personal privilege, and ought to be sincere, serious, and loyal to superiors and subordinates.

Knowing the Men.

A good platoon officer will know his men intimately and thoroughly. Soon after he is appointed he should, of course, know every man by
sight and name. He should be able to call the roll of his platoon by heart, which, on service, may be very handy on emergency or in the dark. But that is elementary—he ought to know his men's characters and qualifications; their good points and their faults. That is important on service, where all sorts of extraordinary cases turn up where a specialist is wanted. An officer ought to be able to pick out a man for any unexpected job, especially in the A.I.F., which comprises men of all sorts of trades and experience. A good officer will also learn a great deal about his men's private circumstances; what they have been at in civil life; whether they are married and have families; where they come from, and so on.

But the great object of knowing the men well is that it is almost essential for justice in dealing with them. It may fall to every officer to have to reprimand or punish, and if he does it without knowing the man's nature, he is sure to be unjust. A high-spirited man, unused to control in civil life, must be treated with tactful firmness. One man may do wrong in training because he is slow to learn; another because he is stupid. These men only want to have things patiently explained. Another man may be careless and neglectful, although sharp enough, and he requires rather appealing to on the moral side to show him what harm his failure is doing.
In learning to exercise command, the officer must use some knowledge of human nature. He must never forget that the men are human like himself—subject to the same influences, temptations, and faults. It is important, therefore, to study them, and to get into the way of treating them all as comrades, even if of lower rank, bearing in mind that, like the officer, they are all servants of the nation.

Initiative.

In exercising command, self-reliance, judgment, and tact are essential. It is a good plan in difficult cases to say to yourself, "What would my Captain, or my Colonel, or the General wish me to do if they were here?" Then act as if you were yourself in these officers' position giving orders to a lieutenant in your place. That will teach you to act on your own initiative, and prevent you awaiting orders. An officer should never do merely his immediate and bare duty, and then sit down and wash his hands of the job because some superior has not thought of everything, or given full orders. The moment an officer seeing something going wrong begins to think, "At any rate, I am not responsible," he is not doing his duty, if he can in any way interfere with good effect. In short, a good officer will never "let things slide." He should be ready to go beyond
the mere letter of his orders, and obey them in spirit, without awaiting further instructions, and refraining from action from dread of responsibility or fear of displeasing his superior officer.

It is necessary to emphasize the fact that an officer is responsible for his subordinates' action in carrying out their duty, and has no right to shelter himself from blame by throwing it on them. Officers are apt to excuse themselves for something wrong in their unit by pointing out that a subordinate has not done what he was told to do, or has misled his officer. This is no excuse. Superior commanders do not wish to hear about the junior's relations with his subordinates, who are placed under him to be used in carrying out his work. It is for his judgment to make proper use of them, and train them to help him, and until they are thoroughly competent, he should watch them, and check their work. If they fail anywhere, it is the officer's fault for not having explained what they were to do, or trained them to do it, and their failure will not be held to be an excuse for him.

Orders.

Giving orders is an important element in exercising command. The following remarks apply equally to regulations made for good order in camp or on the march, and to orders for definite action in training or in battle.
Every order places the recipient in a situation of restraint to which he will submit when convinced from his knowledge of the issuer that the order is necessary. Therefore, before issuing an order, be sure it is necessary, expedient, and possible to enforce. Nothing looks weaker and diminishes confidence like changing your mind, or giving counter orders. Remember orders are to be obeyed implicitly, and at once. They should never have to be given twice. It requires practice and judgment to issue good orders, which should always be—

Clear—complete—concise—courteous.

Clear orders are those which cannot be misinterpreted. If they are, the fault lies probably on the man who gave them, not on the recipient.

Complete orders have nothing omitted.

Concise orders contain not a word too much, and have no repetition or verbiage, which bothers the recipient, and makes the orders harder to understand and remember.

Courteous orders do not irritate and therefore endanger due execution. In giving orders verbally, let the tone be even and calm, but firm. Never give orders in anger or under irritation. Note and correct your faults of manner. Never threaten; it is weak, for the order should imply that obedience to it is presumed. On the other hand
do not invite hesitation in execution by the form of the order or its tone. Some officers give orders as if apologizing for their necessity. It is well not to give reasons in orders, as it provokes argument.

When issuing an order involving somewhat complicated or lengthy execution, have enough imagination to realize all the steps involved in the process. Some may depend on you, some on others not under your command. Make arrangements for insuring all necessary co-operation. Do not leave difficult points to your subordinate, hoping he will find some necessary stores, or means of execution, which you are too lazy or stupid to arrange for yourself. Think when your subordinate will get the order, and give him time to execute it before you blame him for disobedience. It may require some thinking out or planning.

