CHAPTER 4

THE ARMY

THE STORY of Army Education is the record of the idealism and enthusiasm, coupled with realism, of those who have been engaged in the planning and implementation of the various schemes over a period of nearly two hundred years. In the early days the motive of the instruction given in regiments and schools was purely utilitarian, and so was no better and no worse than that which actuated the founders of the Sunday schools or dame schools towards the close of the eighteenth century. The conception of a liberal education for the masses was not generally accepted until the Education Act of 1902, and only since 1944 has some form of secondary education been the right of every boy and girl.

The Army has kept abreast of these developments. The Duke of York's and Queen Victoria Schools have always provided something more than a basic education in the three R's (" reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic "), while the old system of Army examinations, much maligned though it has been, did provide a form of fundamental adult education for soldiers for which there was no counterpart in civil life. In adult education and in combating illiteracy the War Office has often given the lead by offering to every soldier the form of education most suitable to his needs—and this in the course of his working day. One might reflect that at present the same facilities do not exist in industry to any great extent.

In attempting to assess the present situation of education in the Army, pride of place must be given to the main scheme of education promulgated by the Army Council in 1947 as an interim scheme, and finally modified in 1949 to suit peace-time conditions. This scheme has yet to come to fruition mainly because of lack of suitably qualified personnel and unstable conditions. There is every reason to anticipate that these conditions will steadily improve, and that with positive constructive effort over the next few years the Army will have a thoroughly sound system.

The present scheme is a modification of that promulgated in 1947 and discussed very briefly in the last chapter. In aim and content there has been little change, but steps have been taken to associate education more closely with normal military training. This integration was evident in the pre-war Army, but after 1939, as a result of the Haining Report, the relationship between education, welfare and morale became more important than that between education and training. The influence of the university regional committees was in the same direction. It is not surprising, therefore, that the new Army has taken some time to rid itself of the feeling that education, valuable though it may be, is something apart from Service life and only to be attempted by the initiated. To re-establish education as one of the many aspects of military training has been the major task since the end of the war, and the success that has attended this effort will be clear from the detailed examination of the present scheme which completes this chapter.

The organisation of the Army is based on the unit, normally a lieutenant-colonel's command. This officer is responsible for all aspects of the training, education and welfare of his men, and although he may delegate certain specific duties to his subordinates and obtain the advice of specialist officers, he must remain the ultimate authority as far as his regiment or battalion is concerned. Both in form and organisation Army Education is based on this fundamental principle. Units differ as regards the types of men they contain and the role they have to play, and sufficient latitude is given in the handbook of syllabuses for education officers or instructors to adapt their schemes of lessons to suit the conditions peculiar to any Army unit. The aim is to relate English, mathematics and science to the normal military training and function of the corps or regiment, while the location of a unit has a direct bearing on the syllabuses in history and geography.

This method of integrating education with training is receiving particular attention at the present time, as is also the treatment of themes or projects which allow for the correlation of the separate subjects in a comprehensive whole. How successful this approach will be is difficult to ascertain. Teaching

of this nature requires great skill. To the veteran of the profession such methods as the interrelation of subjects and the use of local environment come naturally, but the Army to-day is a youthful service in which certain forms of experience are at a premium. The plea is therefore once again for time—time to enable the new Royal Army Educational Corps to settle down and develop. Given this time, and the benefit of the experience of the older members of the Corps, there is no reason why the Army's educational service should fail to evolve a satisfactory teaching approach in adult education.

A further sign that education is becoming more closely associated with military training is provided by the recent re-introduction of educational qualifications for promotion. During the inter-war years this requirement gave an undesirable rigidity to the curriculum and prevented the complete development of individual preferences. The new system envisages three examinations of the work normally undertaken at stages 'A,' 'B' and 'C' of general education. These syllabuses, which have formed the basis of Army Education for the past two years, are liberal in conception and comprehensive in construction—factors which in themselves ensure a wide choice being given in any test paper based on them. A general paper in the two lower stage examinations and a selection of optional subjects in the highest class give plenty of scope to the candidate with a special interest. It is hoped that these provisions will avoid the danger of the examination's determining the nature of the curriculum.

