LIFE IN THE ARMY

Almost all the military officers in the Company's days were of British origin. The majority of them had their training as cadets at the Company's military seminary at Addiscombe. Some purchased their commissions in the Crown's service and came to India with their regiments, and such officers were often much younger than those who came after military training at the training establishments. For instance, Sir John Malcolm got his commission when he was twelve and the Duke of Wellington when he was a little over fourteen. There were no fixed rules in early days respecting the age at which commissions might be held.1 Thus the young cadets prepared themselves for embarking the Company's ships usually at an age when they could be moulded to suit the Company's regiments; their minds were still tender and flexible, to suit the Indian environments, and they were anxious to enter into a new life and a promising career. Before embarking, perhaps every officer of the Company's army felt like Conran: 'some natural tears I shed, but wiped them soon; the world was all before me'.2

The voyage in the early days was very dangerous and six to ten months were spent round the Cape; but towards the end of our period under study by the opening of Red Sea Route, it was reduced to one month and it was made comparatively comfortable.3 The officers were paid passage money at fixed

sliding scales, varying from £s.250 for a Major General to £s.95 for a cadet, from which all expenses of the voyage were met; but this allowance was considerably reduced with the shortening of the period of the voyage. The recruits were allowed free passage at the Company's expense. On the opening of the new route, the troops went from India to Alexandria where they disembarked; then they travelled through Egypt to reach Suez where they re-embarked in the Mediterranean Sea. From time to time rules and regulations were made for the good conduct of both the passengers and the ship's officers and all passengers were acquainted with these rules before getting on board. According to one rule, dated 17 January, 1799, the time of extinguishing candles at night was nine O'Clock on the decks and ten in the cabins; the hour of dinner was fixed not later than two O'Clock; "when the commander retired from table, either after dinner or supper, the passengers and officers of the ship retired also; anyone offending against good manners and known usages and customs will and on representation to the Court, be severely noticed"; at the same time the Captain of the ship was obliged to pay due attention to the comfortable accommodation of the passengers. The ships moved in groups in those early days; for amusement, the travellers had angling facilities and indoor games; and they could

1. Hardy, H.C. Register of Ships of East India Company from 1760 to 1819, London 1920, Appx. 72-5.
2. Evidence of Colonel Alex Murray, Report of Commissioners, Q.4661.
3. Hardy, H.C. Register of Ships of the East India Company from 1760 to 1819, London 1920, Appx. 130-1.
move from ship to ship. There were sometimes some women on board, as the practice of sending girls to India to find husbands had come into vogue from the middle of the eighteenth century; their presence 'produced more than one duel' at the first landing place. This necessitated a good deal of advice from the parents and guardians of the young ladies, before they embarked. "In case of your coming out", says one anxious adviser, "I entreat you will be as careful of your conduct on board the ship as possible ... It requires prudence even in young ladies of good families and friends to guard against the ruin of their reputation. You will I hope excuse the advice I give you; but as you have no experience of wily men, you may find this and all you get on this head necessary; and if you was worth £s.20,000 and lost your character, you will be despised for ever".

The cadets on their arrival in India reported at the Presidency Headquarters. In Bengal, after reporting arrival at Fort Williams, the cadets were sent to Baraset, fifteen miles from Calcutta, where there was a college for the cadets. After 1811, however, the college was closed due to mismanagement and subsequently an officer was appointed to receive cadets, who acted as their Commanding Officer until they were attached to regiments for training.

treated their cadets excellently, says an officer in the 1840s, and he found "both a capital mess and very comfortable quarters". The regimental routine for the cadet was often tough, at least initially; once he was posted to a regiment as an officer, not even the Commander-in-Chief could remove him from there, unless the officer himself wished to change his regiment. The young officers in due course became so attached to their regiments that they began to look upon them as their 'homes'. Consequently, an officer was seldom removed from his regiment until an alteration of rank made it unavoidable. However, the ties of attachment to the regiments appear to become loose as we move towards the end of our period. In the early days when intercourse with Europe was rare and difficult; few thought of going on leave; and there were few things other than regimental details which occupied the minds of British officers. Every night, thirty to forty of them used to sit down to mess to form "a convivial and happy party". There were no English women to occupy an English officer's time, or mind. It is true that English women had been allowed to come to India, but their number was very small. An officer spent most of his time conversing with his men, entering into their feelings and thinking of their welfare; this resulted in great intimacy and under-

standing between officers and men. Later, however, when intercourse with Europe became easy, there was an influx not only of English news and English books but also of English women; they became the charm of the cantonments.¹ This added some zest to the personal life of the British officers. But it prevented them from mixing with their men.¹