III.—DISCIPLINE.

Discipline is essential, not only for the success of an army, but for its very existence. Without discipline, troops form rather not so much a military force as a mob, with all its notorious unreliability and ineffectiveness; for a mob is always an irresponsible and irresolute body, incapable of concerted action and sustained effort.

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Had it not been for the high state of discipline of the British Army during its twelve days' retreat from Mons, it would have disintegrated during the arduous marches it had to make by day and by night through unknown country, with constant and heavy rearguard fighting.

Discipline is far from being mere obedience to orders. That, as Wellington said, is only its foundation. Discipline is the concentrated spirit of some of the highest qualities of a good soldier, and should equally inspire his higher activities and his everyday work. Frederick the Great called it "the soul of an army." It may be concisely described as the "instinct of duty."

Discipline implies subordination to authority, self-respect, and determination to do one's duty in spite of the discomforts, hardships, and dangers of war. But discipline implies more than physical fortitude. It implies the moral endurance that can bear neglect or injustice, and can see others in comfort and safety while watching, suffering, or dying for them. Such are the virtues of an ideal soldier of every rank.

The object of discipline is that duty shall be performed intelligently and energetically. The discipline of a unit depends on the officer commanding it, who, as F.S.R. says, "requires a strong character to command the respect of his men, with whom he should be in close touch and sympathy."
In the last words we find a new human touch in regulations, and see how far we have moved from the old conception of discipline as coercion founded on fear. Frederick the Great used to say: "A man should be more afraid of his officer than of the enemy." That idea, still ruling in Germany, is obviously wrong. If you want men to fight, you must keep up their spirit and courage. You want them to be afraid of neither man nor devil. How can you get that result if you try to discipline them by fear of punishment and thus break their spirit?

Discipline to-day is for free men, giving willing service to their country, and willing obedience to orders. Due subordination is quite compatible with the self-respect of a free man of spirit, who understands that it is essential for his co-operation in the great work in hand—beating the enemy.

Such discipline must be self-enforced. It is quite possible to teach a man to discipline himself, and direct his activities to a right end, by developing his personality, his will, and his self-control.

Compulsion is at times necessary, no doubt, for proper control, but it adds nothing to the inward life from which true discipline springs. Control from outside really does very little for the character—even worse than nothing—because it implants a habit of only carrying out mechanically
the literal orders received. How useless compulsion is by itself can be seen from the fact that the moment the compulsion is removed its effect ceases. True discipline properly implanted goes on exercising its power even when the man is away from the eye of his superior.

To instil such discipline is perhaps more difficult than in the old days when discipline meant coercion, but the officer can show his men the value of discipline in war, making them understand that it is the test of a good soldier, because in war it leads to co-operation and concentration of effort throughout the army, and thus to success.

In addition to this instruction there are three influences constantly affecting the soldier, which, when properly directed, greatly assist in creating discipline in the unit. These are:—

The Example of the Officer.
Public Opinion in the Unit.
Comradeship Among the Men.

FACTORS OF DISCIPLINE.

The Example of the Officers.

The discipline of a body of troops depends on its officers, who create it and maintain it by their character and example. Their example helps to form discipline among the men; their character is shown in the method of exercising command.
Example is always at work as an influence on men. Man—especially man in the mass—is an imitative animal. Example widens man's ideas as to what human nature is capable of, and stimulates him where mere instruction would fail and appeals to authority or to his conscience fall flat. It has been said:—"Example is the school of mankind; they will learn at no other."—Burke.

As soldiers are keen and accurate judges of their officers' characters, the officer should be to his men the living embodiment of all soldierly qualities. Determination, energy, and self-control are the factors of success in war. If these fighting qualities are not possessed in a high degree by soldiers, the best training, organization, and preparation for war, and even superior numbers will never make up for their lack in an army. These moral qualities, which may be summed up in one word—character—are therefore essential in the officer, so that he may inspire the men by his example. Even the smaller matters should not be thought unimportant—dress, bearing, punctuality, method, and order. The officer should always act as if he were under his superior's eye, and keep strict watch on his conduct before the men in his bearing, manner, and talk.

Apart from the influence and example of the officer there are two great forces always acting in
a body of troops, which, if properly aroused and well-directed, will have a good effect on the conduct of the individual soldier.

These are public opinion and comradeship.

Public Opinion.