As in the other Services, the broad divisions of education in the Army are: education of the officer and soldier in the ordinary unit, education in the specialist colleges and training units, and education of children.

Education in the ordinary unit is what is generally understood to be "education in the Army." As already stated in Chapter 2, the system sets out first to provide education for the soldier as the essential foundation for military efficiency and the basis of good citizenship: this is called general education. Secondly, it looks upon the soldier as an individual and sets out to satisfy his varied needs in as comprehensive a manner as possible: this is called individual education.

General education has the elimination of illiteracy as its first objective; soldiers identified as illiterate are sent to Preliminary Education Centres for a full-time course as soon as possible after entering the Army. The name "Preliminary" was deliberately chosen to avoid any possible stigma attaching to the students attending the centres.

Illiteracy has always been a problem in the Army, and has been resolutely dealt with for a very long time. There is always likely to be a small percentage of illiterates among the Army intake—men, for instance, who are constitutionally incapable of attaining even a modest degree of skill in reading and writing, or who have had their early schooling dislocated by illness or constant moves of home. The incidence of illiteracy at present would suggest that war-time conditions between 1939 and 1945—evacuation, bombing, call-up of teachers, etc.—affected education in some areas very considerably. The inevitable lowering of standards, the relaxation of discipline and parental control, and the general feeling of insecurity have all contributed to the illiteracy or semi-literacy found among some seventeen per cent of the Army intake at the present time. Until the young men affected by these conditions have passed through the Army, illiteracy will not decrease. This will not happen until at least 1958, by which time the men who were at school during the war years will have completed their training.

The Preliminary Education Centres at present deal with only the worst cases—about a hundred in each intake of five thousand. The courses of six weeks' specialised instruction and training are designed to assist in making the backward recruit a more efficient soldier and a happier man. Skilled teaching and a wisely exercised discipline are characteristics of the P.E.C.s. In these centres, also, is carried out much of the experimental work with the adult illiterate; the results have already attracted the attention of the civilian educational world, which on the establishment of county colleges will have to meet a similar problem.

In its present form the typical Preliminary Education Centre is attached to a normal military unit for administrative purposes, although a great measure of autonomy is given to

the educational staff. Courses overlap, but the total student population is rarely more than sixty, and is divided into classes or groups of ten—a number small enough to make adequate individual tuition a reality.

Selection of candidates is the responsibility of the personnel selection staff of the Army, but the assessment of reading ability and standards in the other basic subjects is undertaken by the commandant of the P.E.C. The tests held at the end of each course indicate the progress of the student, and a report is issued for each soldier who has attended.

So far we have done little more than mention what may be termed the " mechanics " of a Preliminary Education Centre, but these in themselves scarcely provide a complete survey of the work in such an institution. Neither would a discussion of teaching methods convey the full scope of the training, for most students gain from the course something more than the ability to read, write and figure. It may be wise, therefore, to pay some attention to those aspects of P.E.C. work which do not lend themselves to accurate measurement.

Emotional instability appears to be particularly prevalent among men of low educational standard. A poor social background, a feeling of inferiority, and a sense of frustration are factors contributory to this instability, which in its turn is reflected in the nature and number of the jobs held by the very backward adolescents after leaving school. As recruits in the Army they tend, in the absence of proper guidance, to be irresponsible and sometimes delinquent. The Preliminary Education Courses give many of these men a second chance not only to attain a measure of literacy but also to gain self-confidence and pride in themselves. At the centres the students live in a carefully controlled environment. They are encouraged to practise any activity in which they excel, whether it be in athletics or hobbies. The curriculum, which gives the maximum time to reading, spelling and writing, also makes provision for arithmetic, history-geography—a joint subject—and handicrafts. A wide range of topics is treated under the heading of current affairs, and ample provision is made for physical education, games and foot-drill. Particular attention is paid to the general welfare of the men, and all of these aspects of the

training contribute to the main aim of developing the potentialities of every student to the greatest possible extent.

The Preliminary Education Courses are too short to be anything more than a step towards complete literacy. The reports which accompany every soldier who leaves the centres therefore contain adequate instructions as to further training in the basic skills. This follow-up education is the responsibility of the unit education staff, whose aim is to fit the man to take his place in the normal Stage 'A' classes.

