Officers and Gentlemen?
Class, Values, and the British Army's Officer Corps, 1871-1901

by

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Bachelor of Arts, University of Western Ontario, 2018

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Abstract

This thesis examines the values and attitudes of the British Army's officer corps during the period from 1871 to 1901, and how these values were linked to those of the British landed classes. Through studying the memoirs and other writings produced by the officers of this period, this thesis confirms that the link between these two systems was extremely close, and that the landed classes' ideas of what constituted 'gentlemanly' behaviour were vitally important in shaping army officers' conduct. This thesis argues that the acceptance of these values by the officer corps was not merely a product of their own social origins, but that officers subscribed to these values because they believed them to be particularly appropriate to military service. This attachment to gentlemanly values produced a deeply imbalanced set of competencies in the officer corps' members, the effects of which remained present in the institutional culture of the army well beyond the end of this period.

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Dedication

To S.B. and A.M.

Introduction

The last decades of the nineteenth century were a significant period for the development of the British Army, and in many ways a period of lost opportunities. In the years between 1871 and 1901, referred to within this thesis as the Late Victorian period, the military attempted to adapt to vast technological changes. The firepower of breach-loading and bolt-action rifles, the machine gun, and modern artillery increasingly changed the nature of the battlefield.[1] Alongside these developments, changes to military policy and organization seriously altered the British Army's structures. The beginning of this period was marked by the abolition of buying and selling officers' commissions, and a variety of other reforms were implemented in small pieces across the period, including the reorganization of the army's regimental system and the codification of the army's strategic priorities under Secretary of State for War Edward Stanhope.[2] However, while some things within the army had changed significantly by the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, many aspects of the military remained quite similar to what they had been in previous generations. This was most true of the army's officer corps.

Closely linked to the landed elite of British society, the army's officers continued to live according to the customs of this elite, supposedly valuing leisure and sport while disdaining both hard work and book-learning.[3] A number of officers agitated prominently for reforms to the army's institutions throughout this period, most especially Garnet Wolseley and his 'ring' of favorites, but they were unable to entirely transform the system they served in, even if they had

1. Ian Beckett, *The Victorians at War* (London: Hambledon, 2003), 180-182.

2. Edward Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815-1914* (London: Longman, 1980), 177, 195, 187-188; Beckett, *The Victorians at War*, 138.

3. Spiers, *Army and Society*, 199, 22-23.

wanted to. These reformers were kept in check for much of this period by a strong conservatism and resistance to change among many of the officer corps' members, especially the longstanding Commander-in-Chief of the Army, the Duke of Cambridge.[4] The army's frequent employment in small colonial wars throughout this period exacerbated this resistance to reform. The frequent victories the army was able to deliver in these wars, despite occasional defeats such as in the initial stages of the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 and the failed Khartoum Relief Expedition of 1884-1885, led even many of the army's reformers into a hesitation to press for radical changes to an army that appeared to be able to successfully prosecute most of its campaigns.[5] While reforms did occur within the army in this period, they moved slowly and often with much opposition from those who distrusted the idea of making any significant changes to the army's status quo.

At least one researcher, Gwynn Harries-Jenkins, has argued that the class composition and values of the officer corps were some of the greatest factors impeding the army's transition into a modern fighting force, and that much blame must be laid on these for the army's poor performance throughout this period.[6] This understanding, however, is built on a remarkably unclear foundation. Historians have remained fairly vague about the values and attitudes of the army's officers in this period, and this leaves any such conclusions about the social character of the army on remarkably shaky ground when dealing with beliefs, values, and attitudes related to social class. This project aims to clarify the true influence of landed, upper-class social values on

4. Spiers, *Army and Society*, 226-227.

5. Spiers, *Army and Society*, 210-211.

6. Gwynn Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 275-278.

the officers of this period. In so doing, this thesis will contribute to both the study of social history within the army, and the effect of these values on officers' approaches to their duties.

This thesis agrees with the premise that a core set of 'gentlemanly' values was central to the identity of the Late Victorian officer corps, even though the meaning of the word 'gentleman' was in flux within Victorian civil society. The term traditionally referred to those men who met the various requirements of wealth, pedigree and personal behaviour which connoted membership in the landed classes. By the Mid-Victorian period, this term was often applied as an honorific simply denoting an upper- or middle-class man's adherence to a code of "restrained Christian virtue."[7] Yet, despite the influence of this relatively new understanding of the term, the army's officers remained closely tied to the traditional idea of what a gentleman was throughout the Victorian era, their values most often linked to "old qualities" of gentlemanliness even where the influences of "Christian virtues" could be detected.[8] This set of 'landed' values defined what it meant to be an army officer in this period and shaped officers' behaviour significantly, yet it remains little examined in academic work on this period. Early works on the officer corps generally dealt with officers' class origins exclusively, avoiding any deep discussion of values and beliefs. Most later historians have also not made the officer corps' values and their relationship to landed society in this period a focus of study, primarily examining other issues and discussing officers' values only when they became relevant to other topics.

This work sets out to begin the process of filling this gap in the scholarship, creating a new analysis of the class-related values that informed the officer corps in this period, primarily

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7. Margery Masterson, "Dueling, Conflicting Masculinities, and the Victorian Gentleman," in *Journal of British Studies* 56 (July 2017), 608, 617.

8. Spiers, *Army and Society*, 26; Masterson, 617.

through analysing the memoirs and other writings produced by officers themselves. This thesis argues that these attitudes were still firmly steeped in the values of the landed classes in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Likewise, they were firmly rooted in a sense of their fitness for a military career, a sensibility that in part explains the widespread adherence to these values visible in the writings of the army's officers. Only by understanding the place of these values within the officer corps can we begin to gain a better understanding of how the British Army's officers viewed themselves, and how these shared values actually influenced their social and professional behaviour. The influence was not an entirely negative one for the army, but it did lead officers to prioritize certain aspects of their lives and careers over other matters. The result was an imbalance in officers' capabilities that, while not wholly negative, was still harmful to their ability to perform their duties efficiently.

Chapter 1 – Historiography

The earliest dedicated academic attempts to study the officer corps in this period, rather than the army more generally, began to appear in the 1960s and 1970s. Articles by sociologists P.E. Razzell and C.B. Otley offered some of the first examples.[1] Before these works were published, studies of the army's officer corps in any period were quite rare. A historical bibliography of the British Army, published in 1975, noted that "a scholarly study of the officer corps [was] needed," as the only thing approximating such a study then in existence was E.S. Turner's *Gallant Gentlemen: A Portrait of the British Officer, 1660-1956*, a popular history with "little analysis or explanation."[2] Turner's work is as broad in its scope and conclusions as its exceedingly long time-period suggests. Its narrative of the history of the officer corps portrays the corps as a body defined by a relatively unchanging identity until the Second World War, an identity as gentlemen that Turner idolized and offered relatively little analysis of.[3] While occasionally producing some fine descriptions of officers' social customs, this was hardly an academic or analytical work. Without an academic history of the officer corps yet in existence, Razzell and Otley's papers were the first serious explorations of not only the Late Victorian officer corps, but the officer corps in general, within the modern historiography.

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1. Anthony P.C. Bruce, *An Annotated Bibliography of the British Army* (New York: Garland, 1975), 95-100. This conclusion was reached by surveying the works listed in this section of the bibliography.

2. Bruce, *Annotated Bibliography*, 99.

3. E.S. Turner, *Gallant Gentlemen: A Portrait of the British Officer, 1660-1956* (London: M. Joseph, 1956), 13-17. Turner's discussion here of the nature of an officer, and his argument for why this traditional system produced officers better than their modern equivalents, is rather questionable.

Razzell's "Social Origins of Officers in the Indian and British Home Army" was the first of these works to be published, and is a statistical study of the class backgrounds of officers in both of these services from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. This study is actually an examination of a hypothesis that the number of officers in European militaries with middle-class backgrounds drastically increased over the course of the nineteenth century. In result, attempts to gauge whether samples of officers selected from the Army Lists were primarily of aristocratic, gentry, middle class, or other backgrounds form the main focus of this study.[4] This attempt to gauge the class composition of the British Army's officer corps is almost purely statistical, and its findings are somewhat questionable. While arguing that the landed classes maintained a generally dominant position in the officer corps throughout the century, it also claimed that the middle class made up a massive part of the army before the purchase of commissions was abolished, and that this portion began to slowly and generally increase after abolition.[5] This is not entirely incorrect, but is a slightly odd conclusion.

This article's methodology has a significant problem. It combines individuals into strict classes, but fails to adequately address the complexities involved in defining these classes or determining their members. The claims that half of the army's officers by 1875 had "middle class" backgrounds while aristocratic membership in the army was beginning to decrease, statistics with significant implications, seem to be built on an especially vague foundation.[6] The term "middle class" was being used here simply as a "residual category" for those officers whose

4. P.E. Razzell, "Social Origins of Officers in the Indian and British Home Army," in *The British Journal of Sociology* Vol. 14, No. 3 (1963): 248, 253.

5. Razzell, 253, 256, 259.

6. Razzell, 258, 253.

families Razzell could not find listed in *Burke's Peerage and Landed Gentry*, which was used to identify the status of the officers examined in this study.[7] This approach had some very significant limitations.

Razzell's methodology could not really take account of either officers with indirect familial relations to the landed classes, or those whose fathers were newcomers to the fluid untitled sections of landed society. Either could easily be omitted from peerage or gentry guides, and neither could be fairly considered entirely outside the landed classes, even if their exact status within them was difficult to define. Within such a model, the complex social status of officers such as Albert Brassey of the 14th Hussars, the son of an ex-businessman who had established himself as a landed proprietor, could not be adequately classified.[8] Such men would be placed within the 'middle class' in Razzell's model, but such a classification would be misleading. They were no longer truly middle-class, and while members of the landed classes they were not really part of the gentry yet. Such men were a significant part of the officer corps, as were men from the portions of the landed classes below the gentry, who equally were not represented by Razzell's classifications.[9] This article offered a set of statistics which began to examine the composition of the officer corps, but its reliance on categorizing officers into strictly-defined classes made its findings a poor reflection of officers' actual backgrounds. Further studies, with more nuanced statistics, would suggest the real social composition of the officer corps in this period was somewhat different from what Razzell claimed.

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7. Razzell, 249.

8. Harries-Jenkins, 24. The example of Brassey, among several others, is discussed here.

9. Harries-Jenkins, 44-46.

This statistical approach was continued by C.B. Otley, who attempted in his 1970 article entitled "The Social Origins of British Officers" to create a more "systematic breakdown of social origins" than that presented by Razzell.[10] This was the product of an analysis of the admission registers of the Royal Military College at Sandhurst and the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. It examined the information given on the professions held by the parents of newly-admitted officer cadets to develop a sense of the cadets' backgrounds, and the extent to which the backgrounds of cadets had changed over time.[11] Otley concluded from this data that in the 1870s the officer corps began to include an increased, though only slowly growing, contingent of men from the "new propertied and professional strata."[12] Despite this increased presence of men from the "upper-middle class," the officer corps remained "highly exclusive," and the corps' social composition remained similar from before purchase's abolition until around the First World War.[13] This was clearly a slightly different picture of the army's composition than that which Razzell's work had suggested.

Otley took good account of the limitations of his sources, and acknowledged that using them to analyse class status presented serious difficulties. He acknowledged that the term 'gentleman,' by which a member of the landed classes was generally identified in the records he used, revealed relatively little about officers' actual social status. An entrant whose father was listed as a gentleman was not necessarily from a traditionally landed family, and this

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10. C.B. Otley, "The Social Origins of British Army Officers," originally published in *Sociological Review* Vol. 18, No. 2 (1970). Republished in *The British Army, 1815-1914*, ed. Harold E. Raugh (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 110.

11. Otley, 111.

12. Otley, 124.

13. Otley, 124.

identification did not help to determine the actual status of an entrant's family beyond placing him somewhere within the landed classes. The officer cadets of this period could not usually be traced sufficiently well to develop a more detailed assessment of their origins, leaving the exact significance of the use of the term 'gentleman' in these records nebulous.[14] Likewise, Otley only tentatively attempted to group these men by class, primarily categorizing them simply by their fathers' listed professions. Otley wisely claimed that too many variables were involved to determine the exact status of these men, and instead accepted that his conclusions about officers' class backgrounds could only be general ones due to the limited amount of information that knowing their fathers' professions provided. Such statistics could give a general impression of the officer corps' makeup, but were a limited tool.[15] Otley laid out the problems of statistical analysis in this field, and while building on Razzell's earlier work, seems to have acknowledged that he was reaching the limitations of what statistical analysis alone was capable of revealing about the officer corps' members.

These articles did begin a discussion about the class status of the officer corps' members, but neither revealed much about officers' values or behaviour. These were subjects with which these sociologists were relatively unwilling to grapple, and which lay outside the scope of their statistical analyses. Given this, they provide little insight into the realities of life in the officer corps, even though their statistical research formed the beginning of the historiography on social class in the Late Victorian officer corps.

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14. Otley, 119. As Otley discusses here, these were self-declared categories, and a 'gentleman' could easily have derived the funds allowing his lifestyle from commercial success rather than inherited lands. His son might equally only have the financial means to barely cover his regimental cost of living, while still possessing a noble lineage.

15. Otley, 113.

The first major departure from a purely quantitative approach occurred in Gwynn Harries-Jenkins' entry in the University of Toronto's Studies in Social History series, *The Army in Victorian Society*. While this work attempted to analyse what the common social backgrounds of officers were throughout the Victorian era, it also attempted to examine their values and attitudes, as well as to link this research with military historians' interest in the development of professionalism within the army.[16] Harries-Jenkins argued that the Victorian army's apparent inability to modernize effectively was a direct result of the army's class attitudes and social structures. This work, however, was not as comprehensive an examination of officers' values as this argument or the title implied.[17]

The Army in Victorian Society was primarily concerned with what sorts of backgrounds and social values led officers to enter and continue military careers, and remained closely focused on this specific subject. It maintained a similar picture of the army's social composition to that discussed by Otley, but concluded that the values of the aristocratic elite from which the army continued to frequently recruit throughout this period possessed a disproportionate influence on the values of the rest of the officer corps.[18] They supposedly brought into the service a conservative, idle work ethic and political consciousness which impeded the army's attempts to implement needed reforms.[19] The latter half of this book addressed how these values

16. Olive Anderson, Review of *The Victorian Army at Home* by Alan R. Skelley and *The Army in Victorian Society* by Gwyn Harries-Jenkins, in *The English Historical Review* Vol. 94, No. 370 (1979): 222.

17. Harries-Jenkins, 275-276, 10-11.

18. Harries-Jenkins, 43-44.

19. See the investigation of the link between the landed classes and military service in Harries-Jenkins, 29-38, and his discussion of several individual officers' careers, 54-56.

informed the army's operation at higher levels, focusing on the development of policy and "professional education."[20] This work was primarily interested in the attempt to create a 'modern' professional army, and claimed that the army's adherence to the outmoded attitudes of the aristocracy and insufficient incorporation of "middle-class" personnel and values had impeded reform.[21] While this is a useful study, Harries-Jenkins seems to have studied the social culture of the officer corps primarily in order to explore the impact of this culture on professionalism, avoiding a wider exploration of these values' functions within the officer corps. While this is a significant limitation, this is also the only published work containing significant discussion of the values of the officer corps in this period, and it will thus heavily inform this thesis.

There is one concept in this work that is extremely valuable in studying the values of the officer corps. This is Harries-Jenkins' brief suggestion that officers' class-related attitudes were not necessarily a product of their own background in civil society, but were more often a product of a coherent system of values and beliefs. As Harries-Jenkins summarized this idea, in response to Razzell's characterization of the army:

> Statistically, a large part of the officer corps at any one time could be described as of middle-class origins, but statistical facts were of less relevance than the feeling, commonly accepted in the United Kingdom, that the military was… 'aristocratic.'[22]

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20. Harries-Jenkins, Table of Contents.

21. Harries-Jenkins, 275-276.

22. Harries-Jenkins, 58. Harries-Jenkins continued to use the term 'middle-class' in a very broad fashion, even though his work substantively disagreed with Razzell's characterization of the army. Note Harries-Jenkins' statement that only a quarter of the serving generals in 1897 could be considered to have a "middle-class professional background," and that most of these

This was a claim that a belief in the propriety of 'aristocratic' behaviour for officers resulted in the creation of a set of standards built around an aristocratic self-image, a set of standards to which all the officers of the army were expected and required to conform. These standards governed their behaviour far more than the actual backgrounds from which the majority of the army's officers hailed. This is an important concept, but the implications of it have still not been fully explored.

Despite the significance of such an observation about the social character of the corps, this system of values and expectations has remained outside the focus of other works. Few historians of the Victorian army have expanded upon this idea beyond Harries-Jenkins' original, brief formulation of it. Harries-Jenkins himself quickly moved on to other topics in his monograph, leaving the exact nature of the expectations placed on officers by this system somewhat vague. Exploring this value-system, and attempting to ascertain what the expectations it placed on officers truly were, is the main focus of this thesis. While this thesis disagrees with his characterization of both the officer corps and its values on several points, Harries-Jenkins' suggestion that the officer corps possessed a distinct, unified value system that was somehow linked to that of the civilian landed elite is the basis from which this investigation proceeds.

Most of the military historians who published work engaging with the officer corps following Harries-Jenkins did follow an organizational template similar to his work, even though their research interests were somewhat different. They generally discussed the social 'character' and demography of the corps briefly, while primarily focusing on structural issues such as professionalization, the growth of the staff college, or civil-military relations. They also

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were in some way linked to the "landed interest" despite their families' professions. Harries-Jenkins, 56.

continued to retain the same general model of the officer corps' composition, one in which the abolition of purchase only effected minimal changes in the officer corps' social composition, which remained dominated by the influence of the landed classes' members and relations until at least the end of the century.

Edward Spiers' *The Army and Society, 1815-1914* (1980) provides a clear example of these trends. Spiers' work was primarily on civil-military relations and the mechanics of military reform, but discussed the officer corps' composition briefly in its first chapter.[23] Spiers argued that the concept of the "officer gentleman," an idealized view of the upper-class army officer, "remained a pervasive influence" throughout the period, but only explored this as far as was necessary to explain that there was a close link between the army's officers and the social elite of British landed society throughout the nineteenth century, both before and after 1871.[24] Spiers discussed how social values and government policy each served to perpetuate the upper classes' dominance within the officer corps throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, but he offered relatively little analysis of the social values upon which his work touched.[25] While laying out a general narrative to explain the officer corps' composition and a summary of its value-system, this chapter remained focused on explaining the officer corps' demographics more than anything else, before the monograph moved on to other topics.

A very similar approach was taken in the first chapter of Spiers' *The Late Victorian Army*, published in 1992. This chapter was an analysis of general changes in the officer corps

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23. Roger A. Beaumont, Review of *The Army and Society* by Edward M. Spiers, in *Albion* Vol. 13, No.1 (1981): 65.

24. Edward Spiers, *The Army and Society* (New York: Longman, 1980), 1, 8-9.

25. Spiers, *Army and Society*, 13-14.

from 1868 to 1902, yet due to this monograph's narrower chronological scope Spiers was able to focus more closely on specific details than in his previous work. He chose to focus on the army's policies, mechanisms of promotion and commissioning, and other structural elements. While the social factors that perpetuated the close relationship between landed society and the army were discussed briefly, this was done in order to supplement the larger discussion of institutional change, and occupied only a small portion of this chapter.[26] Here, again, the officers were studied as part of the 'system' of the army rather than as a social body, much as they had been studied before.