Public opinion as we know it in civil life is a powerful aid in keeping up right behaviour. It is the collective conscience of the body imposing its own standards of conduct, and very effective in devising punishment for departure from them.

Every one hesitates to fly in the face of public opinion, and dreads the shame which will be incurred by flouting it. In a body of troops that dread of shame is one of the strongest forces acting on the man, and tends to make him behave well, in spite of the most pressing claims of self-interest.

Public opinion soon comes into being in any group of men, and is a force not to be despised. It is really more powerful in swaying the individual soldier than regulations and punishments. The point is to direct it to right ends, so as to keep the soldier from conduct detrimental to the efficiency of the unit he forms part of.
Comradeship.

Clearly allied to public opinion is comradeship, which even the most careless and unthinking soldier soon finds out to be absolutely necessary for his comfort and safety. In war each man has all the time to rely on his comrades performing their duty, and will soon learn to realize that he must also do his duty by them and not fail them. In battle men together will do things that no individual man, or only the very bravest, could possibly do. This comradeship springs from the fact that the men are undergoing risks and hardships in common. Soldiers learn to know and esteem each other when they have to live, and suffer, and fight, and very often die, together. This creates confidence in each other. By the strain of war they learn the value of union and co-operation, and begin, therefore, to appreciate the value of discipline.

It is quite easy for officers to train men in that view of regarding discipline. They can be shown how necessary it is for the welfare of the whole unit, and of each man individually. It is a well-known proverb in the Navy that “a strict ship is a comfortable ship” to serve in. The same thing applies to a strict regiment. All orders, however trivial they may seem, go to produce regularity and punctuality which economize the time and
strength of the men. If there are a great number of trivial slacknesses on the part of the men, owing to want of good order and system in the regiment, they will entail by their cumulative effect appreciable hardships, delays, and failures. Marches, for instance, will be needlessly long, unless there is good march discipline. Distribution of food and supply of ammunition will be slow, unless all the men are doing their share of duty. When in action, of course, obedience to the least trivial order is most important. Any one can understand how important silence is during a night march meant to surprise the enemy. A careless sentry will endanger the army. The officer must bring all this home to the men, for "when the man in the ranks understands all that discipline involves—safety, health, efficiency, and victory—it is easily maintained." (Colonel Henderson on War.)

Drill an aid to Discipline.

For newly raised men the first means of implanting discipline is stiff drill in close order movements. Much of what is practiced has, of course, no direct bearing on fighting, as, for instance, attitude and dressing, accurate uniformity in handling arms and turning, and so on; but practice in these points is valuable in forming right habits in a soldier. He learns to attend to
the voice of his commander and to obey him without hesitation, while the commander in turn acquires confidence and the habit of command. When action habitually follows the word of command it becomes instinctive, and the habit of obedience is formed. On getting the accustomed stimulus of an order, brain, nerves, and muscle work in the accustomed way. So no one need think he is wasting time when at drill. He is getting the habit of obedience, which is the foundation of discipline, and of real use in war.

Only by this habit of discipline which has become an instinct, can a body of men respond certainly to the stimulus of an order, and so remain amenable to the control of their leader and keep their cohesion, under the strain which fighting lays on the nerves. Stiff drill is necessary, because no man has yet discovered any other means by which soldiers can acquire the habit of discipline, without which they cannot be controlled in battle, and will not be reliable in difficulties, hardships, and sudden dangers.

Habit is second nature, and this applies to moral habits as well as physical ones. Habits are formed by repetition of acts till they become instinctive, when the mere idea of something to be done is followed at once by the idea of doing it. The soldier’s training gradually forms his habits, and should be carried out so as to form good habits and not bad ones. On the physical side,
training is a school of correct action under all the varying circumstances the soldier will meet in war. On the moral side, the man’s training will develop his soldierly instincts, until at last he naturally follows the impulses of good order, self-restraint, endurance, and co-operation with his comrades. Thus the right sort of training will not only teach the soldier his trade, but also form a tradition of duty, that is discipline in the broadest sense, too strong and deeply implanted to give way under any stress of circumstance.

In carrying out training the officer should not be a mere fault-finder. It is easy to criticise and blame—far easier than to instruct—but it teaches little. The instructor should rather explain and encourage. As F.S.R. says:—“Criticism should be kindly, helpful, and constructive.” Do not blame the men till you are quite sure that it is not your own fault they went wrong. The man may not have been taught to do what you told him to do. Be patient. Some are not so intelligent and quick to think and act as others. Never forget that the men are human beings like yourself, and liable to human weaknesses and errors.