Indeed, European officers became very exclusive.² In the olden days an English officer would welcome the native officer to his bungalow and by informal talk get to know the gossip of the lines, the grievances of men, and various small regimental details, which proved useful. There were some officers who still preferred serving with the natives rather than with Europeans; but this was confined to service in the Artillery.³ Generally, however, there being no regulations for officers to know their men, many young officers were ignorant about many things concerning men under their own command.⁴ Thus, there was no contact between the British officers and the natives; they met only on parade and that was hardly a social contact.

Among the British officers themselves there were jealousies due to differences in the conditions of service between the Crown's and the Company's troops. In the Crown's service the officers lived entirely by themselves, in their

⁴. Evidence of Sir George Clarke, Governor of Bombay, Report of Commissioners, Q.1262-1270.
own circle of friends. The native officers and men who took delight in being spoken to were at times neglected, except in the Irregular Corps, where the officers took a personal interest in keeping themselves informed regarding everything concerning their men. The indifference of European officers towards the native soldiers was observed by many contemporaries. In this respect Sir Charles Napier tells us that when he was a Captain any men could speak to him at any time about his affairs, but that by the time he became the Commander-in-Chief, the soldiers did not get the advice and encouragement from their officers. Sir Thomas Munro observed that younger officers kept aloof from native officers and strong attachments were missing between the Europeans and the natives.

A British officer's life towards the close of our period was a continuous round of dependence on others. The Calcutta Review of 1856 gives a very graphic account of an officer's life: 'Hundreds of officers, especially of the Royal Army in India, with every opportunity, go through their career, live and die, in the most childish helplessness. They have no object, or at least the very smallest, to a worldly mind for exertion. They are accustomed to have everything done for them. To be fed, clothed, barracked, encamped all without a thought on their part; when therefore a necessity

3. Ibid, P.250.
for using their senses arises, they are like babies. The officers depended for most of their personal day to day things on their servants, and a Captain in garrison had a fleet of about thirty servants to look after his affairs: for instance, a cashier, a house steward, a market man, two waiters, a cook, a gardener, eight bearers for palankeen, women to clean the house, porters at the door and numerous other servants. Even in the early years of the nineteenth century, the position of the officers in this respect was probably not much different. During the Mysore wars, for instance, a Captain was accompanied on a campaign by a dubash (steward), a cook and a boy, a housekeeper, a grass cutter, a barber, a washerman and fifteen to twenty coolies to carry the baggage. The luggage consisted of items like a large bed, mattresses and pillows, camp stools and chairs, a folding table, shades for candles, six to seven trunks with crockery and cutlery and a stock of linen, some dozens of wine, brandy and gin, tea and sugar, a hamper of live poultry, a goat and an extra tent for excess of luggage and servants. It may be noted, however, that this unduly large kit was necessitated on account of the non-existence of officers messes; but once officers messes were authorised to be accompanied with regiments and became a part of their establishment the kit carried by officers was reduced considerably.

4. Loc Cit.
An officer of the Bengal Army generally kept a much larger number of servants than an officer in Madras and Bombay. This was due to the caste consciousness of servants in Bengal. Of course the Bengal officers spent more in consequence. In spite of the best efforts to reduce camp equipment during military manoeuvres, the camps became very large and unwieldy on account of a very large number of followers and animals. According to one account, when the Commander-in-Chief moved on his tour of a particular area, his ordinary establishment was eighty to ninety elephants, three to four hundred camels, and the same number of bullocks, with men to attend to those animals, and three hundred and thirty two tent pitchers. The camps looked like canvas palaces and it was believed that great pomp and show produced a great respect in the minds of the Indian peoples.

In the early days, even when there were no wars, big army camps were located at suitable places; in due course, houses were built, and the camps changed into cantonments. This change from army camps to cantonments was not sudden but slow. All cantonments were placed under the department of Quarter Master General who decided on the layout of the cantonments. When considerably developed, these cantonments became the hub of major activity and some of the cantonments became big markets.