Indeed, structural matters seem to have remained central to most conventional military histories of this period. A.P.C. Bruce's *The Purchase System in the British Army*, also published in 1992, similarly focused on structures and institutions more than on the values or attitudes of the officer corps. This was primarily a study of the structures of commissioning and promotion within the British Army's officer corps from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, including those which replaced the purchase system after 1871. While this work claimed to discuss the "multifarious effects of purchase" and its abolition on the officer corps, it primarily examined the impact of the purchase system and its abolition on officers' career trajectories, not on their beliefs or behaviour.[27] Bruce questioned why wealthy, titled officers remained dominant in the higher echelons of the officer corps even after the abolition of purchase, and did not investigate whether the values held by the army's officers were effected by these new circumstances.[28] He

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26. Edward Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 95-97.

27. Anthony P.C. Bruce, *The Purchase System in the British Army* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1980), 4.

28. Bruce, *Purchase System*, 158.

blamed the continued dominance of the landed classes within the army primarily on the manner in which the new promotion system was implemented in 1871, and the class attitudes and prejudices that may have played a factor in the lack of significant demographic change were discussed only in passing.[29] Ultimately this was another structural analysis of the failed "development of professionalism" in the army, and offered little analysis of social matters.[30] While this was certainly a missed opportunity, this was hardly unique to Bruce's work.

The military historians working on the British Army in this period have usually engaged with the social values and culture of the army's officers in a fairly limited fashion. This topic received coverage only when it was clearly relevant to inquiries into other, seemingly more important aspects of the army's history, such as studies of military reform and attempts to gauge the relative effectiveness of the British military as an organization. The unfortunate by-product of this has been the discussion of the officer corps' values and social character primarily as a barrier to professionalism. Social class and the values of the officer corps have not been an object of study in their own right. Instead, these have been relegated to merely being viewed as a barrier to the development of a more effective army. This lack of a sufficient examination of the officer corps' values and identity is an unfortunate deficiency in the academic literature, and one that has largely persisted into the scholarship produced in the early twenty-first century.

From the mid-1990s forward, scholars outside of the field of military history began to explore some elements of the Victorian army's values and culture. This was driven by historians interested in specific questions related to sport history, imperial history and gender history. Their works offered additional insight on a variety of specific topics, but their explorations of the

29. Bruce, *Purchase System*, 158-161.

30. Bruce, *Purchase System*, 165.

officer corps' identity were limited to very specific research questions. Meanwhile, the work of military historians remained focused on studying structural issues such as military efficiency and professionalism. This period saw the publication of a wide variety of papers and monographs with some relevance to the study of the officer corps, but the social character and values of the officer corps were still not discussed in a comprehensive fashion, and the relationship between these values and social class was usually not of central importance to these works.

The works informed by imperial, sport and gender history have primarily focused on their own questions about the officer corps, devoting especial attention to officers' attitudes to masculinity. These historians' prime focus has been the attempt to codify a British "imperialist masculinity," a concept first discussed in Graham Dawson's *Soldier Heroes*.[31] This discussion was continued in the work of J.A. Mangan, who suggested that an ideal of "self-sacrificial warriorhood" was the core of Victorian martial masculinity.[32] This was an intriguing characterization, but did place a heavy emphasis on the masculine aspects of this creed and somewhat less on the class-related aspects of this ideal. The use of sport in the Victorian military was also discussed by a number of authors, who interrogated how sport and hunting were imagined as formative pursuits to build a strong, militaristic masculine identity.[33] The focus in these works on analyzing these specific aspects of the officer corps' lifestyle as products of a

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31. Anna Davin, "Historical Masculinities," in *Gender & History* Vol. 9, No. 1 (1997): 137.

32. J.A. Mangan, "Duty unto Death," in *The International Journal of the History of Sport* Vol. 27, No. 1-2 (2010): 124.

33. Dean Allen, "'A man's game': Cricket, War and Masculinity," in *The International Journal of the History of Sport* Vol. 28, No. 1 (2011): 63-80; Geoffrey Levett, "Degenerate Days: Colonial Sports Tours and British Manliness," in *Sport in History* Vol. 38, No. 1 (2018): 46-74; J.A. Mangan & C. MacKenzie, "Martial Conditioning, Military Exemplars and Moral Certainties," in *The International Journal of the History of Sport* Vol. 25, No. 9 (2008): 1134.

specific kind of masculine identity, more than as products of a worldview linked to the ideals of the landed classes, make them remarkably difficult to integrate into this thesis. While many of their observations are intriguing, the analysis of masculine identity was at the core of these works, and the way officers' values were related to their sense of class was not quite given the same focus.

James Campbell's dissertation on sport in the British Army is far more relevant to this thesis. This narrow, but very important facet of the officer corps' lifestyle was studied in some depth in this dissertation, alongside an examination of how and why the army encouraged sport among enlisted men and a variety of other topics. In his treatment of the officer corps' sporting hobbies, Campbell discussed their scale and omnipresence throughout the army. He also emphasized their nature as both social customs relevant to maintaining an upper-class identity, and as martial activities that supposedly prepared officers for their duties. The key observation that participation in sport was believed to be directly relevant to the military profession was central to Campbell's discussion, and in discussing this important connection Campbell's work has been an extremely valuable addition to the historiography, and a vital source for this thesis.[34]

The conventional military histories of recent decades have mostly continued to avoid the social history of the officer corps. Despite this, several of these works have made relevant contributions which inform this thesis. One of these is David French's *Military Identities*. This monograph studied the professional culture produced in the army by the post-1870 regimental system and "the nature, significance, and influence of that culture."[35] This work's main interest

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34. James Campbell, *"The Army isn't all Work": Physical Culture in the evolution of the British Army, 1860-1920* (University of Maine, 2003). University of Maine. Electronic Theses and Dissertations 185, pgs. 11-12, 25-26. http://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/etd/185

35. David French, *Military Identities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1.

was in the military's professional development, and while French did characterize the officer corps as "conservative," this was a comment on its professional opposition to new "ways of doing things," and any potential roots of this conservative mindset in class or social values were not explored in depth.[36] This work's discussion of the vast differences in professional culture apparent between different regiments and branches of service within the army is, however, a very important point to inform any study of the army in this period.[37] There were wide differences between the various parts of the army, and the standards which one regiment or branch of service applied could not always be relied upon to be present in others. The degree of difference present between the various components of the British Army must be acknowledged in any work on social or professional matters within the army, and has informed the cautious approach taken in the development of this thesis to making generalizations about the army as a whole in this period.

Somewhat more relevant to this thesis is Ian Beckett's *A British Profession of Arms*, a study of officers' career paths in the Late Victorian army. This book was an attempt to break down the various elements that influenced officers' career-paths, including structural, political and social factors. This monograph offers a valuable study of how officers approached their military careers in this period, and an assessment of the different forms of assets and patronage which were needed to pursue such a career.[38] A specific detail particularly relevant to this thesis is Beckett's breakdown of what might otherwise be called 'class privilege' into a set of distinct,

36. French, 3.

37. French, 98.

38. Ian F.W. Beckett, *A British Profession of Arms* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018), 8-9.

interrelated assets. These were, namely, the social connections that could be made through "family and friends," and the personal resources of "wealth, status and social skills" which could help officers positively influence the path of their careers.[39] An individual might in practice possess any combination of the above factors, and the various possible combinations of these assets an officer might possess could not easily be mapped onto conventional class categories.

Beckett's nuanced discussion of these factors underscores the complexities of any attempt to classify officers by social status, something which Richard Holmes also commented on at some length in his *Soldiers: Army Lives and Loyalties*. While this popular social history of life in the army covered the entirety of the modern British Army's existence in fairly broad terms, Holmes similarly argued for a rejection of categorizing the army's officers by class, noting that the officer corps' composition had always been extremely porous and difficult to quantify in solid terms. In his view, most officers had always come from either the lesser landed classes or middle-class aspirants to respectability, and any claim that the army was primarily affiliated with the aristocracy was nothing more than a "cliché."[40] Though an officer's profession was certainly an exclusive one, it was dangerous to adhere too closely to claims about the army's close affiliation to any particular class. Arbitrary definitions of class could not, in the view of either Beckett or Holmes, be trusted to reflect the complicated realities experienced by the officers of the army.

Works engaging with the social history of the Late Victorian officer corps have been relatively sparse. The handful of articles and books that have been written on this subject mostly

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39. Beckett, *Profession of Arms,* 124-141.

40. Richard Holmes, *Soldiers: Army Lives and Loyalties, from Redcoats to Dusty Warriors* (London: Harper, 2011), 168, 164, 158-160.

engage with it either briefly, or tangentially. Military historians have generally approached this field with an interest in the military's functioning as an institution, primarily asking how efficient the army was in this period. This focus on studying the military's capabilities was a natural approach for military historians, but has resulted in a lack of attention to some other subjects. Similarly, the various non-military historians who have contributed to the study of the Victorian army in recent decades have been deeply focused on analyzing specific ideas about masculinity or imperialism. Investigating the influence of social class on the values and beliefs of the army's officers has generally been outside the scope of the questions these scholars asked in their examinations of the army. While we have a statistical foundation for reconstructing the officer corps' social composition, and we have a significant body of work assessing the professional capabilities of the corps in this period, our understanding of the value-system of this body is vague at best. This thesis will further explore this subject, offering a new discussion of it and building upon the work of all of the previous historians who have studied the army's officer corps in this period.

A variety of other scholarly works have also been used to provide context on the military and social history of this period, illuminating topics not covered within the historiography outlined above. One of these works is Ian Beckett's *The Victorians at War*, a general outline of various major topics in Victorian military history. This has offered a good general introduction, from a reputable scholar, to many of the significant aspects of the military history of this period which more detailed monographs assume familiarity with. Alongside this work, W.S. Hamer's *The British Army: Civil-Military Relations, 1885-1905* has provided detailed information on the development of government policy towards the military and the relationship between the military

and civil authorities in this period, subjects which Hamer discusses in substantial detail.[41] Additional biographical details on many of the officers studied here have also been provided from the biographical collection *Victoria's Generals*, edited by Steven Corvi and Ian Beckett, as well as various articles within the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB) Online.[42]

In order to assess the degree to which the values of the officer corps were related to those of the British aristocracy, this thesis also makes extensive use of the major secondary sources on the Victorian landed elite. These include F.M.L. Thompson's *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*, David Cannadine's *Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, G.E. Mingay's *The Gentry*, J.V. Beckett's *The Aristocracy in England*, Harold Perkin's *The Origins of Modern English Society* and *The Rise of Professional Society*, and Mark Girouard's *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman.*[43] These works have been invaluable to this thesis, providing information of all kinds on the lives, structure and attitudes of the Victorian landed classes.

The writings of several other scholars have also been consulted on particularly narrow fields that the previous works mentioned did not examine in depth. Several works on the history of duelling have been consulted, including books by V.G. Kiernan and Stephen Banks, as well as

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41. Ian Beckett, *The Victorians at War* (London: Hambledon, 2003); W.S. Hamer, *The British Army: Civil-Military Relations, 1885-1905* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970).

42. Steven Corvi & Ian Beckett, eds., *Victoria's Generals* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2009).

43. F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963); David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); G.E. Mingay, *The Gentry: The Rise and Fall of a Ruling Class* (London: Longman, 1976); J.V. Beckett, *The Aristocracy in England: 1660-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002, orig. pub. 1969); Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2003, orig. pub. 1989); Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

an article by Margery Masterson.[44] Despite the decline of duelling in the mid-nineteenth century, these works' interrogation of the link between a gentleman's honor and his attitude to violence have been quite useful in reconstructing some of the social expectations that guided officers' behaviour in combat. While no longer expressed through duelling, elements of the same values continued to shape officers' behaviour even in the latter part of the century. In addition, Mike Huggins' historiographical overview of sport in the British upper classes has also been of use, providing context on several points of detail regarding the role of sport in the lifestyle of the landed classes.[45]

This thesis also occasionally discusses the army's conduct during the First World War, and consequently draws on several works studying the British Army in that conflict. Christopher Moore-Bick's *Playing the Game: The British Junior Infantry Officer on the Western Front* has been of use in concluding this study. Moore-Bick's work offers a valuable sense of what the officer corps' culture was like a decade-and-a-half after the conclusion of this thesis' period. In its extensive discussion of the values and mores of the men who served as subalterns and field-grade officers during the First World War, and in how these effected their behaviour as commanders and leaders, this work offers a good point of comparison with those values studied in this thesis.[46]

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44. V.G. Kiernan, *The Duel in European History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Margery Masterson, "Dueling, Conflicting Masculinities, and the Victorian Gentleman," in *Journal of British Studies* 56 (July 2017): 605-628; Stephen Banks, *A Polite Exchange of Bullets* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010).

45. Mike Huggins, "Sport and the British Upper Classes, c.1500-2000: A Historiographic Overview," in *Sport in History* Vol. 28, No. 3 (September 2008): 364-388.

46. Christopher Moore-Bick, *Playing the Game: The British Junior Infantry Officer on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (Solihull: Helion, 2011).

Another valuable source in this matter is a collection of various essays analysing the performance of the officers of the British Expeditionary Force in 1914, published as *Stemming the Tide* and edited by Stephen Jones. In evaluating the later performance of the officer corps in the First World War, this work offers another useful point of comparison with the period studied here.[47] Tim Travers' *The Killing Ground* has also been consulted in this process. This wider study of the modernization of the British Army between 1900 and 1918 has been used to both compare the Late Victorian army with its immediate descendants, and to discuss some of the connections between the values of the army's officers and a variety of wider institutional trends that persisted throughout the Late Victorian and Edwardian armies.[48] In drawing out the continuities between the army in this thesis' period and in the early twentieth century, these works have all made vital contributions to this thesis.

47. Stephen Jones, ed. *Stemming the Tide: Officers and Leadership in the British Expeditionary Force, 1914* (Solihull: Helion, 2013).

48. Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare, 1900-1918* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

Chapter 2 – Primary Sources and Methodological Influences

Any attempt to gauge the values, beliefs and ideals of a community is reliant on the quality of its sources. A variety of primary sources have been utilized here, but at the core of this thesis are officers' memoirs. If used carefully, memoir literature offers a rewarding source on how officers lived and what they valued. A large pool of published memoirs are also available from which this thesis is able to draw: The army officers of the Late Victorian period published over thirty.[1] Fourteen memoirs from this larger body of work were selected for use here.[2] Value-judgements and revealing discussions of both professional and personal matters can be found throughout these works. When examined critically, their contents reveal a great deal about the attitudes of the officer corps within which they served.

The genre of military memoir literature is one of the oldest forms of writing on war and military matters, and is one that has changed significantly over time. Yuval Harari has examined

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1. For a full listing of published memoirs from this period see Bruce, *An Annotated Bibliography of the British Army*, 124-158.

2. Garnet Wolseley, *The Story of a Soldier's Life*, 2 vols (Westminster: Constable, 1903); Evelyn Wood, *From Midshipman to Field-Marshal*, 2 vols (London: Methuen, 1906); Frederick Roberts, *Forty-One Years in India*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1897); Francis Grenfell, *Memoirs of Field-Marshal Lord Grenfell* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1925); Montagu Gerard, *Leaves from the Diaries of a Soldier and Sportsman during Twenty Years' Service in India, Aghanistan, Egypt and other countries, 1865-1885* (London: Murray, 1903); Henry Hallam Parr, *Major General Sir Henry Hallam Parr: Recollections and Correspondence* (London: T.F. Unwin, 1917); Neville Lyttelton, *Eighty Years: Soldiering, Politics, Games* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927); William Robertson, *From Private to Field-Marshal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1921); James Willcocks, *The Romance of Soldiering and Sport* (London: Cassell, 1925); John Adye, *Soldiers and Others I Have Known* (London: H. Jenkins, 1925); George Younghusband, *A Soldier's Memories in Peace and War* (London: H. Jenkins, 1917); The Earl of Dundonald, *My Army Life* (London: E. Arnold, 1934); Winston Churchill, *My Early Life: A Roving Commission* (London: Odhams, date unknown. Orig. Pub. 1930); Horace Smith-Dorrien, *Memories of Forty-Eight Years' Service* (London: Murray, 1925). For a brief discussion of the authors of these memoirs, see pages 58-59 of this thesis.

the genre's history in modern Europe, and suggests that the most important period in its development occurred in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This has been confirmed by Neil Ramsey's research on Napoleonic military memoirs, and both scholars agree that during this period the influence of Romanticism led to an increased interest in sensory and emotional experience. Memoirs accordingly began to frame military experience through examining its impact on the individual, and the development of their identity. This was the form of the genre that would become most prominent in twentieth-century literature, but it was not the only one, and it continued to exist alongside other models of military memoir-writing throughout the nineteenth century.[3]

Prior to the Romantic period, military memoirs were primarily a record of the events an individual had experienced during his military service, often lacking personal detail. The "officers' memoirs" of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were produced in aristocratic societies which viewed war as an intrinsically honorable profession and a useful tool for social advancement, and which viewed emotions and sensations as things that should be subordinated to the mind.[4] Tim Travers has coined a term for this particular tradition of memoir writing, referring to it as the "remote memoir."[5] This is a particularly appropriate way of denoting them.

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3. Yuval Noah Harari, *The Ultimate Experience: Battlefield Revelations and the Making of Modern War Culture, 1450-2000* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 299; Harari, "Military Memoirs: A Historical Overview of the Genre from the Middle Ages to the Late Modern Era," in *War in History* Vol. 14, No. 3 (2007), 297-298; Neil Ramsey, *The Military Memoir and Romantic Literary Culture, 1780-1835* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 29-33.

4. Harari, *The Ultimate Experience*, 95-102, 104, 111-112.

5. Tim Travers, "The Relativity of War: British Military Memoirs from the Campaigns of Marlborough to the First World War," in *Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory*, ed. George Egerton (London: Frank Cass, 1994), 156. This was the more concise of two terms Travers suggested for referring to these works.

Emotions, personality and physical experience were almost completely absent from works in this tradition. They "removed personality and exotic detail in favour of a calm well-balanced sequence of events…. It was one specific view of war, but from a very narrow perspective."[6] As Harari put it, "inner experiences" were shunned and very seldom discussed, and the memoirs of this period focussed almost solely on external events.[7] Though written long after the Romantic period, the influence of this older tradition of memoir writing is still quite visible in the works consulted here.

These works nominally accepted the post-Romantic focus on the development of the individual, with the author's experiences being given central importance and some elements of his inner life and emotions being presented for the reader.[8] However, some common features of these works continued to resemble those of a 'remote memoir.' Rather than describing how he felt during his first combat experience, for example, the Earl of Dundonald described it in the following terms:

> The enemy's sharpshooters fired at us from the hills throughout the night, causing some casualties; two men were shot near me; every moment we expected to be attacked, the enemy tom-toms keeping up a fearful din. This was my first experience of war. I went to see how some wounded were getting on, and then, after attending to other duties, had a chat with Lord Beresford….[9]

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6. Travers, "The Relativity of War," 156.