The secondary objective of general education is the bringing of all soldiers to a standard of fundamental education satisfactory for good citizenship and military efficiency. The subjects of instruction are English, mathematics, history and geography, science and citizenship. It produces the well-informed soldier-citizen having a sufficient fundamental education, and helps to weld together the regular and national service elements of the Army.

The work is organised in three main stages 'A,' 'B' and 'C,' for each of which there is an appropriate examination, 3rd, 2nd and 1st Class Certificates respectively. The examinations are liberal in conception and run on modern lines; the syllabuses to which they refer have formed the main basis of Army education in the last two years. A general paper in the two lower-stage examinations, and a selection of optional subjects in the highest class, give plenty of scope to the candidate with a special interest.

General Education is compulsory and continuous in training or working hours, for national service men for a maximum of twelve months, for soldiers on a regular engagement for two years, or until the standard of the 2nd Class Certificate is reached. Exemption from general education is granted to those who gain a second class certificate or possess a higher qualification. Commanding officers plan the time-table to suit the conditions obtaining in their units, and complete uniformity cannot reasonably be expected in an Army which is stationed throughout the world. Although citizenship is included in this part of the scheme, it remains a permanent feature of military training and no exemptions are granted.

The question of compulsion is a thorny one, and civilian opinion has always been firmly against it as far as adult

education is concerned. This view has much to commend it if classes are contemplated outside normal working hours, but if education is to be an integral part of military training, it seems reasonable to suggest that the compulsion applying to drill and weapon training should also apply to educational subjects. On the part of the men resentment is unlikely to persist if the instructor arouses genuine interest, and it should be remembered that the regimental officer judges the importance of a project from the attitude his superiors adopt towards it. He is, in most cases, a professional soldier who wants to see all activities in the unit subscribing to the military efficiency of his men. For reasons of prestige alone education must be assured of the same attention as is given to other forms of training, and this condition would be difficult to obtain in the absence of compulsory attendance.

The original conception of current affairs has been modified for the peace-time Army. Until recently discussions were confined in the main to problems of a political, economic or international nature, and as such they covered very much the same ground as citizenship. The two terms were, in fact, almost synonymous. It is now proposed to broaden the scope of current affairs by encouraging regimental officers to select for consideration topics which may be classed as cultural and scientific in addition to those treated formerly—in fact, to include any topic which may be " current " at the time either nationally or in the context of the soldier's environment.

So much, in brief, for general education.

The object of individual education is to provide educational facilities to satisfy the personal needs of the individual as nearly as possible analogous to those which would have been available had he or she remained a civilian. It is voluntary, carried out in the individual's own time, and available at home or overseas from the time of entry into the Army. As we have seen in Chapter 2, under the National Service Act, the Army has a statutory obligation to provide further education, and it may, by arrangement, discharge this obligation through a local education authority.

The provision of these facilities starts in the unit which is the soldier's home while he is serving. The aim is to provide in

every unit facilities for private study, a library, an information room, and a workshop or hobbies room. These facilities exist in most units now.

Usually a unit can also provide elementary instruction in some of the more common subjects from its own resources. For intermediate or advanced instruction reliance is placed in the first instance on civilian educational institutions. If a unit is within fair range of such an institution, an arrangement is made with the appropriate local education authority for the soldier to attend. Transport is provided and fees are paid for him. The Ministry of Education has circularised all local education authorities on this point and the response has been very gratifying; most local education authorities take such a broad view of their responsibilities that they are prepared to waive fees for serving personnel. A difficulty still to be overcome is the problem of adjusting the academic sessions of the civilian institution to the stay of the soldier in the unit, or *vice versa*. Adjustments are necessary here, and negotiations for special courses are proceeding between military districts and local education authorities.