In the cantonments, officers were not lodged in barracks but in bungalows; they received money to build them and lived there in an impressive style. The first bungalows were temporary one-storeyed thatched buildings made of kacha or sun-dried bricks and were called 'Garden Houses'. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, new bungalows were constructed with low verandahs for shade. Tatties made of bamboos were hung in the verandahs and kas-kas wetted with water was applied to doors of the bungalows to keep them cool. Swinging Pankas, hung to the roofs and drawn by a string, were used to keep the air cool. The bungalows were thus made comfortable for living.

The first officers who erected bungalows in the cantonments went without many things like meat, poultry and vegetables; they used to dine at mid-day. It appears from various accounts that the day started between eight and nine, followed by a meal called tiffin, followed by dinner at about three in the afternoon. Tea, was drunk in the evening, and late meals, termed supper, were arranged on very rare occasions. The nights were spent in drinking and gambling. By 1800 Lord Cornwallis had made great improvement in cantonment life, both as regards comfort and manners. As more and more women appeared in cantonments, manners improved. Dinner came to be eaten late in the evening and drinking was cut down considerably.

3. Ibid, P.89.
4. An officer's Diary 'War and Sport in India 1802-1806, London (no date) P.474.
There was an attempt to prevent the cantonment bazaar from becoming over-crowded. Europeans were located in such a manner that they could defend themselves if necessary. Some portion of troops was usually held in readiness for emergencies at all Indian stations. Every magazine and arsenal was a fortress, and for the security of gun factories and gunpowder factories, troops were deployed all around them. The civilians having been excluded from the limits of cantonments and proper security having been obtained, the Europeans lived in their "islands" of European culture.

The cantonment life was not without amusement, for there was racing, gambling and big game hunting. Durand mentions dancing, cards, smoking hookah and drinking brandy as his amusements of a camp life. By the end of the eighteenth century most of the cantonments had their annual race meetings.

In the camps and on the march the soldiers revelled in unlimited hunting and shooting. Big game hunting was, however, for only a few, for it had to be conducted on elephants and from 'machans'. Some of the wild game available in India in those days were neal gao (wild black cow), boar, deer and tiger; the duck and the partridge were favourite objects of shooting sport. A few officers spent their leisure in the study of

4. An officer's Diary *War and Sport in India 1802-1806*, London (no date), P.84.
books on diverse subjects. Some of them became writers and authors, as for example Sir John Malcolm. But intellectual pretensions or literary activities were no part of an average British officer's life.

Some officers spent their leisure with the native women. There was scarcity of European women, more so in the Company's early days, and the Europeans often had unions with the native women which, except in a few cases, were often irregular. Major Conran observed that "the weak characterized" among Europeans found an easy way to learn the language, customs and character of the natives by 'illicit companionship with native females'. Nevertheless, in the 1840s only twelve per cent. of men in European regiments were allowed to marry. This new situation must have affected the emotional life of those who could not marry. The opportunities of getting married were prized all the more for their rarity. Lieutenant Colvert refers to his wife as the widow who 'came to Madras with her daughters, the last of which is married to a Captain in the Company's service, and I have married the mother'. In Bengal, an officer got married to a woman who had been kept in succession by a Colonel and then two Captains.

One can understand what frustration the Europeans in India must have experienced on account of scarcity of European women. Even though by the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a considerable number of European women in the cantonments, there were many who could not have an association with them—temporary or permanent. The scarcity of women often led to quarrels among young men, both on board the ship and in cantonments. Evan Cotton narrates that once a quarrel arose among three gentleman passengers on account of a young lady, for all of them professed to have fallen in love with her. However, they came to a compromise; all agreed that she could marry them in turn. And she did. Some women who could not find husbands in Europe came to India, for suitors were easily available here. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, therefore, the problems of marriage of European officers were not so acute.

It has been observed that women were allowed to come from Europe to India, and among other reasons, to prevent unlawful union with country women and to reduce the temptation of soldiers marrying the Portuguese Roman Catholics. There was a great enthusiasm for nauch, partly because there were no facilities for European dancing; this gave the Europeans an opportunity of mixing with native women and the authorities were aware that the presence of English women was necessary.