7. Harari, *The Ultimate Experience*, 96.

8. Harari, *The Ultimate Experience*, 149.

9. Dundonald, 33.

Events which would presumably have had some emotional effect on the author are narrated in detail, but his responses to them are frequently omitted or treated only in vague terms. This is the case throughout these memoirs. The authors of these works chose to emphasize the actions they had performed and the events they had experienced, recording them in detail while minimizing their own emotions and sensations.[10] Strong emotions were rarely fully expressed in these works, and were remarkable departures from the authors' normal approach.

Likewise, these works de-emphasize the authors' personal lives in favour of their careers. Some begin abruptly at the time the author entered military service, such as the memoirs of John Adye, William Robertson and George Younghusband.[11] Others give a brief chapter describing the authors' pedigrees and childhoods, but upon entering their careers depart from the topic of family life and do not return to it in any substantial fashion.[12] The primary focus in these works remained on the development and events of the authors' careers, and many elements of their lives outside of the military were omitted.

It seems most likely that these characteristics are a result of the authors sharing many of the same priorities as the authors of the earlier 'remote memoirs.' These were primarily records of the events that made up the authors' military lives, drawing attention to those events and elements of their careers they considered significant and noteworthy. It is highly likely that these selections reflect some of the same concerns as their earlier counterparts as well, focussing on their careers in a way that complemented the honorable image of themselves and military service

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10. For some varied accounts of officers' first combat experiences which demonstrate this phenomenon, see Adye, 68-71; Younghusband, *A Soldier's Memories*, 58-65; Grenfell, 43.

11. Adye, 13; Robertson, 1; Younghusband, *A Soldier's Memories*, 20.

12. For examples of such introductory chapters, see Grenfell, 1-16; Dundonald, 1-19; Wolseley, *The Story of a Soldier's Life*, 1:1-8.

that they wished to portray. This might well explain the poor treatment of emotions in these works, for the authors omitted or downplayed things such as fear or anxiety that might damage this image of themselves.[13] With an understanding that these priorities seem to have shaped how the officers of this period wrote their memoirs, we can discuss in greater depth how these works can be used to reveal the values and attitudes of the British Army's officer corps in this period.

Historians can use memoirs as sources in a variety of ways, which as Harari discusses are not all equally appropriate in all circumstances. The first is as a source for historical events and facts, something they are only used for when historians "have no other choice."[14] Since their contents are shaped by the author's attempt to fashion a coherent narrative, as well as the "pitfalls of memory" and the dubious "benefits of hindsight," reconstructing major historical events from such sources is rarely considered wise.[15] The use of memoirs in this thesis fits instead into another approach, that of using them to illuminate "military experience and military culture," two closely-related topics for which memoirs "are among the most important sources."[16] The former studies how individuals experienced combat and military life, and the latter examines the cultural assumptions and differing belief structures with which these experiences were viewed by the participants.[17]

Since this thesis uses memoirs to recover the attitudes and values which mattered most to the army's officer corps, it neatly fits into the category of studying 'military culture.' While this

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13. Harari, *The Ultimate Experience*, 104.

14. Harari, "Military Memoirs," 303.

15. Harari, "Military Memoirs," 303.

16. Harari, "Military Memoirs," 304.

17. Harari, "Military Memoirs," 304.

thesis does discuss many aspects of officers' experiences that are visible in their memoirs, this is done in order to determine how officers viewed these aspects of their careers and how these reflect the corps' values. There are, thus, two kinds of evidence this thesis draws from the memoirs of this period: details of the minutiae of officers' lives, and either direct or inferred value-statements by the authors.

This thesis uses memoirs as a major source for details of these officers' lives, supplemented by a variety of other materials and the works of other historians. As previously noted, these are subjective accounts drawing the readers' attention to those elements of the authors' lives they felt to be most significant. The resulting narratives are thus, as the sociologists Kleinreesink and Soeters put it in their study of truth-claims in contemporary memoirs, a "presentation and an interpretation of self."[18] Much as "each culture 'trains' its members to focus attention on different segments of reality," the elements of their lives the memoirs' authors focussed on were those their culture taught them to see as being most valuable and relevant.[19] This image of the authors' lives has been filtered through the lens of their and their community's beliefs, and the resulting accounts offer just as much evidence about their values as the experiences they related. The values of the officer corps are brought into focus simply by the authors' choices of what events to include and how they chose to frame them, and the details of their lives they provide naturally reflect these values as well. This is just as true in cases where the authors have relayed their experiences inaccurately. The things these authors felt uncomfortable writing reveal just as much about their worldview as the things they chose to

18. L.H.E. Kleinreesink & Joseph Soeters, "Truth and (self) censorship in military memoirs," in *Current Sociology* Vol. 64, No. 3 (2016), 377.

19. Harari, *The Ultimate Experience*, 301.

emphasize for the reader. In attempting to reconstruct a sense of the values which mattered to the officer corps, the details of officers' lives recorded in these memoirs are useful evidence directly relevant to this task.

Examining the value-statements within these memoirs offers a slightly different challenge, given the public audience these works were intended for. It must be asked how much any such statements of values reflect the private opinions of the officers themselves, and how much these may have been shaped by concern for the public images of both the individual officers and the officer corps. This concern with truthfulness is a familiar issue in the study of military memoirs. Sociologists Woodward and Jenkings suggest in their study of contemporary military memoirs that some degree of censorship or self-censorship is one of the most common issues present within the genre.[20] It is impossible to escape the fact that these are filtered documents. Without access to letters, diaries or other personal sources it is difficult to determine where an officer's private opinions began and where his community's expectations ended. Such documents can equally fail to clarify this, for their contents can also be impacted by the same concerns about public images.[21] However, the same attitude to the use of memoirs espoused by Harari also offer a solution to this problem.

Harari suggests in multiple cases that it might be counter-productive to attempt to divide memoirs' contents into the categories of 'authentic' personal statements, and less authentic material shaped by the cultural attitudes of the writer's society. Since "culture shapes the lived experience," and the manner in which events are recorded in memoirs reflects the author's

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20. Rachel Woodward & K. Neil Jenkings, *Bringing War to Book: Writing and Producing the Military Memoir* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 123-124, 140.

21. Harari, "Military Memoirs," 306.

culturally-constructed perceptions of his experiences, it is almost impossible to separate the two.[22] It is equally difficult to discuss authors' values in this manner. A culture or individual can initially "adopt them" merely "externally, paying attention and reverence to them because they know they are expected to do so," only to later privately "assimilate" them into their personal beliefs.[23] The former can very easily be mistaken for the latter, and the division between the two can be extremely difficult to discern in an individual's writings. Recapturing the exact experiences and private beliefs of individuals through the text of their memoirs cannot often be done. However, even if the authors' private opinions cannot often be reliably judged, the common values of their society which appear in their writing can still be ascertained through comparing the contents of a large number of these sources.[24]

This is the task on which this thesis focusses, and it is one for which the use of memoirs is appropriate. It analyses the values visible within the selected portion of the period's military memoirs and compares them to those visible in other sources, drawing broadly from both the details of officers' lives they chose to write down and their value-judgements. All reflect the communal values of the army's officer corps, albeit in a variety of different ways. Through examining them, and what these officers' narratives tell us about the details of military life in this period, we can gain a much deeper understanding of the values of the Late Victorian army's officer corps.

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22. Harari, "Military Memoirs," 306; Harari, *The Ultimate Experience*, 301.

23. Harari, *Renaissance Military Memoirs: War, History and Identity, 1450-1600* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012), 30.

24. Harari, "Military Memoirs," 307-308.

A variety of other primary sources have been used to supplement the material provided by officers' memoirs. These include the published volumes of Garnet Wolseley's journals, as edited by Adrian Preston, which offer some revealing opinions of his comrades that he avoided discussing in his memoirs.[25] Other sources used briefly in this discussion include the army's official history of the Sudan campaign of 1884-1885, the final volume of Fortescue's *History of the British Army*, and an article on the British Army's rules for the conduct of war games by H. Spenser Wilkinson.[26] All of these sources have contributed useful pieces of evidence, offering several remarkably explicit statements on the values and attitudes of the army's officers.

Several other books and government publications from the period have been of great use in this thesis as well, providing a variety of perspectives on military life and the requirements of military service in this period. These include the 1903 report of a select committee examining officers' expenses, generally referred to here as the Stanley Committee Report, and Garnet Wolseley's *Pocket-Book for Field Service*.[27] In addition, George Younghusband's *The Queen's Commission* and William Cairnes' *Social Life in the British Army* have been of great utility in discussing the officer corps' lifestyle and costs of living. While very different, these two books

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25. *The South African Diaries of Sir Garnet Wolseley, 1875* (Cape Town: Balkema, 1971); *The South African Journal of Sir Garnet Wolseley, 1879-1880* (Cape Town: Balkema, 1973); *In Relief of Gordon: Lord Wolseley's Campaign Journal of The Khartoum Relief Expedition, 1884-1885* (London: Hutchinson, 1967).

26. H.E. Colvile, *History of the Sudan Campaign* (Nashville: Battery Press. Orig. 1889, this reprinting 1996); J.W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army,* Vol. 13 (London: MacMillan, 1930); H. Spenser Wilkinson, "The Practical Value of the War Game," in *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* vol. 32 (Jan 1, 1888): 69-88.

27. Lord Stanley et al. "Report of the Committee Appointed by the Secretary of State for War to Enquire into the Nature of the Expenses Incurred by Officers of the Army" (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1903); Garnet Wolseley, *The Soldier's Pocket-Book for Field Service,* 2nd ed. (London: MacMillan, 1871).

have been heavily used alongside the Stanley Committee Report to reconstruct a picture of the costs of living incurred by the army's officers, and all three of these sources will be discussed in more depth in the following chapter.[28] John Bateman's *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland* was also consulted to develop a general sense of how officers' costs of living compared to the general incomes available to landed families.[29] All have been vital sources in the creation of this thesis.

One further work of military history has influenced the shape of this thesis, though it is one that is not referred to in the main body of it. In his recent biography of Douglas Haig, Gary Sheffield attempted to provide a balanced treatment of one of this era's most controversial officers.[30] Since Haig never wrote a memoir, he could not be given much attention in this thesis. However, in this biography Sheffield briefly discussed an intriguing tension visible in scholarship on Haig's life that has some applicability to the problems of studying his generation of soldiers as a whole. Sheffield claimed that there was a tendency to treat Haig with "the assumption that he was incompetent or even stupid and then [interpret] the evidence in that light."[31] The cause of this problem, in Sheffield's analysis, was in part the cultural disconnect between the generation to which Haig belonged and the later generations who wrote about him.

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28. George Younghusband, *The Queen's Commission: How to Prepare for it, How to Obtain it, and How to Use it*, 2nd Ed. (London: John Murray, 1891); William Cairnes, published anonymously, *Social Life in the British Army* (London: Harper, 1899).

29. John Bateman, *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland*, 4th ed. (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1970. Orig. pub. by London: Harrison, 1883).

30. Gary Sheffield, *Douglas Haig: from the Somme to Victory* (London: Aurum, 2016), 8.

31. Sheffield, 6.

Haig was "the product of a long-gone era," with values and priorities different from and often quite alien to those of any modern researcher studying him.[32]

This is true not only of Haig, but to some degree of almost all officers of his era. Perhaps the best way to attempt to understand them is to work, like Sheffield, from the understanding that they were rational actors who acted as they did for reasons that made sense to them. Where their behaviour appears irrational or outmoded to the researcher, it is important to attempt to determine what may have led them to view matters differently, and to see their own actions as correct and sensible.[33] Only by attempting to understand the beliefs and perspectives of our subjects can we truly hope to understand their actions, which might otherwise seem strange or even bizarre to modern eyes. This is the spirit in which this thesis approaches the people it studies, and it owes much to Sheffield.

The last major questions requiring discussion in this section concern the treatment of class in this thesis. It would be problematic to attempt to use strict class definitions here, such as those used in Marxian scholarship, and this thesis' preference for the term 'landed classes' reflects this. A conventional division of society into lower, middle, and upper classes would not offer the nuance needed to adequately discuss the fluid and complex realities of Late Victorian society. As F.M.L. Thompson has argued, members of the landed classes were subdivided into a variety of different categories with varying levels of social status, land ownership and income, making their treatment as a single, monolithic 'upper class' difficult.

32. Sheffield, 7.

33. Sheffield, 8.

The relationship the landed classes had with material wealth further complicates this picture.[34] The level of wealth a member of the landed classes possessed could vary immensely depending on individual circumstances. A titled peer would not always be wealthier, either in land or in pure income, than a commoner. He might lack the finances to do much more than meet the minimum expenses needed to maintain his status, or might be a great magnate with ample resources. In addition, the ranks of the gentry were continually increased by new entrants from the middle-class, seeking respectability by attempting to enter the landed classes.[35] The amount of wealth these new entrants brought with them varied, as did the level of respectability they earned within the landed establishment. Any man within any of these categories, from an impoverished Earl to a new, recently middle-class estate owner could be considered a gentleman and a member of the landed classes.

These vast social differences carried over into the army's officer corps as well, as this thesis will demonstrate. While a sizeable portion of the officer corps came from the landed classes, this does not mean they were universally wealthy. The full spectrum of landed society could be found in the service, from the children of the wealthy or titled to the cash-poor sections of the gentry, who would have taken a variety of measures to ensure they remained able to live more-or-less within their means. Men from a variety of other backgrounds could also be found doing the same, attempting to incorporate themselves into this community as fellow gentlemen even if their pedigrees would not have entitled them to such status in civil society. The differences in background among members of this body, as this thesis will explore, were quite wide.

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34. Thompson, 4-6, 14-15.

35. Thompson, 4-6, 19-21; Mingay, 8-10.

In this discussion, we must first begin with an examination of the backgrounds from which the army's officers were expected to come, and how the army's structures enforced this. A variety of structural elements acted, both explicitly and implicitly, to force officers to conform to a set of expectations appropriate to the wealthier portions of the landed classes. After this, it will be necessary to re-examine some of the available statistics on the composition of the officer corps, much as earlier authors have done. This will be done here in order to determine whether the army's expectations were appropriate to the backgrounds from which most of the army's officers came. This thesis argues that this was not the case, and that there were significant differences between the class for which these expectations appear to have been designed and the real origins of most officers. Most army officers of this period were likely not capable of meeting these expectations in the manner they were expected to. Their adherence to these standards was something they consciously cultivated during their service, rather than simply a product of their origins in civil society.

The next part of this thesis will examine the values which formed the basis of the officer corps' identity, and which informed the standards expected of its members, and discuss how these were related to the values of the landed classes in civil society. These are reconstructed from the contents of officers' memoirs and other writings. Some of the values which this section will discuss have been partially addressed in the prior historiography, but others have been discussed very little. These were a clear, coherent set of social values shared between the officers studied here despite their differing backgrounds, and which underpinned and justified the strict social expectations placed upon them. These touched on a wide variety of subjects, including money, sport, personal honour, the treatment of subordinates, and behaviour in combat. Officers

appear to have generally subscribed to this shared set of ideals, and criticism of these core values was very rare.

One question this raises is why these values were accepted so fully, and criticized so little. Key to understanding this is the way in which these were justified not just as appropriate for gentlemen, but also for being extremely important to the successful discharge of an officer's responsibilities. The rationalizations used to justify this status quo are quite visible in both official documentation, and in the writings of individual officers, and are quite revealing. The officer corps' values were a product of a view that the social requirements for gentlemen and the professional needs of military service were closely intertwined. A good officer and a good gentleman were held to be almost the same, and this dual justification for upholding the values of a gentleman within the officer corps was a powerful appeal to officers' beliefs in both social propriety and military necessity. This multi-faceted justification for them likely explains why these values were so widely accepted at the time by those serving in the army.

The final section of this thesis is a brief conclusion. This section discusses the relationship between this thesis' findings and the historiography of the officer corps, and suggests what the effects of these values may have been on officers' effectiveness and capabilities. The values of the Late Victorian officer corps clearly had a significant influence on their level of competence, and perhaps on that of the following generation of officers as well. The findings of this work do have some important implications on the study of this issue, which need to be addressed in order to place the values discussed by this thesis in their proper context. It is hoped that this more comprehensive look at the officer corps' values may also help to better inform discussion of this important issue in future scholarly work.

Chapter 3 – Staffing the Corps: Class, Wealth, and Officers' Backgrounds

In order to discuss the values of the British Army's officers and their ties to landed society, this thesis must first attempt to develop a clearer understanding of the social backgrounds from which the army's officers came. While many officers of this period were drawn from the landed classes, the exact level of status and wealth supporting officers' careers could vary widely, much more so than the army's structural expectations seemed to suggest. While the army presumed its officers would be landed gentlemen with a significant annual income, the reality appears to have been much more complicated. This had serious implications on the ability for the army's officers to adhere to the codes of behaviour expected of them. Upon examining the composition of the officer corps and comparing it to the costs of living officers were subject to, this becomes readily apparent.

Late Victorian Britain was defined by a changing social structure, as the traditional political and social leaders of the nation, the landed gentry and the peerage, found their wealth and authority slowly being eroded by a combination of agricultural recession and political reform. This was, however, not a rapid change.[1] The middle class dominated Victorian culture and finance, yet remained outside the inner corridors of power even in the latter part of the century. Rather than rejecting the social norms of the landed classes, some of the most successful members of the middle class chose to convert their wealth into an estate in an attempt to reach social legitimacy on the landed classes' terms, much as had been done in previous generations.[2] The landed classes still remained at the top of the social hierarchy, despite criticism from social

1. Cannadine, 27-28, 36-37.

2. Thompson, 21-22.

reformers and some dangerous economic trends. According to F.M.L. Thompson the sons of landed families continued to primarily enter "more honorific and less arduous" professions compatible with a gentleman's disdain for labour, making up a significant portion of these limited fields.[3] This was the case in the army's officer corps, much as it was true in the British legal system and the clergy throughout the nineteenth century.[4] Though the dominance of the aristocracy and gentry in these professions was slowly beginning to wane, they remained prominent. Even after 1871's abolition of purchase a career in the army continued to be a common profession for the respectable, landed gentleman.[5]

In previous eras the officer corps' association with the landed classes had been guaranteed by more than mere social expectations. The close link between the landed classes and the British Army had originally been enshrined by policy. The Purchase System, originally an informal practice of buying and selling military positions, was officially sanctioned in the late 17th century and acted to restrict the composition of the army's officer corps to those with either land or another source of independent wealth. This practice ensured that the British Army would only be led by those who "had a commitment to the status quo," and thus were more likely to be loyal to the newly-restored monarchy.[6] This, combined with the requirement for officers to pay for their kit and mounts themselves, would make it difficult for any commoner to rise in the ranks over the following two centuries. This barrier was further reinforced in the nineteenth century, when the government failed to adjust officers' pay to meet rising costs of living after

3. Thompson, 71.

4. Thompson, 70-74.

5. Hamer, 14-15; Thompson, 74-75.

6. Bruce, *Purchase System*, 16-17.

1806.[7] While this explicitly wealth-based system of commissioning and promotion was abolished in 1871, its legacy remained influential afterward. The officer corps' senior membership had primarily been drawn from those who had been able to afford the price of a commission under this system, and the continued expectation that an officer should possess significant status and wealth influenced the officer corps' culture long after purchase itself was abolished.