There remains the very difficult case of the unit located abroad or in the traditional military areas at home, notably Salisbury Plain, Aldershot and Catterick, where civilian provision is difficult or impossible. To cover units in these areas the Army Council has provided four Army Colleges and over eighty education centres. These are all in existence, and are being redeployed and given new functions differing from those of resettlement with which they were concerned in the year or two immediately after the war. When this process is complete there will be in existence an army system of educational institutions which, it is hoped, will parallel that which exists in a normal civilian area, and with similar facilities and courses. There also remains the soldier who requires a course in an unusual subject, or is so located as to be quite unable to take advantage of the facilities in an Army College or education centre. For him there exists the War Office Correspondence Course Scheme, which provides over 500 courses and covers all reasonable requirements. These are widely used and there are 2,000 new enrolments every month.

A direct concern of individual education is the resettlement in civilian life of the regular soldier. The duties of the War Office in this connection will be discussed in detail later; at present it will suffice to point out that many of the courses provided for the individual have a direct bearing on the requirements of various trades and professions. They act in addition as introductions to the more specialised courses held under the aegis of the Ministry of Labour and National Service, which alone can estimate the requirements of industry.

The part of the system we have just described under the headings of preliminary, general and individual education is designed to suit the needs of the majority of men and women in the Army. There are, in addition, several categories, such as hospital patients and enlisted boys, for whom special plans have been made.

Education in hospitals is conditioned to a great extent by the type of patient (each man is a unique problem), by the kind of hospital, and by the amount of accommodation available. The convalescent soldier requires, in the main, opportunities for the wise use of leisure, and the activities appropriate to those who are bedridden form a definite part of the rehabilitation programme, thus having a therapeutic value. To provide these facilities is the duty of a team consisting of the medical staff, the educational and physical training instructors, and voluntary helpers. The demand for them comes from two sources. In the case of the convalescent, the man himself is the best judge of what he wants, whether it be opportunities for serious study, general reading or handicrafts. Patients confined to bed are often advised by the doctor as to the form of education they should receive. In such cases it is essential that the Royal Army Educational Corps instructor should seek the doctor's guidance and arrange his work to contribute to the common aim of restoring sick men to health.

In recent years a great deal of attention has been paid to the mental condition of all hospital patients. It is generally recognised that although surgical and medical treatment are of primary importance, the patient's attitude to his complaint, the use he makes of his spare time, and his determination to recover are also powerful agents in making him fit to return to

normal employment. Thus, education in hospitals demands something more than the provision of facilities. It requires of the instructor qualities of tact and sympathy, good organising ability and industry. Most of his work with the patients takes place in the late afternoon and evening after the doctors have paid their visits. He has to be adaptable and able to improvise; his own initiative is a potent factor in stimulating the demand for education. To meet the requirements of the patients is only one side of his work; the other is to co-operate with the medical and auxiliary staffs. Most men in hospital find lectures, news commentaries and musical evenings enjoyable, and these are provided by both military and civilian visitors. The aspect of education which can be classed as specifically therapeutic is organised under medical supervision, and embraces a range of activities which may be classified as handicrafts. Certain of these, such as the strengthening of muscles or the acquisition of skill in the use of an artificial limb, have a direct medical purpose. The R.A.E.C. instructor can assist in this work, but it obviously remains the main responsibility of the qualified occupational therapist. Complementary to this work, however, is diversional craftwork, which rightly falls within the orbit of the education scheme. The aim here is not merely the construction of a model but the development of creative self-expression.

The accommodation available varies with the size and type of the hospital. In the smaller institutions the work has to be undertaken in the wards and at the bedside, where the presence of serious cases may make any form of communal education impossible. The larger hospitals and most convalescent depots usually allot one or two rooms to the ambulant patients for reading, writing or recreation; these can be used for education. This is not to suggest that accommodation of this type is essential. If it exists, the work of the instructor can be extended, but with the sick the individual approach is perhaps most valuable, and we find in the majority of military hospitals that the most successful instructor is the one who takes what he has to offer to the patient and does not rely on classes and classrooms.

The Army pays special attention to the library facilities for soldier-patients, and it owes a debt of gratitude to various

civilian organisations which have assisted in providing books. Prominent among these are the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John. Reading for pleasure or for instruction is a favourite occupation in hospitals and the enforced leisure presents a unique opportunity for delving into books which at any other time would remain unread. The supply of books from military sources is extensive, and what cannot be obtained in this way can usually be found in those county and borough libraries which allow hospitals special terms of borrowing.