In many cases over indulgence in amusements was a reflection of frustration in their lives. Disillusion often

led to frustration. Europeans as a whole appear to have been frustrated mainly on account of the difference in what they had expected to find in India and what they actually experienced. A young Cavalry officer wrote: 'if the allusion be not simply to curry the rice, the origin of the expression, luxury of the East, is to me an enigma'. Even the best of English officers found a subtle dissatisfaction in their Indian career. Thomas Munro once wrote to his sister in England: 'you seem to think that (Indian Officers) live like those satraps that you have read of in plays; and that I in particular hold my state in prodigious splendour and magnificence - that I never go abroad unless upon an elephant, surrounded with a crowd of slaves - that I am arrayed in silken robes, and that most of my time is spent in reclining on a sofa listening to soft music, while I am fanned by my officious pages, or dreaming like Richard under a Canopy. But while you rejoice in my imaginary greatness, I most likely am stretched on a mat, instead of my royal couch; and walking in an old coat and ragged shirt, in the noonday sun, instead of looking down from my elephant, invested with my royal garments'. Major General Durand once wrote to a friend: 'the luxuries of the East have certainly never abtruded themselves on my organs of sight ... you enjoy more luxury, incomparably more comfort, in your vicrage parlour than would be found in any part in India.'

Staff jobs were more lucrative and were considered to be more honourable than the common regimental duty. They consisted of appointment in the civil departments and in the administration of new provinces, appointment in the public works department and with Irregular Corps. The natural feeling of an officer joining a regiment in India was to get through his regimental drill as rapidly as possible to get to a staff job. This attitude militated against discipline and control of the regiments. Nevertheless British officers were keen for staff appointments; they felt tired and wearied of commanding active units. There were instances of officers remaining ten, fifteen and twenty years away from their corps. Major General Harrington regarded this a fault of the system.

European Officers were not happy with their pay and allowances in the regiments and looked forward to staff appointments which were not only softer but also more paying. About his financial condition Sir Thomas Munro had once written to his sister in England: "you may not believe me when I tell you that I never experienced hunger or thirst, fatigue or poverty, till I came to India - since then I have frequently met with the first three, and the last has been my constant companion".

3. Ibid, Q.1086.
4. Ibid, Q.1092.
Towards the end of the eighteenth century, an officer of the
Company wrote to the Court of Directors: 'with all the care
and attention I could give, I was considerably out of pocket'.

In some cases financial difficulties were increased
by the personal habits of the officers. We find an ensign
deserting the service because he feared imprisonment for
being in debt; an officer requesting a money lender to con­
ceal the fact of his being in debt. This financial diffi­
culty was caused by drinking and gambling. Duelling put the
surviving families of the deceased soldiers and officers to
excessive financial distress. The allowances given were
not enough to meet the expenses which military men generally
incurred through custom and habit; among them there was an
urge to have comforts which they believed were essential to
the health of Europeans in the Indian climate. The greatest
expense arose from the self-imposed obligation to keep a
large number of servants. For instance, as a junior officer
Durand considered six servants 'as the very least you can do
with'. These servants were individually cheap but collect­
ively quite costly. The officers spent a great part of their
pay in giving feasts, some of them going into heavy debt on
account of gambling; and, though it was unlawful for army

1. Ibid, P.58.
2. Ibid, P.70.
3. Forrest, G.W. Sepoy Generals, Wellington to Roberts,
London 1901, P.150.
5. Durand, H.M. Life of Major General Sir Henry Marian
personal to gamble, the practice could never be stopped completely, and there were still others who lost large sums on the race course.

At all the Presidencies, officers were considered offenders if they went into debt and all officers in debt were brought before a 'Court of Request'. The Court of Request was a special army court where officers were tried, and were sometimes sentenced to severe punishments like dismissal from service for being in debt. Offenders appeared before this court every month, for it was a standing order throughout India that a Court of Request shall assemble at every military station every month. Many officers resorted to borrowing money from the pay-havildars to avoid trial.

Duellng, which was a major cause of ruin of some families, was quite common. Subedar Sita Ram tells us that the British had very curious custom about izzat or honour, and if they were insulted they fought or they were never again spoken to by their brother officers. Quarrels often arose over trifles. Subedar Sita Ram himself witnessed a pistol duel at a private party between two officers of his regiment who quarrelled because of the arrogant attitude of one towards the other. The duel resulted in the death of the host. Major General Rollo Gillispie, whose name is

2. Sitaram Subedar, From Sepoy to Subedar, 3rd Edn., Calcutta 1911, P.53.
3. Ibid, P.47.
4. Ibid, P.53.
connected with the mutiny of Vellore, as a young officer quarreled with Major Barrington who called him a coward living in a regiment of cowards. Gillispie's biographer narrates that 'Gillispie, in extreme rage, whipped out his handkerchief, held one end of himself, and offering the other corner to Barrington, engaged to fight at point blank range. Both fired simultaneously. The cock of Gillispie's pistol was knocked off by his opponent's ball. Barrington was shot through the heart and carried to the neighbouring cabin'. 1