The Purchase System's demise was the product of a sustained public attack on the army in the aftermath of the Crimean War. The government and army's administrative failings throughout the conflict fuelled great public interest in army reform, and one of the most prominent arguments made by reformers was that these failures were directly caused by "the staffing of the army… primarily by the offspring, relatives and proteges of the landed aristocracy."[8] The almost explicitly class-based institution of purchase quickly became a target for these reformers, the majority of whom were from outside the military establishment.[9] According to those who advocated its abolition, the removal of purchase should have removed wealth as a criteria for commission and promotion, producing an officer corps more equitably drawn from both the middle- and the upper classes.[10] This was not achieved, either in 1871 or by the later reforms of the Victorian era. While the official economic barrier of purchase was removed, a variety of other pecuniary obligations continued to place significant restrictions on

7. Beckett, *Profession of Arms,* 20.

8. Bruce, *Purchase System*, 100.

9. Bruce, *Purchase System*, 101.

10. Bruce, *Purchase System*, 156-157.

officers who came from backgrounds with limited social connections and financial means.[11] This would remain the case throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The army officer of the Late Victorian era was obligated to privately fund almost every aspect of his life in the service. He was expected to provide his own uniform, equipment and mounts, and to pay his own cost of living. This included the cost of his food and drink in the officers' mess, which on average actually increased in price during the last quarter of the century.[12] In addition to these requirements, the officer was expected to contribute financially to a variety of other causes. One common source of expense was the 'polo fund' some regiments maintained to buy ponies for sporting, which usually required contributions from all officers in the regiment. The maintenance of regimental bands was another, the majority of their funds coming directly from the pockets of the regiments' senior officers.[13] Though the expectations placed on officers varied between different regiments, obligations of this kind remained present throughout the army.[14] It was this economic barrier which most heavily contributed to the continued social exclusivity of the officer corps after 1871. The exact nature of this barrier was complicated, varying across different regiments and the various branches of service, and in order to clearly illustrate the ways in which this system functioned the costs of military service need to be discussed in some detail.

Several works written in this period attempted to analyse and estimate the costs of living faced by officers in the different branches of the army. These contemporary accounts offer

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11. Bruce, *Purchase System*, 149-150.

12. Spiers, *Late Victorian Army*, 104; Bruce, *Purchase System*, 160.

13 Cairnes, 36-37, 50-51.

14 Bruce, *Purchase System*, 160-161.

valuable evidence with which to reconstruct a picture of the expenses faced by prospective officers. In 1891 Captain George Younghusband published *The Queen's Commission,* a handbook intended to advise prospective officers on their career choices and likely financial obligations.[15] Major William Cairnes' anonymously published *Social Life in the British Army* was inspired by rather different motives, written in 1899 as a public defense of the army against critics who, according to Cairnes, characterized its officers as luxury-loving incompetents.[16]

Both officers had reasonably long military careers on which to draw in writing these texts. Younghusband's was by far the more successful of the two. He was commissioned in 1878, and over the next decade participated in campaigns in Afghanistan, Egypt, Burma and South Africa. At the time *The Queen's Commission* was published, he was serving in the Corps of Guides.[17] The book received very positive reviews, including a brief note in the Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, and was praised by one reviewer as "a book full of sound counsel and valuable information, arranged in a very handy manner."[18] Cairnes, in contrast, was commissioned into the army through the militia in the early 1880s and served in a variety of regiments without seeing any active service. He finally made a name for himself with a foray into military journalism in the Second Boer War, but died from illness shortly thereafter in

15. Younghusband, preface to *The Queen's Commission*, iv.

16. Cairnes, 1-4.

17. Younghusband, *Memories*, vii-xiv, 32; Younghusband, *The Queen's Commission*, ii.

18. The review quoted is Anon., "The Queen's Commission" in *The Athenaeum* No. 3327 (August, 1891): 152-153. Other positive reviews include: Anon., "Notices of Books," in *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* Vol. 35 (January, 1891): 703; Anon., "The Queen's Commission," in *Saturday Review of Politics, Science, Literature and Art* Vol. 72, No. 1868 (August, 1891): 200.

1902.[19] His choice to publish *Social Life* anonymously was not explained within this work, but considering the mutually-contradictory negative reviews he received for disagreeing with the opinions of his reviewers it seems likely this was simply in order to avoid having his name associated with views with which others might disagree.[20]

Another vital source from this period is the report of the Stanley Committee, a select committee convened by the Secretary of State for War to inquire into lowering officers' expenses just after the Second Boer War, in order to make a commission more appealing to men with fewer means. This report included detailed figures on the expenses of officers in both the infantry and cavalry, derived from the testimonies of officers interviewed by the Committee during its investigation.[21] While the figures given are extensive, the exact manner by which which they were calculated is not given in the Committee's report. Likewise, the exact composition and number of the "regimental officers of the different arms" interviewed in collecting the Committee's data was unspecified.[22] These figures cannot be relied on in isolation, and must be combined with the work of Cairnes and Younghusband. Though none of these sources are entirely comprehensive, between the three a reasonable picture of the fiscal

19. Roger T. Stearn, "Cairnes, William Elliot," in *ODNB* Online (Oxford University Press, 2004, last edited 2006). https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1093/ref:odnb/32241.

20. For some of these reviews, see: Anon., "Review of Social Life in the British Army," in *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* Vol. 90, No. 2335 (July 28, 1900): 120-121; Anon., "The 'Social Club'" in *The Outlook* Vol. 5, No. 124 (June 16, 1900): 632-633; Anon., "Sociology, Politics and Jurisprudence" in *Westminster Review* Vol. 154, No. 2 (August 1900): 227-230.

21. Stanley Report, 1, 4-5.

22. Stanley Report, 5.

expectations placed on army officers in the last quarter of the nineteenth century can be constructed.

The figures given by these three sources are fairly consistent. Between them, they reveal both the substantial fiscal requirements of pursuing a military career, as well as the fact that a certain amount of flexibility existed within this system. While a career in the army was expensive, it was possible to make do with less than the ideal level of income, provided the officer in question was willing to adopt certain career paths or able to avoid certain expenditures. It even appears likely that an officer could survive in the army on far less than the officers writing on the subject were willing to admit if either of these were the case.

The evidence provided by all of these documents indicates two things: That a private income was absolutely necessary for an officer, and that it was believed that an officer should be a product of a landed background. Cairnes' bias toward the traditional gentleman officer was perhaps the strongest, as he simply brushed off many of the high expenses accompanying the career as if they were perfectly unobjectionable. The prevalence of polo among cavalry officers was simply a natural thing to Cairnes, an "[amusement] common to young men of [their] class," utterly appropriate for young officers and not needing any justification, despite the expensive nature of the hobby.[23] Likewise, Cairnes emphasized that life in most regiments was "economically managed" and not as expensive as critics claimed, while responding to criticism concerning the high expenses faced by cavalry officers with the comment that "people who put their sons into the cavalry must be prepared for this sort of thing."[24] These fairly dismissive

23. Cairnes, 19.

24. Cairnes, 26, 29.

comments only reinforce the sense that Cairnes expected officers to be of a certain stock, capable of easily affording such things.

Similar assumptions were evident in both Younghusband's book and the Stanley Committee Report, though they were less extreme in their expectations. Both presumed that a traditional landed, patriarchal family structure would support the young officer. Younghusband's book was explicitly addressed to officers' parents as much as the officers themselves, and like Cairnes, the Stanley Report made comments implicitly assuming that the parents' allowance would pay a significant portion of any young officer's expenses.[25] It is quite clear from all of these sources that the officially "desirable candidates," in the words of the Stanley Committee Report, were the children of landed families with independent income.[26]

All three of these documents suggested that the 'average' income an officer required would vary widely depending on what branch of the army and specific regiment he chose to enter. Despite this, some generalizations were still made. Younghusband suggested that any man with a secure allowance of £300 per annum would find it "sufficient income in any infantry regiment, from the Guards downwards."[27] He furthermore added that if he lived modestly he might easily be put "into half the cavalry regiments in the service" without any difficulty.[28] This was an extremely vague figure, however, as it did not account for the differences between regiments or the differing lifestyles of individual officers. Younghusband wisely observed that the character of an individual could drastically influence this number. A man willing to live in a

25. Stanley Report, 11; Cairnes, 28-29; Younghusband, *The Queen's Commission*, vi.

26. Stanley Report, 6.

27. Younghusband, *The Queen's Commission*, 187.

28. Younghusband, *The Queen's Commission*, 188.

spartan manner could theoretically pursue a successful career on a much smaller income, spending as little as possible on personal possessions and messing.[29] The cost of living was an inherently personal matter, and difficult to assess objectively. Despite this, Younghusband and his fellow writers presented a number of general assessments outlining the level of expenses that they felt would likely be expected of officers in the different branches of service. These, while simply estimates, allow the historian to get a better gauge for the actual costs of the lifestyle officers were expected to be living during their service.

All agreed that the cavalry was exceedingly expensive, as in most cavalry regiments Younghusband's annual income of £300 would only allow an officer to survive, and to engage in the expected minimum of social activities. This was the absolute minimum recommended, including only the costs of maintaining horses and tack, as well as maintaining the more expensive kit, messing and social customs of these regiments.[30] This figure did not include the initial lump sum required to buy an officer's kit and mounts, which Younghusband tentatively estimated would likely run between £250 and £350.[31] The overall costs for cavalry service were quite large, effectively demanding that the cavalry officer have a private income roughly equal to the annual salary of the average urban medical doctor in the 1890s.[32] This restricted a cavalry regiment's officers to being drawn from a relatively small pool of individuals in British society.

These figures would be further inflated if the officer entered one of the army's more 'fashionable' cavalry regiments. The high level of expenses the officers of these regiments

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29. Younghusband, *The Queen's Commission,* 187-188.

30. Stanley Report, 9; Cairnes, 26-28; Younghusband, *The Queen's Commission*, 188.

31. Younghusband, *The Queen's Commission*, 191.

32. Beckett, *Profession of Arms,* 23.

incurred was noted by these authors as a salient feature of these more prestigious, socially active units. Cairnes suggested that the minimum annual cost of living could far surpass that of a normal cavalryman in the "smartest" of regiments, among which he singled out the 10th and 13th Hussars, blaming such costs on expensive messing arrangements and the "almost incredible" expenses required to maintain these regiments' championship polo teams.[33] In summation, as he rather pithily put it, "officers have lived in the 10th [Hussars] with an allowance of only 500 a year in addition to their pay, but they have rarely lasted long."[34]

Younghusband was skeptical of providing an exact figure for the annual cost of living in these regiments. He suggested that while it was probably higher than £500 per annum, this reflected the proclivities of those generally drawn to such units, rather than the actual requirements of regimental life. He claimed that the men drawn to such 'fashionable' units primarily entered "into these regiments for social reasons, and 'to have a good time,'" and suggested that the high average cost of living in these units was a product of their above-average attraction to such men. [35] Even if they could have served in such a prestigious regiment on a smaller income, more modest or professional soldiers would most likely choose to serve elsewhere among more like-minded soldiers, leaving the fashionable regiments to those who had few compunctions about their cost.[36] The Stanley Committee corroborated these analyses, estimating that cavalry officers' expenses in practice would generally range from £350 to £500 per annum in most regiments, and could exceed £700 in fashionable units because of their added

33. Cairnes, 27-28, 34.

34. Cairnes, 27.

35. Younghusband, *The Queen's Commission*, 191-192.

36 Younghusband, *The Queen's Commission*, 191-192.

social and sporting expenses. This was considered to be exorbitantly expensive, and was the main target of the Committee's recommended reforms.[37] These regiments were the most costly part of the army in which to live, and tended to attract those who were willing to pay for the lifestyle it afforded them. However, there were many options for those who wished to avoid this lifestyle or who lacked the ability to afford it, and it is to these other parts of the army which we now turn.

The costs associated with infantry regiments were more moderate, certainly compared to the cavalry. Younghusband estimated that infantry officers needed a private income between £120 and £300 per annum, depending on their particular regiment. He stated that this could easily rise to £500 per annum in a Guards regiment, a product of higher charges for messing and social obligations, just as in fashionable cavalry units. Younghusband suggested that an infantry officer could live on much less than these estimates in any normal, well-managed infantry regiment.[38] Cairnes, attempting to make officers' lives seem as palatable as possible for the public, attempted to downplay these costs by arguing that a Guards officer did not truly need more than £300. He admitted, however, that the sacrifices required to live on such a sum were "not often" made, most Guards officers being "very seldom contented" to sacrifice their fashionable lifestyle or their sporting and racing clubs.[39] This comment was a vague one, but seems to add credibility to Younghusband's significantly higher estimate of what was expected of officers in the Guards. Cairnes' only comment on other infantry regiments was that the average infantry officer would not be capable of indulging in sporting and social activities "as

37. Stanley Committee Report, 9.

38. Younghusband, *The Queen's Commission*, 189-191.

39. Cairnes, 15-16.

much as he would like," a comment that appears to be a product of an assumption on Cairnes' part that all officers valued such pastimes highly.[40]

Interestingly, the Stanley Committee reported a similar range of average living expenses among infantry regiments, but concluded that most of this was due to expenses not essential to military service. The committee actually believed that a significant, though unspecified, number of officers had been living on much lower incomes for some time. If £150-200 per annum would allow an officer to engage fully in his regiment's social life in moderate comfort, in reality only about £60 would actually be required per year to cover the necessities of his career.[41] The committee had even interviewed officers who lived on less than this, albeit experiencing some hardship in result.[42] This suggests that a greater level of flexibility was possible than Younghusband and Cairnes had suggested. An officer could seemingly find ways to scrape by with far less independence of income than some of his contemporaries were willing to acknowledge. Though the infantry remained a service in which a man would likely need independent means, the level required appears to have been much lower than some contemporary sources claimed.

Of these sources, only Younghusband gave serious attention to the conditions present in the less fashionable technical branches, the Royal Engineers and the artillery. He claimed that serving in these branches was generally more affordable than their counterparts in the infantry and cavalry. He noted that while the Royal Horse Artillery was made somewhat expensive by the costs of mounts and a more fashionable uniform, it remained low-cost compared to most cavalry

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40. Cairnes, 54.

41. Stanley Report, 8.

42. Stanley Report, 8, 11.

regiments. Likewise, he suggested the other artillery branches were comparable to most infantry regiments, stating that the cost of regimental life was carefully controlled in order to avoid discouraging technically-skilled officer candidates.[43] The Royal Engineers were the most practical of any of the services, however, as "after the first three years [of service]" an officer could actually expect "to live on his pay."[44] The educational requirements the Engineers demanded, combined with their lack of social prestige, meant that they attracted "none but professional soldiers" and consequently had a more reasonable pay scale and lower expenses than any other part of the army.[45]

The relative affordability and professional character of these services led Younghusband to recommend them to prospective officers with relatively small incomes. However, he admitted that joining any of these branches could be detrimental to an officer's career. Engineers and artillerymen had limited access to promotion above the rank of major, as very few positions existed within these services for field-grade officers. Likewise, very few slots were allotted to entrants from these branches at the Staff College, making it harder for officers from them to get staff appointments. If he was unable to obtain a staff posting, the best an Engineer or artilleryman could hope for at the end of his career was "a half-pay lieutenant-colonelcy, and an honourable retirement."[46] While service in the infantry or cavalry could be far more expensive, these branches offered much greater opportunities in the long-term.

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43. Younghusband, *The Queen's Commission*, 187-188.

44. Younghusband, *The Queen's Commission*, 187.

45. Younghusband, *The Queen's Commission*, 187.

46. Younghusband, *The Queen's Commission*, 15.

The technical services offered a good route for officers with fewer means to enter the service, but this held limited opportunities. An officer with a small private income might be able to find greater opportunities through entering an infantry regiment but would still need to carefully control his expenditures. Both were sub-optimal career choices, and it was clear from both the expectations of those servicemen who wrote on this subject and the structural makeup of the army that a large independent income remained a purported requirement for officers who wished to have a successful career.

Despite the occasional characterization of the officer corps as "aristocratic," the evidence does not suggest that the majority of its members possessed both the high wealth and high social status that this term implies.[47] As previously noted, the Stanley Committee and Younghusband both observed that a number of officers in the service lived on significantly less than the level of income that Younghusband or Cairnes recommended.[48] Such individuals have also been noted in Beckett's research: He noted that many officers would inevitably find themselves cash-strapped at some point in their careers, as the requirements of high rank increased their expenses. Some examples of this were particularly dramatic: one Colonel, Robert Home, was rendered nearly penniless by the costs of service, and was forced to resort to handmaking his children's clothes.[49] This was far below the dignity of a gentleman, whose family was by definition supposed to be able to live in "freedom from manual labour."[50] The impression gathered is that officers' standards of living were not always as high as the corps' public advocates wished to portray

47. Harries-Jenkins, 58.

48. Stanley Report, 8; Younghusband, *The Queen's Commission*, 189.

49. Beckett, *Profession of Arms*, 22-23.

50. Mingay, 2.

them to be. The statistics available on the officer corps' composition seem to confirm that this was likely so, and that a much wider variety of social and economic backgrounds were represented among the army's officers in this period than the expected costs of living in the army appeared to indicate.

The demographic composition of the officer corps has been a subject of study for some time, but not all of the extant scholarship can be relied upon. One of the earliest attempts at studying it, by P.E. Razzell, is deeply problematic and has been excluded from this thesis' analysis. The only data point from Razzell relevant to this study is his conclusion that there was a 50/50 split between 'landed' and 'other' officers in the service in 1875, a judgement based on an analysis of unspecified "samples" of officers in the 1875 Army List.[51] Given this strangely orderly figure, and the questionable research method that appears to have produced it, this thesis instead primarily draws on the later works of C.B. Otley and Edward Spiers, who compiled much more reliable figures in separate studies of two different sample groups. Otley's figures are based on the annual intakes of the R.M.A. and R.M.C. in several different years over this period, and are an extension of figures compiled for the decades prior to 1870 by Elizabeth Hayes. Spiers analysed one-third of the list of colonels and all of the generals present in the service in 1899 as part of a wider study of the army's change in composition over time. While both authors presented their numbers as being generally representative of the officer corps' composition across the Late Victorian period as a whole, both studies were based on partial sample groups

51. Razzell, 253. How exactly the sample groups were selected by Razzell is unspecified in the published article.

and thus cannot be considered absolutely reliable.[52] Both these studies, when taken together, can however reveal a great amount of detail about the officer corps' composition to the historian.

These samples furthermore reflected the different research methods applied to the respective datasets. Otley simply categorized his officer cadets' backgrounds by the information on their parents' occupation they provided in their entrance paperwork.[53] In contrast, Spiers performed a substantial amount of research in archives, reference works and other resources to properly identify the officers present in the 1899 Army List.[54] Comparing these samples cannot be relied on to provide an authoritative representation of the corps' overall composition, but can give a rough impression of what the corps' social backgrounds would have been during this period. The following table gives the most relevant statistics for gauging the general composition of the officer corps.

52. Otley, 220-221. The earlier portion of the analysis, concluding in 1869, was based on figures compiled from Elizabeth Hayes, *The Changing Social Origins of Entrants to the Royal Military College, Sandhurst during the Nineteenth Century*, unpublished Dip. Ed. Dissertation, University of Manchester, 1959; Spiers, *Late Victorian Army*, 93-94.

53. Otley, 221-223.

54. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, 338-339.