**Discipline of Officers.**

The officer needs discipline as much as the private, or more, both for the sake of example to his men, and because unless he is well disciplined
he cannot effectively exercise command. Want of discipline, a great fault in the private, is in the officer a crime—the more heinous because it is less likely to be detected than in the case of the private. The officer is trusted more and watched less, which should make him the more anxious not to fail his commander and betray the trust placed in him.

Any want of discipline in an officer cannot fail to react on his men, as it will impair his capacity for instilling discipline in his command. The man who has learned how to obey knows from personal experience how irksome an order can be if unnecessary or mistaken, and how hard it is not to resent it.

Discipline in the officer means loyalty to his superiors, even though he may think them tiresome, weak, or even stupid. He must not allow himself to show by word or manner that he despises or disagrees with his superiors, which would undermine authority and injure discipline. Still more must he avoid criticism of their plans or orders, and grumbling; all that spreads disaffection and corrodes discipline. He must never show an easy-going spirit in carrying out duties, nor give half-hearted, grudging obedience. His superior officers must be able to depend upon him with confidence, and he must not fail them.
He must also be loyal to his brother officers and to his men. All alike are his fellow-labourers at the common task, and entitled to all his assistance for the good of the service; therefore he must never be envious or jealous of his comrades, or supercilious or vindictive to his men. He must not be biased by his likes and dislikes, or think of his own interests, or be calculating or self-seeking in his acts. No officer must allow himself to sneer at his comrades or his men, or run them down. It is not, perhaps, to be expected that private talk among friends will not be pretty frank and jocular, but criticism and jokes about brother officers and men should never cloak a hostile note or a desire to injure.
IV.—CARE OF THE MEN.

The Lieutenant commanding a platoon (or similar small unit) is the officer in immediate contact with the men, and must understand that he is thus the agent of his superiors, and of the nation, as to everything connected with them. He must grasp the fact that he is responsible for everything that concerns his men with whom, as the Field Service Regulations say, "he must be in close touch and sympathy." He has to be not only their leader and instructor, but also their helper, adviser, and friend.

This responsibility for the men is unlimited and unceasing, and cannot be passed on to the N.C.O.'s. If the officer does not feel it, and neglects it, he is worse than useless, and is doing harm to the service. It constitutes the essential difference between the officer and the private, who has no responsibility for other men, but only for his own conduct, and has only to act in obedience to his orders.

The officer, on the contrary, has to hold his unit together, healthy and contented, fit in mind and body to march and fight. He has, therefore, to be constantly in touch with his men, know where each is at work, and see that none are ever absent without leave. When a unit is
newly raised, he has to equip and train it, for he will be held responsible that each man is armed, clothed, and equipped, and knows his work. He is at all times responsible for the men's food, shelter, and rest; for their comfort, health, and efficiency in camp and on the march; for their discipline and conduct; for the way they do their duty; and in presence of the enemy for their effective action, their safety, and their lives.

The officer's responsibility is thus double. On the one hand, he is responsible to his superior that his command is an efficient machine for war as regards its training, discipline, equipment, and health; on the other hand, it is necessary for the contentment and welfare of his command that he should take care of his men's interests in every sense.

Care for the Men.

Consideration and thoughtfulness for his men are important qualities in an officer, and a great aid in exercising command and acquiring influence over them.

The officer must see that each of his men knows the number of his platoon, company, battalion, and brigade (or similar units in other arms), and
knows by name and sight the officers who command each, and that he understands the conditions he is serving under as regards military law, and the pay, clothing, and equipment he is entitled to.

The man must be told that any complaints he may have can be addressed to the officer of his platoon, who will hear them patiently, and remedy them. The men will have difficulties and troubles; some may be trivial, and can be dismissed; some the men can be taught how to remedy themselves. But some will be genuine grievances or wants, and these the officer must try to set right himself, if he can; if not, he must call his superior’s attention to them, and he should not rest until he has taken every possible step to get them remedied. The fact of the officer being thoughtful of his men, and always ready to do his best to help them in their difficulties, will make them realize that when their troubles are not remedied they are unavoidable. The men will then endure hardships, fatigue, and privation, when really necessary, without complaining.

Clothing and Equipment.

The officer must see that each man on joining gets every article he is entitled to, and must also inspect from time to time, so as to insure that
the man does not lose or sell his things. No clothing is to be taken over by the man till his officer has seen it fitted; if that is done, there will not be men going about with new boots cut open because too tight, or in clothing too big, making them look ridiculous. In these cases the clothes seem to have been just thrown at the men by the Q.M.S., and the officer has neglected his duty.