Another duel arose when a Captain, Brown, called a young officer officer, Grant, 'a child'; Grant sent a challenge, they met and fired together and Brown was shot dead. 2

In due course, the Government was obliged to take notice of sad consequences of duelling. By an order of Her Majesty the custom was stopped. Napier took a determined action to put down duels. In 1850 he awarded severe punishments by a Court Martial to two young officers of a battalion of Native Infantry, who had assisted as seconds in a duel. The punishments were exemplary in their effect and that was the last recorded case of duelling.3

The soldiers were by regulation required to follow the teachings of their faith. It was considered desirable that their spiritual education should keep pace with their

military duties. In fact in some of the regiments Commanding Officers took very keen interest with regard to this aspect and some of the renowned soldiers, such as the Lawrences, Nicholson, Edwardes, Montgomery, Havelock and many others had earned for themselves the title of 'good soldiers of Jesus Christ'.

By a regulation, any officer or soldier who spoke against an article of the Christian faith, was liable to be delivered over to the Civil Magistrate for trial. All officers and soldiers were required to attend Divine Service and sermon at a place fixed for the assembling of the Corps to which they belonged. For absence from prayers an officer could be brought before a General Court Martial and the punishment awardable was public reprimand; and a soldier could be tried by a lower court and could be sentenced to suffer a loss of pay. Roman Catholic soldiers were, however, exempted from compulsory attendance at the Church service. Soldiers were by regulation expected to uphold the sacredness of a place of worship. In fact the securing of a proportion of spiritual services to all classes of European forces in India was always considered of highest importance both by the authorities in London and in India. For the provision of these services, there was in India what


2. Military Department Consultations dated 3 February 1841, No.5; vide Military Letter from Court dated 4 November 1840.

3. Loc Cit.

was called Ecclesiastical Establishment. The chaplains of the church of England had been appointed to the different stations in India. Church services were also extended to the schools for the children of Europeans and for the sick soldiers. Chaplains attended the troops in the field and imparted spiritual consolation to the soldiers slain in battle and performed the last rites according to the Christian faith.

The Chaplains conducted Divine Service for the troops every Sunday and gave a short discourse on the moral and intellectual habits of a soldier. The sick were visited by them because it was believed that it was in a hospital that the moral character and conscience of the soldier was known, because his mind was then open to conviction on consequences of vice and intemperance; and it was there that the soldier looked for something more than human support. Major Conran wrote from his experience that there came to be a kind of tacit understanding that the hospital was the 'neutral ground for many a soldier, who in health, whilst occupied in active duties, and encouraged by his comrades, defers conviction, and throws off, like early dew, all the influences exerted in his behalf, is brought by the mysterious experience of a sick-bed to listen to your exhortations and even to long for your visits, as he that watcheth for the morning."

It was believed that certain amount of education was necessary for soldiers; even for promotion to the lowest

1. Letter from Principal Chaplain to the Forces relative to the performance of Ecclesiastical duties vide Military letter from Court, dated 17 October 1833.
appointments it was expected that soldiers attained to some minimum educational standard. His Royal Highness, the Duke of York, was the first person who introduced a regular system of Regimental schools, where soldiers and their families attended in large numbers and learnt to read and write. The regiments were provided with libraries, where in each five to six hundred chosen books were kept, and some leading newspapers were provided. These libraries served in relieving educated soldiers from the tedium of barrack life. Army schools were authorised for various European Regiments, depending upon their strength. As a matter of religious tolerance in schools, the Roman Catholics were exempted from attending regular prayers, which was said before the commencement of the school. There were no female schools before 1832, and the first female school was opened at Fort William in that year. Subsequently separate female schools were provided and the young boys received instruction in female schools until they were six. In addition to education the female schools imparted instruction in knitting, sewing and other household occupations.

The schools were free for soldiers of lower ranks and their children above four years of age were required to attend schools by compulsion.