Table 1. Selected Estimates of the Officer Corps' Social Composition

Backgrounds of officers' families	Otley, R.M.C. entrants, 1869[55]	Otley, R.M.C. entrants, 1880[56]	Otley, R.M.A. entrants, 1880[57]	Spiers, Colonels, 1899[58]
Peerage/Baronetage	23.2%	25.5%	12.8%	12%
Gentry				26%
Military families	60.7%	45.8%	53%	23%
Professionals/Clergy	16.1%	23.8%	26.5%	21%
'Middle Class'/Businessmen		14.5%	7.7%	
'Others'	0%	0.3%	0%	13%
Unknown Origins				5%

The figures cited here are those that give the most insight into the generations of officers who performed the majority of their service in the Late Victorian period. They represent both those who entered the army near the beginning of the period, and those who had risen to relatively senior rank by the period's conclusion. Most notable is the relatively small proportion

55. Otley, 114. Note that no figures were provided for entrants to R.M.A. Woolwich in this year due to their failure to record background details. From Otley, 111.

56. Otley, 115-116.

57. Otley, 115-116.

58. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, 94. Note that Professionals and Clergy have been combined here into a single category in order to make comparison with Otley's data clearer. Spiers' analysis of the general staff's composition has also been omitted, due to its close similarity to his data on the army's colonels.

of the officer corps these numbers suggest was directly linked to the aristocracy and gentry. This number is much smaller than that recorded for earlier intakes to Sandhurst in the 1850s and 1860s, in which around half of the cadets admitted identified their fathers as gentlemen.[59] This is reason enough to doubt the validity of characterizing the army in this period as fundamentally aristocratic. The most senior officers serving in this period, such as Sir Garnet Wolseley, Earl Roberts and Sir Evelyn Wood, originally began their careers in an army that better fitted such a description. By this period, the later stage of their careers when they rose to senior positions in the army, such a description was clearly no longer quite as fitting.

These figures suggest that somewhere between 25% and 38% of serving officers were directly affiliated with the gentry and aristocracy by birth, though this estimate may not be entirely accurate. It seems likely that the Sandhurst and Woolwich rolls might have contained a number of 'gentlemen' whose families might have been owners of an estate, but lacked a title or respected pedigree. Such families might have called themselves gentle, but whether they would have been recognized as such by the community at large would be questionable. It is likewise impossible to know how many cadets of gentle birth identified their fathers by their vocations, as officers or clergymen, rather than by their social status. It is even possible that a large number did so. This might explain why the number of men identifying themselves as sons of military officers is so much higher in Otley's data, and the number primarily identifying themselves as gentlemen so much lower, compared to Spiers' numbers.

While this renders the exact proportions suggested by Otley's data questionable, when combined with Spiers' figures it does suggest that the majority of officers were not members of the peerage or greater gentry. If they were Spiers would undoubtedly have discovered a larger

59. Otley, 114.

portion of them in the upper ranks of the army by 1899, even if they were reluctant to describe themselves as such. Even Spiers' large estimate that around 38% of the army's colonels were members of the aristocracy or gentry constituted a minority, albeit a sizeable one. The upper echelons of the landed interest, the titled aristocracy, made up an even smaller portion of this group. At the highest estimate, possibly biased by Spiers' focus on senior officers, they comprised about 12% of the total. It is most likely that the total percentage of greater gentry and aristocrats serving as commissioned officers remained somewhere in the general area between all of these figures throughout the Late Victorian period, fluctuating slightly over time. The admission figures given by Otley certainly seem to suggest such a pattern. His category of 'gentlemen' remained relatively similar in the Sandhurst intake over the following decades, decreasing to 14.2% in 1890, before increasing again to 17% in 1900 and 20.5% in 1910. While the exact numbers fluctuated, the general proportions remained similar up to the First World War.[60] It is obvious from figures like these that the vast majority of officers in this period came from somewhere beyond the directly related, identifiable core of the aristocracy and greater gentry.

This should not be at all surprising, considering that these made up only a small portion of the British landed classes. Considering them together, the aristocracy and greater gentry of England and Wales made up only about 1/8 of the significant landowners of the two nations.[61]

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60. Otley, 115.

61. The exact portion is 12.25% out of the total combined sum of Bateman's categories of the Peers, Great Landowners, Squires and Greater Yeomanry. The Lesser Yeomanry, as Bateman categorized them, owned less than 300 acres per family and have been excluded from this calculation due to their minimal holdings and social status. The data used here is sourced from John Bateman's summarized figures on the landed interest of England and Wales in *The Great Landowners*, 515.

Many officers undoubtedly came from families among the much more numerous body of lesser landowners, whether they would have identified their fathers as gentlemen on their entrance to the army or as professional men, who could be found more commonly among the lesser gentry than in the higher-status sections of the landed classes.[62] As Harries-Jenkins has argued, it was also likely that many officers came from non-landed or newly-landed families whose patriarchs sought greater social status by sending their sons into appropriately gentlemanly careers. The social status of such families was uncertain, and the level of wealth they could afford to put towards their sons' careers equally variable.[63] Given these possibilities, and the small number of great landowning families extant in the period, it seems likely that a majority of those serving did not fit the mould of the stereotypical wealthy, aristocratic officer.

This impression is only reinforced by looking at the troubled economic state of the landed classes in this period. Their funds were not unlimited, and the agricultural crisis of the 1880s seriously harmed the incomes of all landowners.[64] Furthermore, the recorded book values of families' holdings were usually misleading. In the introduction to *The Great Landowners,* which catalogued all families in England and Wales owning more than 3,000 acres, John Bateman noted that a family's theoretical income from land could not be taken at face value. Bateman judged that the average head of a family could easily spend as much as 4/5 of the family's income on his various obligations. This included allowances and dowries to his siblings, children and other relations, as well as the costs of estate management and engagement in county

62. Thompson, 22.

63. Harries-Jenkins, 24-25.

64. Cannadine, 27; Thompson, 308-317.

politics.[65] Given the breadth of these obligations, even a family with a substantial income might not have been able to provide a son with an allowance as large as that recommended for a military career. His allowance would only have been one among a wide variety of different expenditures.

All of this suggests that while the majority of officers may have been able to claim gentlemanly origins, not all would have possessed a sufficient income to support the standard of living expected of an army officer. Several of the memoirs written by officers who served in this period lend credence to this. Most avoided directly discussing the subject of money, an interesting trend that will be discussed in further depth in the following chapter. Some, however, either explicitly acknowledged the financial pressures of their career or subtly alluded to them while discussing other aspects of their lives.

Of the former category, William Robertson and the Earl of Dundonald are clear examples. They had almost nothing in common, save that they were both cavalrymen with less money than was ideal in their respective parts of this expensive service. Dundonald, who would inherit his father's peerage partway through his career, came from an old yet relatively poor landed family, having lost a significant portion of their property in previous generations. Despite this, they still retained enough wealth to furnish him the minimum required to enter service in the Life Guards, an expensive regiment suited to his social status as a member of the peerage.[66]

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65. Bateman, xxiv-xxv.

66. Dundonald, 4; Roger T. Stearn, "Cochrane, Douglas Mackinnon Baillie Hamilton, twelfth earl of Dundonald," in *ODNB* Online (Oxford University Press, 2004, last edited 2006). https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1093/ref:odnb/32472.

Robertson was the son of a village postmaster, and had been commissioned from the ranks after several years of service, possessing little wealth with which to finance his career.[67] Each was in a position beyond their means, and when writing their memoirs they were more willing to criticize the corps' expensive lifestyle than many of their contemporaries. Dundonald was especially critical, claiming that "officers served for less than nothing if you take their… expenses into consideration…."[68] There was a definite tone of resentment to this comment, and a similar one is easily detected in his choice to reprint without comment the advice his father gave him upon his embarkation for service in Egypt: "My dear boy, leave the Army or you will get your health ruined like mine is, and no one will care and you will get no thanks for it."[69] Though he came from the expected class for an officer, Dundonald had fair grounds for such occasional bitterness.

Both Dundonald and Robertson attested to a culture of expense prevalent in the army at this time. This was something they had first-hand experience of, for neither of them had the resources to fully meet the expectations of their regiments. Dundonald's experience in the Life Guards appears to have been marked only by occasional incidents. The few he recorded were notable, such as the threat of being ostracized over the quality of his civilian clothes, a fashionable London tailor's work being expected for a Guards officer. Dundonald accepted the expense of renewing his civilian wardrobe, but admitted it was both ridiculous and wasteful.[70]

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67. David R. Woodward, "Robertson, Sir William Robert, first baronet," in *ODNB* Online (Oxford University Press, 2004, last edited 2011). https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1093/ref:odnb/35786.

68. Dundonald, 41.

69. Dundonald, 61.

70. Dundonald, 6-7.

Robertson's experience was a more complicated one, owing to his confessed lack of any private income at all. As he put it, any ranker commissioned without means would most likely be "miserable in himself and a nuisance to his brother officers."[71] Even though he received a £150 allowance for uniform purchases given to some newly-commissioned rankers, Robertson still struggled financially. His measures to attempt to curtail his spending extended to abstaining from tobacco and alcohol, unnecessary luxuries he could not afford.[72] This, he found, was "not altogether agreeable" to his brother officers, though he avoided giving more information on whatever social penalties he incurred for his conspicuous abstinence.[73] These small comments from Dundonald and Robertson illustrated that regardless of his pedigree, an officer could easily fall foul of the corps' social status quo if he gave the appearance of lacking wealth. It clearly did not do for any officer to be seen failing to live like a gentleman.

Looking beyond these dramatic examples, less explicit indications of fiscal trouble are present in the writings of other officers. Evelyn Wood admitted that his family had been forced to economize in his youth, losing their governess and sending him to grammar school with only a paltry preparatory education and still mostly illiterate.[74] He never mentioned monetary matters again in any detail in his memoirs, but in reality money continued to be a problem for him throughout his career.[75] Lord Grenfell's memoirs were quite similar. Explaining that his career had been stalled as a subaltern for twelve years, and that he lacked any apparent chance of

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71. Robertson, 30-31.

72. Robertson, 32, 42.

73. Robertson, 42.

74. Wood, *Midshipman to Field-Marshal*, 1:4-5.

75. Beckett, *Profession of Arms*, 26.

promotion or active service, he recounted how he nearly left the army in 1873. Knowing how expensive life as an officer was, it is unsurprising that one of the first things he did upon deciding to leave was to sell his uniform and kit off to other officers. He did not comment on his reasons for doing so, but it seems likely that he was in part motivated by a desire to recoup at least some of the substantial sum he would have invested in his career by that point. In the end he narrowly avoided leaving the army, receiving an offer to serve as Aide-de-Camp to General Cunynghame in South Africa just a month after submitting his application to resign.[76] Concerns about money were clearly a significant element in these officers' lives just as much as in Robertson and Dundonald's, even if they were reticent to write about the subject.

To struggle with money in this way was simply the reality of military service at this time. Recent research by Ian Beckett has revealed that even a number of the most prominent officers in the army consistently struggled to afford their lifestyle and, in his words, became "obsessed with remuneration" for their services.[77] This was true of Evelyn Wood, but it was also true of Garnet Wolseley, and of Frederick Roberts. The latter was in fact quite afraid of the idea of receiving a peerage in 1892. Though this was a high honor, he barely had enough income to cover his pre-existing expenses, let alone those required to keep an establishment appropriate to a titled peer.[78] If some of the most successful generals of the period were struggling to maintain their required standard of living on their incomes, this is a strong indication that many other officers serving in this period were likely not in good straits. These were hardly hardships confined to unsuccessful members of the officer corps, or to those of 'unsuitable' backgrounds. A lack of the wealth

76. Grenfell, 31.

77. Beckett, *Profession of Arms*, 19.

78. Beckett, *Profession of Arms*, 24-27.

required to sustain a gentleman's lifestyle seems likely to have been a fact of life for many, possibly most, officers serving at this time.

This placed such officers in a particularly difficult situation. The expectations of their career, and their comrades, demanded that they maintain an expensive standard of living. At the same time, they lacked the means to sustain this level of expense comfortably. Their inability to do so was itself a violation of the requirements to be considered a gentleman, for they were unable to genuinely present the "lordly indifference" to fiscal concerns that marked a true gentleman.[79] Living in continual violation of this basic criterion for their status, perhaps this explains why the army's officers were, as is explored in the following chapter, so attached to many of the other ideals of the traditional landed classes. Strictly adhering to these ideals made them appear to conform more closely to the level of status expected of them, even though many may have been struggling to do so on the most basic level.

What is most remarkable is that even those who did criticize the burdens of this social system generally avoided doing so too strongly in their writing. This was especially true of Robertson, who is remarkable for his willingness to both criticize and defend the officer corps' status quo, sometimes within the same sentence. He expressed distaste for the officers he had served under as a ranker, especially their focus on sporting and hunting at the expense of their responsibilities toward their men. Yet, he insisted repeatedly that the officer corps was of innately good character.[80] Once they were asked to take a closer interest in their subordinates in the Edwardian Era, he claimed his fellow-officers "readily responded – as British officers always

79. Thompson, 16.

80. Robertson, 9, 155.

will once they know what is required of them." [81] Robertson thus excused his comrades of any lack of character his former criticism made them appear to deserve. Similarly, despite his own difficulties in affording the style of living expected of an officer he insisted that it was only right for officers in the army to be "expected to live up to the standard of their regimental mess."[82] In this peculiar manner, Robertson defended the army and his comrades from criticism even while he himself was engaged in criticizing them and their social system. Even though he was a thoroughly professional soldier, and the negative effects of the corps' social structure were clearly visible to him, he still defended its social expectations as correct and proper.[83]

These social expectations were accepted, at least publicly, by Robertson and many others. Sir Garnet Wolseley accepted the system just as fully. An able officer and energetic proponent of army reform, he was also an impoverished member of the lesser gentry, and had himself been subject to social prejudice during his career.[84] Despite this, he is known to have remained a firm believer in the social requirements placed on officers, and "never doubted that the army was a career fit only for gentlemen."[85] The Stanley Committee similarly insisted in 1903 that while the costs of service needed to be lowered to attract men of modest wealth, nothing should be done which would "impose any arbitrary limitation on the manner in which a man may elect to spend

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81. Robertson, 155.

82. Robertson, 42, 31.

83. John Spencer, "Sir William Robertson as Quartermaster-General," in *Stemming the Tide*, 89-92, 106-107.

84. Bruce, *Purchase System*, 164; Harries-Jenkins, 15; Corvi, "Garnet Wolseley," in *Victoria's Generals*, 9.

85. Spiers, *Army and Society*, 2.

his money" lest it "[render] the Service unpopular."[86] It explicitly stated that no method of expense relief that would "render the Army unattractive to men of good position and fortune" would be acceptable.[87] The idea that the officer should be of high social status was to be safeguarded carefully, no matter what might be done to relieve his financial difficulties.

The attachment to the idea that the officer should be a wealthy, aristocratic gentleman remained quite strong in this period. This was not simply the belief of conservatives such as the Duke of Cambridge. It was also expressed by professional, reform-minded officers and those who were disadvantaged by such attitudes, as well as by the British government itself. This widely held belief is an apparent contradiction of the idea that the army's cultivation of aristocratic values was simply the product of a tradition of military amateurism. If this ideal of what the officer's social status should be was publicly defended even by dedicated professionals and reformers, despite the hardships it caused for them, it can hardly have been merely evidence of officers' lack of interest in the army as a profession.[88] This raises some significant questions about how this social system built on class actually worked, and how the values the officer corps prized and upheld were derived from and reflected it. We must ask what effects this belief in the ideal of the aristocratic officer-gentleman produced in the officer corps' behaviour, how their attitudes related to the values of the civilian landed classes, and how these informed the manner in which they approached their duties as officers. These are questions which will require a closer engagement with the literature produced by the officers of this period to answer in sufficient depth.

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86. Stanley Report, 6.

87. Stanley Report, 6.

88. Harries-Jenkins, 58, 52-53.

Chapter 4 – Gentlemanly Values and the Officer Corps

The key to developing a greater understanding of the influence of class-related values on the officer corps is to explore how these were present in the writings of officers serving in this period, both through direct statements of their values and the details of their lives in the army which they chose to share. This thesis will now turn to these attitudes in an attempt to reconstruct a sense of what the officer corps valued, how this was related to the value-system of the British landed classes, and the impact of these values on officers' behaviour. The content of these memoirs cannot be understood without some contextualization. Accordingly, their origins must be discussed briefly here.

As previously stated, this thesis draws on the memoirs of fourteen officers from a variety of backgrounds, all of whom served for a substantial amount of time during this period. These can be divided into two distinct generational groupings. The older generation of officers in this sample began their careers either near the beginning of this period or just before it. Some of them finished their careers within it, and some retired in the years following the death of Queen Victoria. Regardless, all left the service or died before the outbreak of the First World War. These included Garnet Wolseley, Evelyn Wood, Frederick Roberts, Francis Grenfell, Montagu Gerard, Henry Hallam Parr and Neville Lyttelton. The younger generation of officers began their careers in this period, and would remain in the service long enough to participate in the First World War. These men included William Robertson, James Willcocks, John Adye II, George Younghusband, the Earl of Dundonald, Winston Churchill and Horace Smith-Dorrien. All except Churchill were career soldiers who served out a substantial portion of their careers in the years between 1871 and 1901.

Rather than focusing specifically on a single branch of service, this sample deliberately includes officers from a variety of different parts of the British Army, allowing a broader perspective on the values the army's officers generally expressed. The resulting sample is fairly diverse. Robertson, Dundonald, Churchill and Wood were all cavalrymen. Grenfell and Lyttelton were riflemen. Wolseley, Parr, Willcocks, Smith-Dorrien and Younghusband began their careers as infantry officers, though their careers took them into other branches of service as well. Younghusband entered the Corps of Guides in his second decade of service, for example, and Wolseley was attached to the Royal Engineers during his time in the Crimea. Roberts, Adye and Gerard were all artillerymen of various types. Roberts and Younghusband also spent most of their careers as officers in the Indian Army, rather than the British Army proper.[1] While the significantly different careers of these officers undoubtedly influenced the ways in which they behaved and acted, the values discussed here seem to have been present throughout this sample, with few differences appearing to have been produced by their different branches of service.

1. David Woodward, "Robertson, Sir William Robert," in *ODNB* Online (Oxford University Press, 2004, last edited 2011); Roger Stearn, "Cochrane, Douglas Mackinnon," in *ODNB* Online (Oxford University Press, 2004, last edited 2006); Paul Addison, "Churchill, Sir Winston Leonard Spencer," in *ODNB* Online (Oxford University Press, 2004, last edited 2018); Ian Beckett, "Wood, Sir (Henry) Evelyn," in *ODNB* Online (Oxford University Press, 2004, last edited 2011); H. de Watteville and James Falkner, "Grenfell, Francis Wallace," in *ODNB* Online (Oxford University Press, 2004, last edited 2011); Stearn, Roger, "Lyttelton, Sir Neville Gerard," in *ODNB* Online (Oxford University Press, 2004, last edited 2015); Ian Beckett, "Wolseley, Sir Garnet," in *ODNB* Online (Oxford University Press, 2004, last edited 2008); Ian Beckett, "Parr, Sir Henry Hallam," in *ODNB* Online (Oxford University Press, 2004, last edited 2006); F.E. Whitton and James Lunt, "Willcocks, Sir James," in *ODNB* Online (Oxford University Press, 2004, last edited 2008); Stephen Badsey, "Smith-Dorrien, Sir Horace," in *ODNB* Online (Oxford University Press, 2004, last edited 2011); Younghusband, *Memories*, 43; Brian Robson, "Roberts, Frederick Sleigh," in *ODNB* Online (Oxford University Press, 2004, last edited 2011); Adye, 13-15. G.S. Woods and James Falkner, "Gerard, Sir Montagu Gilbert," in *ODNB* Online (Oxford University Press, 2004).