The Army has always been greatly concerned with the education of the boys who have enlisted as drummers, bandsmen or apprentices. These soldiers of the future are found in most permanent military stations in groups varying from a mere half-dozen to twenty or more. Their dispersion in this way creates a problem as far as education is concerned, for it is extremely difficult to deal with small scattered groups. The need for flexibility becomes more pronounced when it is realised that the boys represent a diversity of intelligence, experience, and social background. These conditions exist in any school, but schools are divided into classes with a fair degree of homogeneity. The Army's difficulty with boys is not the education of the apprentice attending a properly organised institution; it is to ensure that a boy attached to a regiment is receiving sound instruction and training not only in educational subjects but also in life and correct behaviour.

It is with this latter type that we shall first deal, leaving an examination of the Apprentice schools until later in this chapter.

In the civilian world it is proposed that young people under eighteen years of age shall attend a County College for the equivalent of one day per week. In one area this scheme is already operative, and is providing useful lessons to all concerned with the education of the adolescent. The Army is also experimenting in this field, to which it is not a newcomer. In view of the recent movements in educational thought and provision it is important that the enlisted boy shall receive treatment similar to that of the youth who is not in uniform. It is the aim, therefore, to educate these boys in an environment which provides as far as possible the characteristics of a County College. Complete identity, especially in accommodation, is

impossible; but environment embraces factors other than the physical, and the military authorities in planning for enlisted boys have been more concerned with the spirit which should pervade the instruction. Instructors, for instance, are chosen very carefully. They must not merely be teachers in the academic sense, whose influence is confined to the classroom, but leaders interested in young people and their development. Generally, commanding officers make a personal concern of the education of the boys attached to their units. They encourage the co-operation of all those engaged in training and welfare—the padre, the education instructor, and the Regimental Serjeant-Major.

Many of the boys are newcomers to their regiments, but some have an intimate connection with the unit they have joined through their fathers or even their grandfathers. Here is a splendid opportunity to foster an *esprit de corps* that can be sufficiently infectious to influence other newly joined recruits, and in later years when the boys become men can develop into that loyalty to the regiment which has been a characteristic of the British soldier for over two hundred years. With this in mind the War Office has included regimental history in the curriculum for enlisted boys, and instructors are encouraged to correlate history, geography, science and citizenship with this subject, relating the whole to the larger background of the Army and its development. Mathematics and English naturally play an important part in the education of these boys. The approach to the former is made through practical work involving situations which the boys will meet in their everyday lives; this method makes it possible to relate mathematics to the other subjects of the curriculum. Self-expression is the key-note in the English periods, and while formal grammar teaching is avoided the boys receive by example rather than precept guidance in the right use of words and punctuation.

Individual education, which in the case of men is often synonymous with a definite course of serious study, becomes for the enlisted boy the opportunity for the pursuit of a hobby or some other interest. It is found that many boys have no definite preferences of this kind; in such cases the instructor, by gaining his confidence, can often help the young student by suggestion.

Education cannot ultimately be effective unless it stimulates interest, and regrettable though it may be, it is none the less true that many youths of fifteen or sixteen years of age are intolerant of anything which suggests a return to school. The Army is constantly facing this problem, and a great deal of the energy of its instructors is devoted to finding new methods which will arouse the boys' enthusiasm for educational activities.

Army apprentices are trained in schools which were first established twenty-five years ago. The centralised system as we know it to-day was started in 1923, and although the second world war interfered with the plans for expansion, it also proved that the Army apprentices schools were of vital concern as sources of technically trained men. Since the end of the war the military authorities have resumed their task of increasing the numbers and raising the standard of these institutions.

The object of these schools is to train boys as tradesmen for the Regular Army with a view to their becoming senior non-commissioned officers, warrant officers, and commissioned officers of the technical corps to which they are posted later in their service. It is realised that neither technical skill nor academic attainment is enough if this end is to be achieved. The man who is later to lead others must develop a sound sense of authority, and be able to inspire confidence and assess the capabilities of those who serve under him. The schools set out to foster these qualities through the agency of a carefully graded system of general, integrated with technical, education.