1. PP Vol. 40, Page 449, Commons 319 of 1836.
The customs and traditions of one’s regiment were often a part of the emotional life of the individual as a member of the regiment. For example, once when a regiment mutinied, twenty eight men who were most guilty were court martialled and sentenced to death. Eight of the culprits were ordered to be blown away from guns. As they were on the point of execution, three soldiers stopped forward and claimed to be blown away from the right hand guns, because these men in their regiments had fought on the right. They wished to uphold the tradition even in the face of death.¹

With the Company it was customary to carry colours and these represented a regiment’s spirit and were the epitome of their history. Battle honours were borne on them. Standards, or distinguished flags were issued to squadrons of native cavalry as early as 1779.² There is a record of a Body Guard standard in 1800 when the Marquess of Wellesley presented colours to the corps at the Couchington on his review of the body guard. In the Bengal Army, in 1825 Oak leaves and Ocorus became the distinctive feature of its colours, and it remained so upto the Mutiny.³ In the Bombay Presidency, the practice of the British Army was followed; on all the colours of the Bombay Army union wreath was embroidered.

The Colour of a unit was its life and it was most

¹ Macleod, On India, London 1882, P.82.
² Viceregal Establishment in India, Printed by Governor General’s Press, New Delhi 18148, P.16.
³ Bullock, Indian Infantry Colours, Bombay 1931, P.15.
respected. It was regarded as a great honour to possess the old superannuated colours. Many Commanding Officers kept old Colours in their possession in spite of prohibitory orders. An instance of the strength of custom is provided by the Bengal Army battalions paying the highest respect to colours even when they mutinied. On the eve of recruitment all recruits took an oath to remain true to the colours. When a rebel leader found that one of the battalions proved to be insubordinate to him as a rebel, he deprived the battalion of its colours for this insubordination.¹

Customary military awards were given both to Europeans as well as natives. Order of the Bath was the term used for gallantry awards.² The most important and honourable military order of the Bath was composed of three classes, differing in their dignity. The first class of the order was worn upon the left side of upper vestment and could be conferred on no officer less than the rank of Major General in His Majesty's service. The second class was awardable to officers not below the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. The third class was awardable to officers holding commissions in His Majesty's service. These orders were subsequently allowed to the officers of the Company's service. There were two other kind of gallantry awards: the 'Order of Merit' and 'the Order of British India'.³ The

¹ Ibid, P.22.
² The Annual Register of 1815, London 1816, P.135-137.
order of Merit was divided into three grades. The first was obtainable by those who had already won by individual gallantry the third and the second grades. The badge of the first grade was a gold star with the inscription: 'The Reward of Valour'. The decoration of the other two classes was of silver, with a similar motto. All were suspended on the chest with a dark blue ribbon with a red edge. Double pay was attached to the first grade, two-third increase to the second, and one-third to the third.

There were two classes of the 'Order of British India'. The maximum number of awards in each class was one hundred. The first was restricted to Sabedars and Rissaldars who were given also the title of Sardar Bahadur with an additional pay of two rupees a day; the second was awarded to native officers of lower rank with the title of Bahadur and an increase of pay of one rupee a day. The decoration was a gold star, pendent from a blue ribbon. Though awardable for good service, it was virtually the reward for old age, and invariably the wearers were pensioners. Some times awards of land and the use of palki were allowed. This was regarded by the sepoy as the highest honour.

The climate of the plains was not suited to the British and they were susceptible to many an acute disease like jungle fever, dysentry, inflammation and abscess of liver, epidemic cholera. These diseases were responsible for premature deaths in the European forces located in the various provinces; the

British soldier suffered from physical deterioration which very often resulted in permanent disability or some organic disease. A few years of residence in the plains were sufficient to spoil the blood and tissues of the Europeans. And when the liquors of the bazaar was easily available, the deterioration of their health was still more. Not many could live long enough to get acclimatised or 'salted'; those who did, in spite of an epidemic or an unlucky duel, were of an unusually strong constitution. A regular relief system and the climate of hills were meant to obviate physical deterioration or disability. Families of European officers often went to these hill stations during summers to live in comfort.