It is the officer’s business also to see that the man’s clothing is marked, to prevent misappropriation. The man’s rifle and each part of his equipment should have a number stamped on it, so that the man can be held responsible for it.

On service, arms and equipment must be constantly inspected, to see they are clean and serviceable, especially the haversack and water-bottle, and to insure that each man has his field dressing, iron ration, and identity disk.

Men’s Food.

The officer should constantly see that the men’s meals are served at the right time, well cooked, and properly divided among them, and also see that the men have mess kit to eat their meals with, and that they keep it clean. Of course,
the company cook and kitchen is under the Captain, but by finding out what is wrong, and complaining to the Captain, the Lieutenant can get it put right. On service, he must think of how his men are to get water, food, and fuel to cook it.

**Men’s Health.**

Officers can do a good deal for their men’s health, whether in training camp or at the front. They can do their best to see that the men get warmth and shelter, and facilities for drying wet clothes, and washing. They can make the men obey the orders as to sanitation and cleanliness of clothes and person, which are so essential to health.

Tents, and the ground around, are to be kept tidy and free of dirt, all scraps of food being put in the rubbish tins, and no greasy or soapy water being thrown near tents. This is to avoid breeding flies. Blankets to be folded after being aired, and occasionally washed.

The officer should see that his men shave daily, wash when their work is done, keep their hair short, change their socks, and keep their feet clean; that their towels, shirts, and socks are frequently washed; that their boots are cleaned and dubbed.
The officer must see that the men learn to look after themselves. They should know how to mend, darn, cook, and how to take care of their arms and kit. When men are dead-tired, there is a great inclination to rest without cleaning rifles, and doing things which are absolutely necessary for health, such as washing—especially the feet—and making arrangements to keep warm or dry.

Officers must teach men that they must not let their health suffer by any neglect, because their country will be deprived of their services while they are ill. As a French General recently said, "One has a right to be dead but none to be ill."

In this connexion one comes to the two great evils of all bodies of soldiers. One is drink, and the other disease. The only thing, perhaps, an officer can do about either of these evils is to point out to the men how the character and physique essential to efficiency in war cannot be acquired, or kept, if men give way to self-indulgence in dissipation and drink. A good soldier ought to have too much self-respect to misconduct himself in gross ways. It can be pointed out how ridiculous it is for a man who has volunteered to undergo all the discomforts of war, not to mention the risk of losing his limbs and his life, to be unable or unwilling to put a little restraint on himself, and make some sacrifice, so as to keep fit.
That sort of advice will be wasted on a certain class of man, but some will listen to it, and it will help a little to diminish the evil.

**Officer's Responsibility for the Men's Conduct.**

It may seem hard to hold the officer responsible for the way his men behave when he is not with them, but in practice it is a fact that the better the officer the better conducted will be his men. In the well-commanded unit there will be less absence without leave, drunkenness, and other military crimes than in the unit commanded by an indifferent officer.

The officer cannot prevent the misconduct when it actually occurs, but he can diminish the possibility of its occurrence by the influence he has over his men to keep them straight. He can instil a good spirit in the unit, and try to make the men proud of belonging to it, and ashamed of tarnishing its good name by doing what will discredit it. When an officer who knows how to command is liked and respected by his men, they will hesitate to vex him by bad conduct, and incur his displeasure. From such an officer the men will feel disapproval a punishment, and rebuke a severe one.

To influence the men's conduct the officer can also appeal to their reasonableness. He can show the man that if he does wrong he is really helping the enemy. If he goes absent from camp,
his training suffers, and the efficiency of his platoon is diminished; if he drinks or gets diseased, he becomes physically less fit; if he fails to obey camp orders for cleanliness, the general health suffers. On service, misconduct is still more harmful. Therefore offenders are punished for their own good, and in the interest of the whole force.

It will be seen how vital a part of an officer's duty it is to look after his men, and, in doing so, he must never allow his own convenience or comfort to interfere. As General Birdwood said to his Anzacs last October, "It is up to the honour of every commander of men to look after the comfort and health of his men before he begins to think of himself." Nothing is a surer mark of a poor officer than finding him getting water or a meal, or making himself warm and comfortable, before he has seen that his men (and horses) are sheltered, watered, and fed.

An officer who looks after his men before he thinks of himself, and who expects them to go to him with all their troubles, if he is at the same time a man who will stand no nonsense, and knows his work, will have an efficient and contented command.

By Authority: Albert J. Mullett, Government Printer, Melbourne.