The values of the officer corps were composed of a series of distinct elements, all of which acted to inform the corps' broader identity. These included the cultivation of an appearance of wealth, the pursuit of sporting and leisure activities, a conspicuous reluctance to criticize fellow officers, and the high value placed on paternalistic behaviour and personal valor. All of these were closely related to the attitudes of the British landed classes, after whom the officer corps styled itself. Many of the things valued by the landed classes were justified as directly relevant to the military profession, and the way in which the ideals of these groups were intertwined is frequently visible in the writings of the period's officers.

All these elements worked together to create and maintain a unified sense of identity among the officers of the army, an identity based on shared standards of social and professional behaviour. This value-system fulfilled much the same function that Mingay suggested its equivalent among the elite of civil society did, producing a body of leaders that "… shared the same education and culture, and thereby enjoyed the same tastes and held the same ideas…," and which also shared the same manner of living, which "helped to maintain a sense of community and familiarity…."[2] This ensured the creation of a unified identity within which "the binding forces of common interest and a common viewpoint were stronger than the divisive influences of rank and wealth."[3] Through this common identity, officers were indoctrinated with a set of ideals and attitudes that informed their approach to their role within the social and professional community of the British Army, regardless of their background. Understanding the distinct elements that shaped this identity allows us to better understand not just the lives of the

2. Mingay, 17.

3. Mingay, 17.

officers of this era, but also the effects this identity had on the army's ability to function. The two were deeply interwoven, and their effects cannot be dealt with in isolation from each other.

Wealth and Expenses – Maintaining Appearances

The first of these values to be discussed here, which has already been mentioned in the previous chapter, was the high importance the officer corps' status quo placed on maintaining the appearance of wealth. As already noted this proved to be exceedingly expensive, especially in comparison to the incomes of the majority of officers in the service. While the fact that officers tolerated these expenses did indicate an acceptance of the corps' social status quo, the attitudes visible toward these expenses also reveal a strong commitment to the display of social status in line with traditional elite mores. This becomes clear upon examining the social function of such expenses within landed society, and through considering the manner in which they were discussed in the memoir literature.

The cost of living for an officer could reach prohibitive levels. The majority of this was a product of social expectations, as the Stanley Committee Report outlined, and not a representation of the actual requirements of the service. For example, the Committee considered the costs actually necessary for an infantry officer to make up only about half of the average infantry officer's annual expenses.[4] Despite this, a high level of expense seems to have been accepted fairly readily by officers of the army.

Explaining why such expenses were accepted is only possible within the context of the belief systems present in the landed classes that the corps mimicked. One of the most significant markers of status was the display of wealth in an appropriate fashion. While what was considered

4. Stanley Report, 8.

an appropriate display of wealth varied over time, one relatively stable example was the maintenance of the household. The maintenance of a large home, an appropriately large establishment of servants, and the ability to provide hospitality to guests were important displays of wealth. Such displays of wealth remained important rituals even in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, though the function of the home in landed society changed. The attention once devoted to farming on the estate was increasingly directed toward the pursuit of leisure activities, but the emphasis on the estate and household remained a symbol of status.[5]

Rituals like this were not simply anchored in the display of wealth for its own sake, but were intended to display the ease with which a gentleman could meet the obligations of his position in society. Expense was supposed to appear to be of little concern to a gentleman, "money matters" being of no consequence compared to the "more important considerations" of maintaining his social obligations and projecting an image appropriate to his station.[6] The variety of expenses which army officers were subjected to in this period seem to have been approached with a similar mentality. The costs of this life were quite high, and officers' expensive uniforms and living standards visibly projected an image of affluence. The presumed social status of the officer class demanded the projection of a similar image of affluence, and for this requirement to be met with the same apparent ease. An officer's ability to live in such a manner without any apparent concern for money 'proved' his respectability. An officer who could not maintain such an image was endangering his claim to the status of a gentleman. In order to retain their position in the hierarchy of social status army officers needed to tolerate such expenses, even when money was much less readily available than they wished to portray.

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5. Mingay, 148, 142-144, 175.

6. Thompson, 16.

The relative lack of discussion on monetary issues within officers' memoirs is actually a sign of how thoroughly officers accepted this attitude toward money. As previously mentioned, Dundonald and Robertson were the only officers of this sample willing to discuss monetary issues in their writing, though Grenfell gave some vague indications of economic difficulties. Wood's slip about his family's lack of money in his childhood was not repeated.[7] Wolseley and Roberts, despite their known financial difficulties, carefully avoided the topic.[8] All other officers in this sample avoided fiscal issues, just as they had. This is an unfortunate absence, but is to be expected. The idea that expenses should be met easily led to a common belief that a gentleman should never complain or make a fuss about monetary issues. While he was not expected to display a complete indifference to costs, discussing or complaining about financial matters was certainly improper.[9] This made writing about them for a public audience unacceptable, and this mentality seems to explain the relative absence of discussion of such issues in these memoirs. Propriety demanded that financial concerns be kept private, and the officers of this period seem generally to have done so.

While maintaining this appearance was considered important, it must be emphasized that a number of officers recognized how difficult this could be. Robertson's financial troubles, for example, met with a variety of reactions rather than simply social rejection. When he was first commissioned, for example, his regiment's commanding officer explicitly recommended that Robertson be sent to a regiment serving in India to take advantage of the lower cost of living there. Rather than viewing his lack of means as a mark against Robertson, he clearly

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7. Beckett, *Profession of Arms*, 26; Wood, *Midshipman to Field-Marshal*, 1:4-5

8. Corvi, "Garnet Wolseley," in *Victoria's Generals*, 9; Beckett, *Profession of Arms*, 24-26.

9. Thompson, 16.

sympathized with his situation.[10] Younghusband demonstrated a similar sympathy for those with few means in *The Queen's Commission*, simply by choosing to note a number of ways a new officer unfamiliar with life in the army might safely limit his expenses. These included advice on which branches of service were more economical, suggestions on tailoring, and even some basic advice on messing affordably.[11] These measures, while offering only relatively minor savings, could still help an officer maintain an image of easy living while protecting his limited income. Assisting one's comrades if they were in difficulty was clearly not out of the question. That said, this was no rejection of maintaining a 'proper' image, only an acknowledgement that some compromises might have to be made in order to achieve it.

There are several reasons why officers may have been so willing to project this image, even though doing so was financially difficult for them. The most obvious was that it integrated them into a single social community, emphasizing their shared identity as gentlemen even if their eligibility for that category would have been questionable in civil society. This image also cultivated the same symbols of authority that came along with membership in the civilian elite of British society. As Edward Spiers and some other historians have discussed, many officers in this period believed that the army's rank and file were innately deferential to the landed and titled. The lower classes would supposedly be more willing follow the leadership of a gentleman than a man of lesser birth, and this made a claim to landed status appear to be very important to the officers of this period.[12] Maintaining a high level of expense emphasized officers' supposedly elite status, demonstrating that they were owed obedience and respect by virtue of their social

10. Robertson, 42, 32.

11. Younghusband, *The Queen's Commission*, 62, 195-203, 142-143, 190.

12. Girouard, 65; Beckett, *Profession of Arms*, 21; Spiers, *Army and Society*, 5-6.

status as well as their military rank. Doing so would have been imagined to bolster the authority of an officer's rank, co-opting civilian society's status symbols to strengthen his authority over his men.

This image of propriety could also help to legitimize the officer in civil society, which often did not respect the army's officers for their profession alone. Some of the hostility to Garnet Wolseley's rise to prominence can be traced to a lack of social status compared to his contemporaries within the senior ranks of the army. Though he was a country squire, Wolseley's modest wealth and birth within the landed classes' hierarchy made his social status questionable enough to be considered "no gentleman" in the eyes of some members of the landed establishment.[13] His relative lack of standing was likely a factor in his hostile relationship with the Queen, the Duke of Cambridge and his circle of conservative adherents. Combined with Wolseley's clear opposition to Cambridge's faction within the army, the former's lack of status made him more vulnerable to the charge that he was a careerist and malcontent with no vested interest in the stability of the status quo.[14] As Harries-Jenkins argued, officers who cultivated a persona compatible with the standards of the respectable upper classes could escape such charges by stressing their unity with and loyalty to the British political establishment.[15] This was likely a factor in officers' attachment to their status as gentlemen. It bolstered their respectability not

13. G.R. St. Aubyn, *The Royal George* (London: 1963), 200. Quoted in Harries-Jenkins, 15.

14. Beckett, *Profession of Arms*, 98-99; Corvi, "Garnet Wolseley," in *Victoria's Generals*, 24; Ian F.W. Beckett, "Wolseley, Garnet Joseph, first Viscount Wolseley," in *ODNB* Online (Oxford University Press, 2004, last edited 2008). https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1093/ref:odnb/36995.

15. Harries-Jenkins, 55-58.

only within the military structure, but to their peers and superiors in civil society more broadly as well.

Sporting, Pastimes and War – Leisured Pursuits

Another extremely prominent status symbol adopted by the officer corps was its engagement in sport. Officers of this period engaged in a wide variety of sporting activities and pastimes, two of the most popular being polo and hunting. Both were frequently referred to throughout their memoirs, sometimes in passing, and sometimes in great detail. These activities were standard facets of life for officers in all branches of service. Those serving in Ireland and India especially tended to engage in them, often spending more time on these hobbies than performing their professional duties, and sporting was encouraged even for officers on active service.[16] While theoretically pastimes, sport took so prominent a role in the army's culture that its importance cannot be underestimated.

Polo was perhaps the most iconic of these sports, and though it was most associated with the British Army in India, it was not restricted to India. It was a common pastime for officers throughout the army, but especially predominated in the more fashionable cavalry regiments, and became the subject of fiercely competitive inter-regimental tournaments from 1878 onwards.[17] It could also become exceedingly expensive. The greatest cost of the sport was the provision of good polo ponies, which could quickly reach "enormous prices," especially in regiments with ambitions to compete in tournaments.[18] Even officers with significant allowances could find the cost of the sport to be very dear, including Winston Churchill, who found that purchasing

16. Campbell, 13-14.

17. Campbell, 18-19.

18. Stanley Report, 21.

himself a good pair of ponies was far beyond his normal allowance.[19] Despite this, polo remained extremely popular among the army's officers throughout this period.[20] Churchill would reflect that the officers of his regiment, while in India, "… freed from mundane cares… devoted ourselves to the serious purpose of life. This was expressed in one word – polo. It was upon this, apart from duty, that all our interest was concentrated."[21] There was little criticism to be found of it in the writings of officers, and for those who mentioned it as a significant part of their memoirs it was a subject of happy reminiscence, no matter how expensive it may have been.[22]

The other most common pastime of the officer corps was hunting, and this was the subject of even more discussion in the memoirs of the period. It could take any of a range of forms, from hunting with hounds to the colonial big-game hunt, and often involved a remarkably large investment of time. Officers are recorded engaging in long hunting trips, taking anywhere from days to months of leave each year to pursue their hobby, and often noting that they found the opportunity to shoot whenever possible in their various postings.[23] Criticism of such apparent wastes of time can be found, but not of the propriety of the sport itself. Robertson was unimpressed by the officers he served under early in his career, who performed all of his regiment's inspections on Sundays so that they could have "greater leisure to follow their social and sporting pursuits during the week." [24] He was surely not alone in thinking such behaviour

19. Churchill, 75.

20. Campbell, 20.

21. Churchill, 104.

22. Willcocks, 6, 102; Younghusband, *Memories*, 138.

23 Campbell, 12; Gerard, 38; Younghusband, *Memories*, 338-340; Robertson, 36-37.

24. Robertson, 8-9.

improper. Yet he criticized those who spent too much time sporting and hunting, not these activities themselves. This is an important distinction, for the role of these pastimes within the officer corps was a significant one.

The extent to which the corps' sporting pastimes were accepted is visible in the casual air with which they are treated in officers' memoirs, even when practiced in the field during wartime. Smith-Dorrien noted that while responsible for maintaining the army's lines of communication to Pretoria, during the Second Boer War, his command managed to have "a good deal of polo" in addition to "concerts and a dance."[25] This was in spite of the fact that things were, as he put it, "by no means peaceable" at the time.[26] He made no justification, and apparently did not feel one was necessary, for indulging in such luxuries during a campaign. He mentioned it only in passing, neither explaining nor giving the impression that this was as unusual as it seems to the modern reader. This level of engagement in such pastimes seems very unusual, and such easy acceptance of constant sporting by the army's officers needs some explanation.

This is partially related to the use of sport as a status symbol, deeply embedded in the lifestyle of the British landed classes. Particularly expensive forms of sport, requiring significant amounts of leisure time, as well as "substantial areas of land to ride over…" and a substantial income were important status symbols in civil society.[27] The landed social identity the officer corps emulated was defined by a wide variety of such pastimes, ranging from cricket to fox-

25. Smith-Dorrien, 264.

26. Smith-Dorrien, 264.

27. Huggins, 6.

hunting.[28] Pursuits of this nature set officers apart from their subordinates just as they set "the squire and his grand friends" apart from their social inferiors in their local county, who could not have afforded to engage in such activities.[29] Cultivating such behaviours among the officer corps emphasized much the same things that their expensive standard of living did: Their superiority on the class hierarchy compared to their men, and their claim to the authority of gentlemen.

How this attachment to sporting impacted officers' ability to perform their duties is a somewhat more complicated issue. The focus on sport within the officer corps was problematic in some rather obvious ways. These pursuits gave officers ample distractions from their duties, and many seemed happy to indulge in them. In most regiments the policies surrounding leave were "generous to the point of folly," as officers were permitted frequent days off to hunt and usually several full months of leave during the winter season.[30] In John Adye's time at Aldershot his commanding officer's policy was that his subordinates should not even bother to ask for leave to hunt, so long as there was a single subaltern left in barracks to act as duty officer. His philosophy was summarized by Adye with the phrase, "I do not want you to ask for leave. Always go."[31] Such practices seem to indicate a significant devaluing of the needs of the service in favor of sporting, indicating that this was perceived as a more appropriate use of officers' time.

Most officers expressed little self-consciousness about their constant engagement in these pastimes, whether they discussed polo, hunting or other amusements, and some were especially

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28. Mingay, 179-180.

29. Mingay, 180.

30. Turner, 238.

31. Adye, 55.

open about them. Lyttelton's garrison life in India in the mid-1870s was summarized, for example, in the following manner:

> … It was rather difficult to fill up time in the hot weather except with books, with which we were not too well supplied, and I find in my diary not much more than racquets, billiards, whist, vingt-et-un and such like frivolities.[32]

This particular anecdote was shared just after Lyttelton described a six-week-long hunt, presumably free of any military duties. He also devoted a full chapter to the discussion of games and field sports, which as he described it had, "figured so conspicuously, and for so long a time in my life."[33] Gerard focused on his pastimes even more, offering copious records of hunting throughout India and Africa. A representative section is his uninterrupted discussion of pig-sticking and tiger hunting in the Central Provinces of India, which consisted of an astoundingly detailed twenty-one pages of text.[34] Willcocks' memoirs were similar, offering detailed accounts of various hunting expeditions throughout the empire and happily stating that one of his first concerns upon travelling to Assam on leave was to decide "where [he] should start shooting."[35] If these works indicate anything, it is that hunting and sport became high priorities for at least a minority of the officer corps, and that they felt sufficiently secure in the propriety of their behaviour to write about it openly. This is because sport was commonly believed in this period to have a variety of positive effects, which made officers' engagement in it appear acceptable and even necessary.

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32. Lyttelton, 78.

33. Lyttelton, 116-129.

34. Gerard, 38-59.

35. Willcocks, 25.

A belief in the physical and moral value of games had grown up in mid-nineteenth century Britain, and become a major influence in both public schools and society generally by the Late Victorian period. It was held that sport and competition cultivated both physical fitness and a variety of moral virtues ideally suited to gentlemen.[36] Among these qualities were, "self-control, courtesy… honour, rejection of deceit, cheerfulness under difficulty and refusal to surrender."[37] According to Mark Girouard, the supposed virtues of sportsmanship were so closely-linked to Late Victorian ideals of gentlemanly behaviour that the two became "overlapping" and almost-interchangeable sets of ideals for conduct.[38] Within this context, sport further solidified officers' identities as gentlemen. It also offered obvious benefits to physical fitness, and so would have appeared highly appropriate as a form of personal training for officers. Indeed, as James Campbell argued, "strong character and physical prowess" continue to be considered important characteristics for "combat leader[s]" in the modern world, and the Victorian conception of sport as a means to foster these attributes is not entirely unreasonable.[39] While sport was not strictly related to military duties, the cultural attitudes of the period made it seem an important and fitting pursuit.

The Stanley Committee partially endorsed this logic, suggesting that sport was an important element of officers' training. While the Committee's purpose was to examine whether the costs of military service were excessive, it also argued that hunting and polo remained appropriate for officers and should not be curtailed. The Committee claimed that polo

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36. Girouard, 232-233.

37. Girouard, 235.

38. Girouard, 238.

39. Campbell, 25.

"subserve[d] a very useful educational end, in the development of qualities of horsemanship and character…," which it claimed made the sport especially suitable for cavalrymen.[40] Similarly, it stated that hunting was "a most desirable… branch of… professional training," though it neglected to give specific reasons for this claim.[41] While they admitted these sports could be expensive, the Committee recommended the use of government resources to facilitate officers' participation in them "at the least possible expense to themselves."[42] The Committee agreed that these sports were a positive influence on officers, but framed this within the language of professional training and skill development as much as that of character development.

The claim that these sports would train officers in skills useful to their profession deserves some examination. The only skill mentioned by name in the Stanley Report was horse-riding, and the Committee's concern to ensure that cavalry officers especially were capable riders makes sense.[43] A cavalryman did need to be able to control his horse effectively, and mounted sports would have offered a form of practice in this. Still, the claim that sport offered the most appropriate form of training in this skill seems questionable. Dedicated training and exercises in horsemanship would likely be far better for improving officers' proficiency as riders. The skills sport was imagined to cultivate were, however, clearly not confined to horse-riding alone.

40. Stanley Report, 21.

41. Stanley Report, 15.

42. Stanley Report, 15, 15-16.

43. Stanley Report, 15, 21.

The other skills "essential" to the military profession these sports might build were likely of a limited variety.[44] The Stanley Committee gave no exact indication what the other skills they alluded to were, but other sources suggest a variety of possibilities.[45] Campbell observed that similar claims appeared throughout military literature at the time, noting that hunting was claimed to offer good training in assessing terrain, scouting, and planning for military expeditions.[46] In addition to these skills, polo and hunting would by their very nature teach the basic principles of how to strike a target from horseback, and how to shoot practically in the field. These seem likely to be the sort of skills to which the Committee was alluding. This would also make some sense, since the army throughout this period was seriously deficient in practical training that might cultivate many of these sorts of skills. Large field maneuvers only began to appear near the end of this period, and the average regiment allotted at best two months to training exercises during the remainder of the average year.[47] Without significant opportunities for giving officers practical experience, it seems possible that hunting especially was viewed as an acceptable substitute. This was not an ideal substitute, though, especially since the sort of skills these activities could build were missing some of those most vital to an officers' duties.