However the climate of India was not wholly responsible for a very high death rate among the Europeans; eating and drinking habits, rather than heat or cold, sent many a European to the grave. In fact the evils of drinking were many. Towards the beginning of the period under study, Dodwell tells us that at Madras an intoxicated officer on duty marched off the guard. The son of William Robertson, the historian, in a state of intoxication, beat a man to the affusion of blood; another drunk officer insulted even his Commanding Officer and drew his sword over the shoulder of another officer. Sometimes an entire regiment was found drunk even at a critical hour. For instance, once suddenly

apprised of the near approach of the enemy, Sir Archibald Campbell hastily ordered the men of a particular corps to occupy at once the prescribed post. But the men of that regiment were found to be so intoxicated as to be unfit for duty. Measures were adopted from time to time to eradicate the evils of drinking. For instance, liquors were served in the mess only to those who asked for them; those who did not, got compensation in money. However, according to Conran, the anticipated good result was neutralised by the easy and uncontrolled availability of liquors in the canteens.

Casualties could be attributed to the unhygienic condition of the barracks as well as to climate and the drinking habits of the European soldier. Bungalows provided an excellent accommodation. But this was meant only for the officer class. The soldiers lived in barracks and the barracks were very unhygienic. A great number of casualties occurred owing to this. In Bombay in particular, where the barracks were extremely bad, there occurred an appalling mortality. It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that, on the recommendation of Sir Charles Napier, construction of new barracks with adequate ventilation and good drainage was undertaken. Now, 1,100 cubic feet were allowed to a man lodged in the barracks. At about the same time the space allowed to a soldier in Bengal was 1,200 cubic

3. Court of Directors Despatch to the Government of Bengal, dated 21 August 1850.
In every cantonment, land had been provided for bazaars and the Commanding Officer was empowered to make such general regulations as he thought fit respecting the tenure or occupation of shops and houses, for the land belonged to the government. Not only a brigade but also each battalion had its own bazaar for a constant supply of food and grain and fodder. These bazaars accompanied the formation when it went on active service. Each bazaar had its own authorised establishment, with a Chaudhry and a mutsuddee; some additional officers were allowed for conducting the management of the bazaar of a brigade of foot artillery. Duty was levied on articles like liquors, tobacco, intoxicating drugs; this brought large profits. In the early days of the Company's army, officers of a certain rank used to obtain a large share of these profits. Subsequently, however, when the bazaars were taken over by the government, they contributed to the government's income.

There were numerous privileges given to the soldiers. A Non-Commissioned officer or a soldier was entitled to send or receive letters by paying only a nominal amount. Hospital facilities, though not entirely free, were a great boon to

1. Loc Cit.
2. Foreign Department Political Consultation, dated 3 December 1832, Nos.4-5.
4. Evidence of Mr. Russel, Minutes of Evidence, Q.2240.
the soldiers; their treatment, and of their families, was undertaken on a very nominal payment, called the 'hospital stoppages' (which were recovered from their pay). Venereal diseases were common among European soldiers in those days and there were hospitals at certain selected stations where the suffering soldiers were treated. As a preventive measure, the country women suffering from those diseases were also treated in these hospitals.

There were excellent arrangements for the evacuation of casualties in the field. When a European corps of 1,000 men took field, 100 'doolies' were attached to it, for the carriages of its sick and wounded and to these 'doolies' was assigned an establishment of 630 hired bearers.¹ Experiments were carried out from time to time to improve the 'doolies' so that patients could be evacuated without discomfort. Field hospitals accompanied the force in the field and the sick accompanied the baggage train, which trailed behind the main force. Privileges of sick leave were given to soldiers and officers to enable them to restore their health in Australia, South Africa or Mauritius.² There were asylums for the orphan at Calcutta and Madras, both for the children of the officers and the soldiers.³ The Orphan Society and the Widow Fund were the two benevolent institutions to take care of the families of the deceased soldiers.

1. Military Department Consultation dated 16 October 1846, No.89.


Those who became unfit for field service, either owing to physical deterioration or age or disability, were allowed to enlist themselves in the veteran battalions which were employed in cities on internal duties.

The social status of a sepoy in the Indian society was very high. In England an Englishman joining the army was forgotten by his family; it was no great source of pride to an English family to know that one of its members was serving in the ranks of the army of the East India Company. In India, it was a thing of great pride to join even the ranks; and the boast of many a family was that generation after generation they had "eaten the salt" of the Company. This pride was connected also with the fact that the sepoys, generally speaking, belonged to one or another of what were known as the martial castes or classes. The profession of arms was thus almost a hereditary profession. "Inferior" classes were excluded from joining the ranks, and the martial classes were generally the superior castes. Pride and tradition resulted in "honourable" conduct.