To be admitted, a boy must be over the compulsory school age and reach a minimum standard of physique. He must also show satisfactory attainments in mathematics, English and general knowledge. At the end of the training period of three years most of the apprentices find their way to the technical branches of the Army, but the final choice is based on a study of the boy's aptitudes as well as his own particular wishes. In order to enable the staff to make this assessment the apprentice chooses four trades, and for the first six months of his service the instructors study his progress in each, eventually selecting the one in which it is obvious he will succeed.

The general education curriculum is complementary to the trade training and contains English, mathematics, history,

geography, scientific and engineering subjects. Boys who wish to prepare for the examinations of civilian institutions are given every encouragement and help to do so, both during school hours and in their own time. The possession of one of these qualifications not only contributes to a boy's success in the Army, but is also likely to be of use to him when, at the end of his engagement, he wishes to select some form of civilian employment.

It is the policy of the schools to provide a wide range of voluntary evening activities. It is not unusual to find foreign languages, literature, music, and many forms of handicrafts included under this arrangement. In addition, the boys are expected to take part in the games and athletics for which the schools have unrivalled facilities. Linked with this is the attention paid to the general health of the apprentices, a most important feature of which is the meticulous record that is kept of each boy's physical development.

The Army has set an extremely high standard of training for its technicians and tradesmen, a fact which has received the recognition of the engineering trades unions. This technical training, together with the sound general education given to the boys, is helping to produce the men who are vital not only to the Army but also to industry.

No account of the present state of education in the Army would be, in any sense, complete without reference to the work of Sir Philip Morris, now Vice-Chancellor of Bristol University. As Director of Education for Kent he became intensely interested in Army education, and was persuaded by Sir Ronald Adam in 1943 to become Director-General of Army Education, with the Directorates of Education and Army Bureau of Current Affairs under his control. Under his brilliant direction the education scheme for the release period was planned and executed. His vision and foresight laid down the lines of development for the future, and the Army education of the last five years has been a not unworthy monument to his genius. To his synthesis of the traditions and achievements of the past with the needs of the present and aspirations for the future the Army will always be indebted.

At present educational policy is dictated by the Army Council, the Adjutant-General being the responsible member under the supreme authority of the Secretary of State for War. This policy is implemented by the Directorate of Army Education and by the Commanders-in-Chief of the Army commands at home and overseas. Each of these has his own educational adviser and staff officer. The Director of Army Education is also responsible for resettlement — a subject inseparably linked with education and discussed fully in the last chapter.

Owing to the spontaneous growth of educational activity in the Army during the war-time and release periods, the Directorate had become unwieldy and had assumed functions inappropriate to a Department of State. To remedy the situation and to decentralise such functions, an Institute of Army Education was set up in 1948 to carry out higher training and resettlement, and to administer correspondence courses, examinations, book supply and so on, under the direction of the War Office.

Since the end of the war, research into training methods for instructors and into teaching syllabuses and subject correlations has been undertaken by officers of the Directorate and Institute. At a time when the majority of instructors are new and untried such work is vital to the success of the education scheme. Experienced teachers can always develop fresh methods and novel applications of the subject matter they are using in a particular lesson, but the younger man requires guidance and demonstration. It is a notable indication of the cordial relations between the Army Directorate and the Ministry of Education that His Majesty's Inspectors have been ready to give every assistance to officers and instructors in their efforts to make education in the Army a real force and a factor which can contribute to the success of all forms of training.

Because of the emphasis which has necessarily to be placed upon fundamental work, the education scheme of the Army is an entity in itself; in this respect it differs from the Naval and R.A.F. educational provisions, which in spite of certain of their features appear mainly as an aspect of normal training. It is not the purpose of this book to plead a case for either form of organisation. The position to-day is a development and

concomitant of the conditions peculiar to each Service, and is not the result of a predetermined policy which has no regard for realities. In the next chapter it is possible to see how closely the form of R.A.F. Education follows that of the Navy, and it is perhaps stimulating to have discussed in this chapter a scheme which is in so many respects a contrast.