This was a narrow set of skills that seem to be far more relevant to training the individual for combat, rather than training him to command troops. These were essentially personal skills, and could certainly be useful, but they had little bearing on tactics, strategy, or commanding men in combat. These skills, perhaps the most important for any officer, would not be helped at all by

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44. Stanley Report, 9.

45. Stanley Report, 21.

46. Campbell, 25-26.

47. Spiers, *Army and Society*, 230.

this substitute for formal training. Instead, the use of sport as a kind of training appears to have placed more emphasis on cultivating the skills of a warrior. These skills better prepared the officer for the idealized role into which he was cast by Late Victorian elite culture, that of the genteel and quasi-knightly figure honing his skills to fight for his nation and sovereign in wars "of glory, honor [*sic*] and cavalry charges."[48] The choice to cultivate these skills emphasized a specific idea of what an officer's role was, and personal engagement in combat was vital to it. Such an ideal was clearly important to determining what skills were imagined to be priorities for officers, and these priorities in turn would have marked effects on the officer's readiness for actual combat. Being taught how to fight was given far more importance here than being taught how to command.

The role these sports played for the officer corps was thus several-fold. These were leisured, expensive activities, serving as status markers in the same way the officer corps' general manner of living did. Hunting especially was also easily rationalized as a martial activity cultivating skills relevant to officers, even though these were not the technical or administrative skills most necessary in modern war. Elite ideals about leisure, social symbolism and chivalry blended together into a multi-faceted belief in sport's relevance to the life of an army officer. This emphasis on sport prepared the officer for his duty in some ways, but did not encourage him to build some of the most vital skills for his profession.

There were other practices that could have offered correctives to this, even in the absence of more formal training, but though some officers considered them respectable they appear to have enjoyed nowhere near the same popularity as conventional sport. Younghusband stated that kriegspiel was an appropriate pastime for regimental officers, and the simulation of commanding

48. Girouard, 261, 283.

troops in combat could have been a valuable educational tool in the absence of significant actual field experience. Despite this, war games are not mentioned by any other officer in this study.[49] As an academic pursuit with no relevance to the social persona officers wished to cultivate for themselves, it seems to have been of little interest to them. As a result, it went unmentioned by any memoir-writer, even if they participated in it during their careers.

Even if they had engaged in it, the rules for kriegspiel published in Britain seemed to be the product of a lack of interest in the changing nature of warfare. The increased dangers of firepower on the modern battlefield had been incorporated in German war gaming after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. In contrast, the British rules continued to drastically underestimate the effects of infantry firepower even decades later.[50] In 1888, military journalist and theorist Henry Spenser Wilkinson noted that this still remained the case, and came to the conclusion that the rules available in Britain could not be given "any high estimate of… value" as a training tool.[51] British war gaming did not adequately represent the changing nature of battle, and more thoughtful contemporaries knew that it was under-developed. Just as military training and maneuvers were lacking in this period, so too was competent wargaming to make up for them. The officer corps' priorities were clear: A gentlemanly character and combat skills were what mattered most in creating a good officer, and while sporting and hunting could cultivate the qualities appropriate to that ideal, technical exercises that would prepare officers better for the burden of command were not as high a priority.

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49. Younghusband, *The Queen's Commission*, 138.

50. H. Spenser Wilkinson, "The Practical Value of the War Game," 71-73.

51. H. Spenser Wilkinson, "The Practical Value of the War Game," 73.

Personal Honour and Professional Criticism – A Case of Self-Censorship

The officer corps' attachment to genteel ideals coloured more than just their belief in what skills were most important. These ideals had other far-reaching effects on the professional culture of the corps, most notably on how officers discussed and engaged with their comrades' conduct. Officers frequently avoided publicly voicing criticisms of their comrades, creating a dangerously tolerant institutional culture. The effects of this on the content of the corps' memoirs and their professional behaviour were very significant.

Sir Garnet Wolseley's two-volume memoir *The Story of a Soldier's Life* offers the most extreme example of this available in any officer's personal writings, but while extreme, it is also quite revealing. Once cross-referenced with his campaign journals and diaries, which recorded his thoughts privately, it becomes clear that Wolseley's true opinions of his fellow officers were often radically different from those he was willing to express publicly. In his memoirs, he presented his relationship with the Duke of Cambridge as a relatively cordial one. Despite the fact that their professional opinions on many matters "differ[ed] materially," Wolseley wrote of Cambridge that he "liked him more and more the better I knew him," and was impressed by his "honesty of purpose, loyalty to the army, devotion to duty" and personal integrity.[52] This was not at all accurate.

In reality, Wolseley's opinion of the Duke was extremely low. In his journals, he expressed a belief that Cambridge was long "past cure," claiming that Britain could "never hope to have an efficient army" until he was dead or retired.[53] Wolseley's honest assessment was that the Duke was incompetent, and unable to effectively fill his position as Commander-in-Chief. As

52. Wolseley, *The Story of a Soldier's Life*, 2:234-235.

53. Wolseley, *South African Journal*, 29.

the former commented in his journals, "…rabbit shooting" would be "more in His line than directing the affairs of an army."[54] These opinions were kept entirely private, hidden behind false praise in his public writings. This withholding of Wolseley's assessment of the Duke could perhaps be explained simply by Cambridge's superior rank and royal patronage, but this deception was not merely confined to discussing Cambridge.

Wolseley was similarly complimentary of many other army officers mentioned in his memoirs, and as with Cambridge this appears to have been dishonest. Evelyn Wood, whose career Wolseley had helped to promote, was described as an "able [man]," a "dashing and excellent [leader]."[55] Robert Home, who Wolseley had appointed as senior Engineer on the Ashanti Expedition in 1873, was characterized as "able, daring and imaginative."[56] While Wolseley admitted that Home could be arrogant at times, he insisted that this did not impair the latter's "undoubted usefulness" or the "high opinion" in which he was supposedly held by his fellow-officers.[57]

Wolseley's journals record very different assessments of both officers. Wood was characterized during the Zulu War in 1879 as "good," but not "first-rate," an opinion that would grow into frank dislike and distrust over time.[58] By 1884, when Wood was serving under Wolseley in the Khartoum Relief Expedition, this had changed. Wolseley was by that time

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54. Wolseley, *South African Journal*, 29.

55. Wolseley, *Story of a Soldier's Life*, 2:283; Ian F.W. Beckett, "Wood, Sir (Henry) Evelyn," in *ODNB* Online (Oxford University Press, 2004, last edited 2011). https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1093/ref:odnb/37000.

56. Wolseley, *Story of a Soldier's Life*, 2:282.

57. Wolseley, *Story of a Soldier's Life*, 2: 282.

58. Wolseley, *South African Journal*, 55.

describing him as a vain, untrustworthy political schemer, and "puzzle-headed" in his behaviour as a commander.[59] Home was harshly characterized as an inveterate liar, as Wolseley conjectured possibly even incapable of distinguishing between reality and his own distorted view of it.[60] These opinions obviously weighed on Wolseley's judgement enough to write down, but they were withheld from the narrative of his career he chose to put before the public. Instead, rather than offer gentle criticism or even faint praise, Wolseley went out of his way to be ingenuously charitable.

Wolseley's self-censorship was extreme, and it deserves some explanation. One contributing factor is that Wolseley's actual opinions were so harsh that they could easily be considered libelous, and with the harsh nature of British libel law he had ample motivation to keep his unkind opinions of others from print. His choice to treat his comrades with such patently false praise is, however, far more than would have been required to simply avoid accusations of libel. He did not need to lie so blatantly, and could simply have omitted comment on their conduct if this was his main concern. Something more was clearly at work here. This trend of self-censorship was also hardly unique to Wolseley, for many other officers also attempted to conceal their opinions of their comrades in a variety of ways that suggest they were troubled by more than just possible legal issues.

Examples of such self-censorship could be found throughout other officers' memoirs, and generally took the form of either downplaying their criticisms or simply omitting them. Both could be quite noticeable. John Adye actually acknowledged that he was doing so, stating in the introduction to his memoir that, "in recording my experiences I have endeavoured to avoid

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59. Wolseley, *Campaign Journal of the Khartoum Relief Expedition*, 31-33, 166.

60. Wolseley, *South Africa Diaries*, 159.

giving offence, and have, therefore, withheld incidents which… might have given pain to persons still living."[61] This statement said very little about what Adye omitted or why, but was at least an honest acknowledgement that he had omitted some things. Lord Grenfell attempted a different tactic, albeit quite transparently. He was willing to criticize Wood's behaviour as commander of the Egyptian Army, a position Wood held between 1882 and 1885, but only half-heartedly. Rather than stating his criticism of his former commanding officer bluntly, he stated that Wood's "strong military instincts" had led him to "despise the Orientals whose army he was commencing to reorganize." [62] He avoided making a fundamental criticism of Wood's character by implying that Wood's virtues were the problem, rather than any genuine personal failings that might explain his bigotry.

By doing so, Grenfell side-stepped any substantial discussion of Wood's actions, and proceeded to implicitly place the blame on those who had selected him, rather than on Wood himself.[63] This was a very weak argument, and it remained perfectly apparent that Grenfell felt Wood had not done a very good job. This clumsy attempt at moderating his criticism remained potentially offensive to its subject, but seems to indicate that Grenfell was awkwardly attempting to minimize the potential offensiveness of a critique he wanted to write, but felt personally uncomfortable making. Namely, that Wood's bigotry had made him a poor commander during his tenure in Egypt. Much like Wolseley's totally unnecessary level of praise for his comrades, the shape Grenfell's strangely faltering criticism took demands some explanation.

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61. Adye, 5.

62. Grenfell, 75.

63. Grenfell, 75.

The explanation for this odd level of discomfort with criticism seems to lie in certain ideals of honour to which the officer corps continued to subscribe. Gentlemanly mores had been defined in Europe since at least the sixteenth century by high concern for personal honour, and consequent sensitivity to any behaviour that might insult a gentleman or harm his reputation.[64] Within this code of behaviour, comments that might harm another gentleman's reputation were considered thoroughly improper. Offending his honour by making such comments was an insult against both the gentleman in question and his social status, and might even be valid grounds for a challenge to duel.[65]

This strong belief in personal honour continued to be held very seriously by many army officers at least as late as the Mid-Victorian era. In 1862, an officer had been persecuted by his regiment for failing to challenge a man who had insulted him, despite the likely legal penalties for engaging in a duel.[66] Though society generally was "softer and more conciliatory" than in previous generations, and dueling was extremely rare, it is highly unlikely that this deep-seated concern for personal honour had disappeared entirely among the army's officers by the Late Victorian era.[67] Considering how fully the officer corps continued to attempt to live their lives in obedience to elite standards in most other matters, a continued belief in this code of honour seems likely to be responsible for the remarkably conciliatory tone with which officers discussed their comrades. If making comments that could damage their reputations would be such an insult,

64. Banks, 5-6.

65. Kiernan, 15.

66. Masterson, 617-618.

67. Banks, 220.

it would be better to avoid such criticism, as officers generally seem to have done. The consequences could be quite severe, professionally as well as personally.

The army's officers had ample motivation to remain quietly tolerant of their comrades during their careers. Throughout the period before the First World War, the development of an officer's career was highly dependent on their personal connections. An influential patron and friendly contacts in the right positions could exercise great influence over what positions an officer received, and this "personalized" system meant that finding allies to aid one's career and avoiding making enemies unnecessarily were disproportionately important to a successful career.[68] Offending another officer's honour might not result in a duel, but might easily create a personal rivalry that could have later consequences in the competition for positions. Once an officer's career was over this was no longer such a factor, but the concern with maintaining his and his comrades' honour remained. It was still improper and unkind to speak ill of one's fellow officers.

This attitude also explains why officers' writings seem to reveal a remarkably flippant tolerance for poor behaviour from other officers. This could reach an extraordinary level. One particularly egregious example was the treatment of an anecdote shared by John Adye, and which occurred during the Sudan Campaign of 1884-1885. While posted along the Nile at Hannek, Adye relayed a curious incident surrounding the malfunctioning of the post's 'Nilometer,' a device used to measure the river's depth. For some unknown reason, "a young subaltern who was passing through the camp on his way up-river" took a "'maul,' or heavy wooden hammer… and hit the 'Nilometer' several hard blows upon the head."[69] The gauge's

68. Travers, *The Killing Ground*, 6-12.

69. Adye, 110.

readings were thus modified by a full foot, and remained so for several days before the discrepancy was corrected. Adye's reaction to this significant breach of discipline is perplexing. Though he described the act as "degenerate," Adye was also "glad to say" that the "name of the sinning subaltern" was never discovered.[70] Adye did not explain this comment, but it seems most likely that he would have been unhappy to see a fellow officer's name tarnished over this foolish act, even though disciplinary action over it was well-deserved.

Such a laissez-faire attitude to inappropriate conduct can be detected in the memoirs of other officers as well, suggesting that such a lack of will to hold their comrades accountable for their actions was surprisingly common. Churchill wrote of a squadron commander who, given temporary command of his brigade during training maneuvers, used the opportunity to order his own regiment to return to barracks. This was nothing more than a stunt to embarrass his regiment's colonel, which Churchill tellingly looked on as nothing more than an amusing anecdote.[71] Similarly, Younghusband recorded in his memoir that one of his fellow Staff College students refused to provide a serious answer to a thought exercise on the grounds that it was simply a children's game of "let's pretend," and Younghusband gave no indication that he saw anything wrong with this attitude.[72] Younghusband then admitted without any apparent shame that he himself had cheated on his entrance examination to the College.[73] These appear to be especially blatant examples of officers behaving improperly, but Gerard even swore it was common for officers ordered to superintend fatigue-parties to be found "sitting and reading a

70. Adye, 111.

71. Churchill, 68.

72. Younghusband, *Memories*, 123-124.

73. Younghusband, *Memories*, 123-124.

novel, and leaving matters to the sergeant-major," rather than directing their men themselves.[74] The fact that such behaviour appears to have been condoned commonly enough to be openly admitted to in memoirs is troubling. There is no way to estimate how much poor behaviour these tolerant attitudes may have allowed, but it was clearly treated much more lightly than it should have been.

This mentality even infiltrated the army's official literature and historical records. Colonel Colvile's official history of the Sudan Campaign recorded William Hicks' disastrous loss of his Egyptian command in the Sudan in 1884 in the following terms:

> After wandering for three days and nights without water they [Hicks' column] came upon a force of the enemy near Kasghil. But many hundreds [of his men] had already died from thirst, and the remainder were too feeble to offer any determined resistance, and were soon despatched [*sic*] by the enemy. A brilliant charge was led by Hicks Pasha and his Staff, who all died fighting like men.[75]

Colvile notably failed to discuss how Hicks' command fell into such poor condition. Hicks had led a force suffering from poor morale deep into the desert, relying on the promises of local guides, who were known to be potentially friendly to the enemy, that the route in question would have a sufficient water supply. In reality, it did not. When Hicks' troops failed to guard his supply lines, he gave up on securing them entirely and continued his advance anyway, without any secure route by which to retreat.[76] These were extremely risky decisions, and Colvile significantly downplayed them.

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74. Gerard, 324.

75. Colvile, 16.

76. Beckett, *The Victorians at War*, 69-71.

Rather than seriously discuss these consistently poor decisions the Official History recorded the events leading up to the battle at Kasghil with little assessment.[77] The only judgement Colvile passed was on Hicks' final fate, claiming that he had faced death with courage, thus emphasizing this over the fact that Hicks' death and those of his troops were mostly his own fault. More value was placed on conveying that Hicks had faced his death with gallantry than on providing a frank assessment of the decision-making which had led him to that point. Even in official documents like this, criticism of officers' performance was muted.

Just as their sense of honour motivated the memoirists of the corps to keep their own opinions of their comrades from the public, this same instinct acted to undermine the corps' professional standards. The effects of this have already been noted in prior work, most especially in Ian Beckett's analysis of the army's performance evaluation system. This was deemed generally unsuccessful even at the time due to officers' consistent failure to record honest opinions of their subordinates, being unwilling to speak against them even for the good of the service.[78] As long as the army's officers believed that criticism was dishonourable and should be withheld, unprofessional behaviour was less likely to be punished as it deserved and such poor conduct would be allowed to continue by officers unwilling to harm the career prospects of their comrades or themselves.

Paternalism and the Common Soldier – The Obligations of Rank

Where the relationship between officers was conceived of as one of mutual respect, the idealized relationship between officers and the Other Ranks was imagined in a firmly paternalistic mold. This attitude towards their subordinates was frequently displayed in officers'

77. Colvile, 14-16.

78. Beckett, *Profession of Arms*, 56-58.

memoirs. Wood, in a display of the vanity of which Wolseley had accused him, carefully drew his readers' attention to all that he had done for his soldiers' welfare in his various positions. This included purchasing climate-appropriate clothing for his battalion while in South Africa in 1878, paying close attention to their health and the quality of their food while on campaign, and improving the recreational and messing arrangements at Aldershot.[79] Wood was more willing to make a show of his paternalistic tendencies in his writings than many other officers were. However, taking such an interest in the welfare of their troops was a virtue held in high regard not just by Wood, but by many officers less proud of their own accomplishments.

This sort of paternalistic concern for enlisted men was noted with great respect by several other authors, all of whom valued it as a mark of good leadership. Dundonald wrote that Lord Roberts was especially talented at making such an impression with his troops, noting with approval that the latter "astonished me by his power of remembering faces… we did not pass [in inspection] a single group without Lord Roberts speaking to some man, calling him by name and asking with great kindness of manner how he was."[80] Robertson expressed similar praise for the model of leadership he felt Lord Roberts represented, noting that Roberts "took infinite pains… to show [his troops] that their interests were also his…. It is to be regretted that his example is not more frequently followed by other leaders."[81] Wood, Grenfell and Parr insisted that actively taking an interest in their troops' conditions and welfare had been of critical importance even during their tenure in the Egyptian army. They claimed their troops had been loyal to them

79. Wood, *Midshipman to Field-Marshal*, 2:2, 74, 185-6.

80. Dundonald, 76.

81. Robertson, 107-108.

because they had made their welfare a point of interest, where their Egyptian officers had not.[82] Such an idealization of the officer's role as caretaker of his troops was strongly held by many officers of this generation. This attitude would even find its way into Fortescue's *History of the British Army*, for he insisted in his discussion of the army after 1870 that "the regimental officer needs no example to lead him to take care of his men. It is always the officer, not the state, who thinks of the soldier."[83] It was assumed without question by Fortescue that this was a defining feature of the officer corps, and many officers of the period seem to have valued this image and the behaviours that went along with it very highly.

This attitude was judged to be essential to leading troops, and cultivating this paternalistic persona was explicitly advised by Wolseley. He made it clear that he considered this the most crucial element in creating a good officer. Wolseley wrote that if the officer "were 'the right sort,' his men would never fail him," and to him this meant the officer needed to possess a specific set of personal qualities.[84] These included, "good pleasant manners, closely allied to firmness, a genial disposition, a real sympathy for the private soldier, and an intimate knowledge of human nature…."[85] This placed a high priority upon the individual officer cultivating these purely personal qualities, and maintaining this persona in front of his men. These were of the highest importance to Wolseley, "more necessary for the officer than any knowledge he can acquire by a study of the drill-book, essential though that knowledge be."[86] Though his language

82. Grenfell, 74; H.H. Parr, 185; Wood, *Midshipman to Field-Marshal*, 2:160.

83. Fortescue, *History of the British Army*, 13:564.

84. Wolseley, *Story of a Soldier's Life*, 2:211.

85. Wolseley, *Story of a Soldier's Life*, 2:154.

86. Wolseley, *Story of a Soldier's Life*, 2:154.

was general, Wolseley was essentially advising a model of leadership much like that visible in the memoirs of the period, demanding that the officer should take a close personal interest in his subordinates.