However, caste consciousness had its bad effects. On parade, a Sipahi stood side by side with another Sipahi, but in their huts a wide gulf separated them, if one of them

happened to be a Brahmin. Huts were constructed keeping in view the castes of companies; they were arranged in rows caste-wise, and men of low caste were not allowed to enter the huts of the sepoys of the superior castes. Obviously, there were no barracks for the sepoys. It may also be noted here that the government was not responsible for providing food to them and, generally speaking, they were undernourished.

There was a wide gulf between the privileges enjoyed by the Indian sepoy and the British soldier. Whereas the soldiers had an excellent arrangement for education both for themselves and their children, the sepoy was deprived of such benefits, because it was considered dangerous to teach him. Only a very elementary education was imparted to a sepoy which enabled him to carry out his day to day duties.

The treatment given to the sepoys by the British officers was not very humane. Abusing and striking the sepoys on parade were common practices. By an order of the Court of Directors, in 1813, the officers were prohibited from maltreating the natives; they were liable even to dismissal from service for such a misconduct, but it is doubtful if this order produced any uniform or considerable effect. The attitude of the European soldiers towards the Indian officer was equally overbearing, almost insulting. Kaye and

2. Sen, S.N. Eighteen Fifty Seven, New Delhi,1957, P.23.
3. Court of Directors Orders regarding Treatment of Sepoy dated 14 April 1813 vide Military letter from Court dated 10 April 1832.
Malleson tell us that "a Sipahi on duty always presented or carried arms to an English Officer, but an English soldier suffered a native officer to pass by without a salute. Even an English sergeant commanded native officers of the highest rank. On parade, the English officers made mistakes, used the wrong word of command, then threw the blame upon the Sipahis and reviled them. Even native officers, who had grown grey in the service, were publicly abused by European striplings. On the line of march native officers were compelled to live in the same tents with common Sipahis, and had not, as in the armies of native potentates, elephants or palanqueens assigned to them for their conveyance how great soever the distance which they were obliged to traverse. And if they rode horses or ponies, purchased from their savings, the English officers frowned at them ... the concubines of the English gentlemen were better paid than the native officers and their grooms and grass cutters better than the native soldiers, that the English officers could import into their Zenana the most beautiful women in the country, whilst the natives hardly dared to look at the slave girls.¹ Kaye and Malleson were looking at the situation with an eye on the causes of the Mutiny and one may be tempted to discount their observation. But, without doubt, there was a marked difference between the life of the Europeans and the natives in the armies of the East India Company.

There were some important differences in the private life of the native sipahis in the three Presidencies. The most glaring of these was that, whereas the families of the Madras sepoys followed their regiments, those of the Bengal sepoys remained in their native villages. The Madras sepoys entered the service very young and his regiment became his permanent home and he had no other ties or views than passing the rest of his life in service; when he got married, his wife, mother and sister all lived with the corps and each regiment formed a sort of colony. Each regiment of native infantry comprised of an aggregate of from 3,500 to 4,000 souls. When a regiment made a move the families also accompanied it. In Bengal, the soldier could not think his regiment to be his home for he always looked forward to furlough to visit his family.

A native officer formed a link between the European officer and the sepoy: he watched men in their lines, and he tried to know all that went on in the lines, of which the European officers had no idea. The native officers were consulted in all matters of caste and religion. Every officer who got commissioned, often got the advice to pay particular attention to the learning of native languages. Officers were examined by Committees appointed at various stations, and if they did not qualify they were liable to be removed from their

1. Ibid, P.213.

2. Minute by Marquis of Tweeddale, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Madras of the 6th Day of March 1845; vide PP 191 Commons of 1867.
appointments. By a general order of 1822, officers were prohibited from taking charge of troops and companies unless they had made sufficient progress in the Hindustani language to explain orders to those placed under their command. By such measures on duty, the European and native officers were in daily communication; but there was little social contact between them. This was perhaps owing partly to the fact that native officers were prevented by their own religious sentiments from attending dinners or parties thrown by the European officers.

Thus, there was a wide gulf of privileges enjoyed by officers, European soldiers and Sipahis and each class lived separately and there was hardly any social contact between them. On the whole, however, the absence of a social contact between the natives and the Europeans in the armies of the East India Company was, among other things, a reflection of the wide gulf in the privileges enjoyed by them.

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1. Evidence of Colonel Dickson, Minutes of Evidence, Q.1563.
3. Evidence of Colonel Dickson, Minutes of Evidence, Q.1588-90.