The close link between these ideas and aristocratic paternalism becomes very clear upon examining Wolseley's instructions in his *Soldiers' Pocket-book*, which emphasized that officers should demonstrate a constant interest in the lower ranks and their conduct. They should be willing to give praise wherever it was due, "never lose an opportunity of calling attention publicly to the gallantry of their men…," and in talking with the Other Ranks should "study to be familiar without being vulgar…," a practice Wolseley tellingly suggested would allow the officer to "be gracious and intimate with [his] men without any loss of dignity."[87] While care for the men and their welfare was thought important, Wolseley was clearly stating that this should be expressed in a manner appropriate to the officer's social class, and to his difference in status compared to his men. Close interest, concern, and maintaining an appropriate level of social distance needed to be balanced.

Curiously, such paternalistic ideals had not been a major influence in civil society for some time by the Late Victorian period, having lost their hold on the British elite near the beginning of the nineteenth century. According to Harold Perkin, the decay in social responsibility among the landed classes had begun much earlier, but a decisive change occurred between the 1790s and the 1820s.[88] In this period "practically the whole of the centuries-old legislation protecting the workers' standard of living… was repealed," destroying the "system of paternal protection" that had traditionally acted to morally justify the landed classes' hold on

87. Wolseley, *Soldier's Pocket-book*, 2.

88. Perkin, *Origins*, 184-188.

power.[89] This was a critical blow to rural society, as from this point forward the landed classes increasingly abandoned their traditional social responsibilities. For most of the nineteenth century the landed classes instead claimed the right to exercise "paternal discipline without paternal responsibility."[90] As a principle of social organization, paternalism had fallen out of favour well before the Victorian era began.

The language of paternal responsibility was revived at various points during the nineteenth century, but its influence on elite behaviour within civil society was never as strong as it had been prior to 1800. A small 'aristocratic revivalist' movement attempted to do so in the 1820s and 1830s, claiming that it remained the unquestionable moral duty of the elite to care for their social inferiors' welfare.[91] This movement, in Perkin's words, was "fighting for a cause already lost" and thoroughly failed to change either the general attitude of the landed classes or government policy.[92] Some paternalistic elements were also incorporated into the quasi-chivalric ideals that became popular among British elites in the Mid- and Late-Victorian era. These ideals stressed, as Girouard summarized it, that a gentleman should be "gentle to the weak" and a landlord should take "good care of his dependants [*sic*]."[93] While these values were still idolized by some in the later part of the century, the landed classes as a whole had abdicated the social role that adherence to these values demanded long ago.

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89. Perkin, *Origins*, 184.

90. Perkin, *Origins*, 251.

91. Perkin, *Origins*, 250.

92. Perkin, *Origins*, 251.

93. Girouard, 260.

The belief that an officer should direct a great degree of attention toward the welfare of his troops thus had a strange relationship with the mores of landed society, evoking an attitude of social responsibility that was long out of fashion. In earlier periods the landed elite had justified its authority by proclaiming it had a duty to look after and "protect the rights of the less well off," and those who had subscribed to this ideal could be found making significant contributions to charitable initiatives, sponsoring a variety of events in their local county, or providing what they believed to be significant pay and benefits to those they employed.[94] The epitome of this earlier moral ideal can be found in political diarist Charles Greville's description of how the Duke of Rutland went about his duties as a Poor Law Guardian. As Greville recorded it, the Duke would regularly:

> …[visit] those paupers who receive out-of-door relief, [sit] and [converse] with them, [invite] them to complain to him if they [had] anything to complain of, and [told] them that he [was] not only their friend but their representative at the assembly of Guardians, and it [was] his duty to see that they [were] nourished and protected.[95]

Greville's clear approval of behaviour like this seems to be echoed by the Late Victorian army's officers, especially Wolseley. Though the ideals this generation of officers professed to value in the treatment of the common soldier were not common among British elites by the Late Victorian period, they were also clearly related to those which had once been common in previous generations.

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94. J.V. Beckett, *Aristocracy*, 350, 340-41, 345-46, 353.

95. Charles Greville, *The Greville Memoirs*, ed. Lytton Strachey (1938), 4:45-46. Quoted in J.V. Beckett, *Aristocracy*, 353-54.

The attitudes present in the memoirs of the officers studied here seem to reflect the values of this older system of social relations, stressing paternal obligation more than was common in British society by the late nineteenth century. If this attitude was still taken seriously by the officers of this period, it seems likely that the army's structure may have been specifically responsible for preserving it, or at least heightening its appeal to the army's officers. The hierarchical structure of a military organization would have made these attitudes seem far more appropriate within the army than in the rest of British society. The Other Ranks were required to obey their superior officers, and to behave with a respect toward them that could not be counted upon in civil society. The idea that the loyalty and deference which the Other Ranks were required to give to their officers should be repaid with some degree of responsibility for them would surely have seemed a logical conclusion. The highly structured nature of military life easily leant itself to such a structured, disciplined code of social relations.

This was an ideal, of course, and surely was not a constant reality. As Harold Perkin warned in *The Rise of Professional Society*, "no society has ever lived up to its ideal."[96] There were undoubtedly many officers who did not live up to the paternalist ideal in practice, just as there were many landlords who surely did not, even in the eighteenth century when a paternalistic interest in their tenants was still expected of them. This does not change the power these ideals held, for they were capable of molding individuals' worldview and driving their behaviour no matter how distant they may have been from reality. Whatever the Other Ranks actually thought of their commanders, and though many officers surely did not care much about their welfare, there were certainly many officers who sincerely believed that behaving in a paternalistic fashion was crucial to winning the loyalty of their men.

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96. Perkin, *Rise of Professional Society*, 405.

The officers who sincerely believed this seem to have felt that a gentleman who behaved in this way could command exceptional loyalty from the enlisted men. Lyttelton was unsurprised to record an instance of enlisted men "screening" their commanding officer in the early 1870s.[97] An "elderly lieutenant," arrested for drinking heavily while on duty, was "tried by court martial, and convicted in spite of his men declaring he was perfectly sober."[98] While Lyttelton called it a "remarkable" incident, this appears to have been surprise at the soldiers' willingness to defend an officer who had made almost no attempt to hide his drunkenness at the time.[99] The idea that regular soldiers would 'screen' their commanding officer to protect him from punishment does not seem to have been the source of his surprise. He even had a term for this phenomenon, which he did not feel the need to explain or define for the reader.[100] Lyttelton likely perceived this as another form of deference, for the idea that enlisted men automatically respected and "preferred to be led by their social superiors" remained quite common among the officers of this period.[101] Many sincerely believed that this was the case, and that it was not only essential to leadership, but morally correct for them to attempt to fill the role of the paternalist landlord in their duties as officers.

Combat and Courage – A Disregard for Danger

The final major aspect to be discussed here is army officers' view of combat. In many ways this was a product of the other attitudes discussed here. Wolseley's prescription for

97. Lyttelton, 68.

98. Lyttelton, 68.

99. Lyttelton, 68.

100. Lyttelton, 68.

101. Spiers, *Army and Society*, 5.

maintaining an appropriate persona in combat was "to be cool and to seem ignorant that any danger exists… evince a lively interest in all that is going on," and most unusually to "come what may, have a smiling face."[102] This was part of a wider tendency, possibly encouraged by Wolseley's endorsement of it, for officers to approach combat with an attitude of reckless disregard. They could frequently be found taking few precautions for their personal safety, and praising others for doing the same. Unfortunately, Wolseley's injunction that taking cover was sometimes required does not appear to have been heeded with as much zeal.[103]

One of the most frequent compliments officers gave in their memoirs was to describe a comrade as gallant, brave or courageous.[104] This was a quality given the highest importance as a sign of good character and martial capability. A "very good officer" was "always well to the fore" in combat.[105] Smith-Dorrien gave this a great degree of importance, noting other officers' acts of valor frequently, and with only one exception consistently praising them for their courage.[106] Wood demonstrated a similarly high regard for officers "show[ing] great courage in action," even going so far as to imply that in his eyes, displaying courage in action would redeem an officer of past indiscretions.[107] This was an unrealistic assessment, as the officer in question had been discovered drunk on duty, which had no relationship with his ability to display courage

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102. Wolseley, *Soldier's Pocket-book*, 6.

103. Wolseley, *Soldier's Pocket-book*, 6.

104. For some examples of the frequency of such compliments, see Roberts, *Forty-One Years in India*, 2:53, 84, 111, 359, 454; Smith-Dorrien, 13, 18, 55, 62, 85, 154, 222; Younghusband, *Memories*, 223, 252, 318, 321, 322, 332.

105. Wolseley, *Story of a Soldier's Life*, 2:303.

106. Smith-Dorrien, 154, 193, 223-224, 253.

107. Wood, *Midshipman to Field-Marshal*, 2:37.

in combat. Wood described this officer's valour, however, as if it were proof that his character was good despite his previous behaviour.[108]

Stranger still were the expressions of approval recorded for any officer who was killed in action. Roberts frequently celebrated the valour of officers killed in combat, commenting on their deaths in laudatory terms.[109] More extreme was Gerard's chillingly congratulatory assessment of the performance of an older officer's unit in the Indian Mutiny. According to Gerard, "despite the severity of their march [his unit]… arrived [at the battlefield] so fit that, within four hours… they went into action and had half their British officers killed or wounded before sunset."[110] Their casualty rate was used here to demonstrate their courage and energy, qualities which appear to have mattered far more to Gerard than whether the casualties they incurred were necessary. Officers frequently drew attention to personal bravery or a death in combat as signs of good character, as if these were of pivotal importance beyond most other things as indicators of an officer's worth.

This attitude informed a disregard for danger which was sometimes taken to remarkable extremes. One especially dramatic example was Major-General Hart's behaviour under enemy fire during one engagement in the Tirah Expedition. Smith-Dorrien recorded the event in the following terms:

> As daylight was breaking bullets began to come in thick, when quite unconcerned our Brigade Commander Major-General… Hart, V.C., walked up. We were lying down in the position we had secured, but I had to stand up to salute him. He gave me a warm

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108. Wood, *Midshipman to Field-Marshal*, 2:37.

109. Roberts, *Forty-One Years in India,* 2:223, 447-448, 454.

110. Gerard, 201.

> greeting, hooked his arm in mine, and insisted on walking up and down discussing the art of war, in spite of my protests that we provided the sole mark for the enemy to aim at. It was some time before I could maneuver him into a position of safety. Why neither of us was hit I do not know….[111]

Though Smith-Dorrien was incredulous of it, this was exactly the sort of behaviour Wolseley had suggested was ideal for inspiring troops. Wolseley's later advice that taking cover was sometimes necessary would probably have been better suited to these particular circumstances, but Hart's actions were still in alignment with the kind of combat leadership Wolseley advocated.[112] This behaviour projected an image of composure and fearlessness, regardless of the danger, but could be remarkably hazardous. This particular case was extreme, but other examples of such risk-taking in combat are easily found.

Since courage was valued so highly, it is unsurprising that reckless behaviour was not merely confined to such extreme examples. One act commonly recorded by officers was rescuing the wounded while under fire. While in battle, an individual or a small group of officers would go to the aid of wounded soldiers outside of formation. Often, the officer or officers in question would be wounded or killed themselves while doing so. This was noted several times in the memoirs, each time as something to be praised.[113] This was definitely unwise, placing the officers required to effectively lead their units in lethal danger, risking their lives for those of

111. Smith-Dorrien, 82.

112. Wolseley, *Soldier's Pocket-Book*, 6.

113. Some examples visible in Grenfell, 60; Smith-Dorrien, 253; Younghusband, *Memories*, 331.

individual soldiers. Despite this, it received almost no criticism from the officers who recorded these incidents.

Only once in this sample of memoirs was a criticism of this phenomenon recorded: Evelyn Wood, while commanding his column at the Battle of Kambula, nearly left his post to rescue a wounded infantryman. A captain on Wood's staff insisted that Wood was too senior to be risked, and proceeded to do so himself, accompanied by two lieutenants. Though junior officers, the same complaint that had been laid against Wood could just as easily be made against these three officers. They risked themselves en-masse, for little potential gain, one of the lieutenants being wounded in the process. Wood himself did not record an opinion of his subordinates' actions, but given that he would have done so himself he does not appear to have disapproved.[114] This sort of reckless behaviour was clearly at least somewhat common, and seems to have been considered more worthy of praise than concern.

The roots of officers' common disregard for danger, and of this behaviour specifically, are likely several-fold. Such demonstrations of courage neatly fit into the image of the officer as a genteel warrior, the same sensibility that was built and maintained in peacetime by hunting and equestrian sports, emphasizing officers' personal skills with horse and firearm. It was very dangerous to behave in this manner in combat, but this was also part of its appeal. The belief in courage as "a pre-eminent virtue" had underpinned the custom of duelling, and was likely just as strong an influence on officers' behaviour in actual combat.[115] The greatest proof of a gentleman's honour was his willingness to face danger. Failing to follow his principles in the face of danger, whether to protect his social inferiors or to retain his normal persona of self-

114. Wood, *Midshipman to Field-Marshal*, 2:61.

115. Banks, 213.

assurance, would to some degree appear dishonourable.[116] While certainly courageous, the behaviour that this mentality bred could also be extremely dangerous and impractical. The rescuing of wounded personnel was one example of this. The officers who engaged in this behaviour were not only proving their courage, but also looking out for their social inferiors in the most selfless manner possible. The risks of officers behaving in this manner, potentially leaving their units leaderless in the middle of combat, should not be downplayed. However, within this context it does make some sense why this was perceived as a noble, virtuous act by other officers at the time.

The attitudes concerning how officers should behave in combat were the fullest expression of the value-system the corps' members embraced. The behaviour they considered most desirable showed their concern for their subordinates' welfare, their sense of personal honour, and their courage in the most extreme manner possible. It also revealed some of the great dangers that following these values entailed, for these were not entirely practical or even sensible priorities in combat. This careless disregard for danger was deeply unwise, and the emphasis on projecting an image of boundless self-confidence seems at best a questionable priority. Combat leadership was one of the most important duties of the officer corps, and their values encouraged a rather dangerous attitude toward it that placed officers at risk needlessly. This is not something to be praised.

Implications and Consequences

All of these values acted to project a certain image of the officer. This was an image of the officer as a gentleman, who was to act according to the codes of behaviour traditionally

116. Banks, 207, 213.

considered appropriate for the landed classes. This heavily influenced the manner in which officers approached their duties, drawing their attention away from deeper engagement with the technical aspects of their positions and towards a variety of other behaviours that they believed were more important. This was likely a major contributing factor to the frequent disregard many officers in this period held for any activity considered too 'intellectual' or 'bookish,' an especially dangerous trend that Travers indicates led a large number of officers to conclude that they did not require any modern education in "doctrine, theory and critical reading" in order to command effectively.[117] The belief in the officer-gentleman tradition had some clear merits, but was also responsible for perpetuating a dangerously backward-looking approach to command responsibilities, to the detriment of the army as a whole.

While these values were a firm influence on the common consciousness of the officer corps, they were not universally held, even by the officers whose writings were consulted for this sample. Many of these values were identifiable in a significant number of these officers' writings, but few officers provided solid evidence of their subscription to all of these values. Many authors showed an attachment to several of them, while some only demonstrated one or two in their memoirs. It is clear, however, that these values were all reasonably common among officers of the army serving in this period, informing the corps' character as whole even if individual officers' exact views varied. While the details of each individual officer's worldview are likely impossible to reconstruct accurately, the values discussed here were significant trends in the officer corps' overall culture, and clearly heavily influenced the corps' members.

Above all, this system of values emphasized the officer corps' supposed identification with not just British landed society, but with the landed elite, the peerage and greater gentry. As

117. Travers, *The Killing Ground*, 40-41.

the previous chapter demonstrated, this was not entirely real, but the officer corps' members went to great lengths to present the image that it was. The demonstration of great material wealth and leisure was a major part of this, accomplished through the corps' customarily expensive and sporting-heavy manner of living. These fulfilled much the same roles the lifestyle of the landed elite did in civil society, acting as potent symbols of status and authority. They emphasized the respectability and shared class-identity of the army's officers, while also leveraging these social symbols to buttress and reinforce officers' authority over their men.

Similarly, officers' mentality towards their subordinates was closely linked to traditional landed values, defined by ideals of noblesse oblige and deference. The strong emphasis on these values in the officer corps was out of fashion with much of the aristocracy by the late nineteenth century, but was still closely aligned with the traditional attitudes of the landed classes. The authority officers possessed needed to be balanced by obligation to those below them in the army's hierarchy, and looking after their subordinates was believed to instill firm loyalty and deference in the rank and file. Whether truly as effective in building the loyalty of their men as these officers imagined, this was commonly imagined to be an important part of their role in the army in this period.

Furthermore, officers' attitudes toward their profession, their honour, and combat were clearly extensions of various aspects of landed society's mores. Much of the corps' behaviour, centred around reinforcing a gentlemanly persona, also enshrined a self-image and a set of skills built around ideals of honour and chivalry. These led many to take immense risks in combat, and to lead with a self-assurance and selflessness that was certainly impressive. However, this behaviour was also extremely dangerous, placing their lives and the lives of their troops in unneeded danger. These same values further led officers to overvalue their comrades' courage

and personal integrity as signs of their quality as officers, and to devalue academic and technical pursuits accordingly. Simultaneously, it also made them unwilling to assess their comrades' behaviour frankly, or to engage in the criticism necessary to adequately discuss or learn from mistakes and failures.

The effects of landed society's values as adopted by the officer corps were, thus, far-reaching. In assessing their overall effect on officers' abilities, however, these can be divided into two distinct trends. The first is that these did a great deal to cultivate officers' abilities as leaders. They surrounded officers with the symbols of authority from civil society, trained them in some combat skills, insisted they should fight alongside their men and lead from the front, and cultivated a belief in their responsibility for their subordinates. However, these values also contributed to a second trend: The erosion of the officer corps' capabilities in a variety of ways. The inability to assess their comrades' performance honestly, an unhealthy attachment to taking great personal risks in combat, and their valuing of social symbols and personal combat skills over technical training and skill-development all contributed to the same problem. They worked to undermine officers' ability to become the educated professionals they needed to be in an increasingly technical career. The result of this was army officers' persistent inability to develop a unified approach to warmaking, one that in Travers' formulation could encompass both the technical skills required to fight on a "technological battlefield," and the traditional, "human qualities" prioritized by the officer-gentleman ideal.[118] The traditional, conservative landed values the officer corps adhered to both incentivized the latter and discouraged the former, and must be evaluated together. These two trends cannot be judged in isolation from each other.

118. Travers, *The Killing Ground*, 62.

The assessment of the total effect of landed values on the officer corps' capabilities, then, must be multi-faceted and complex. These values created a standard set of expectations for officers to follow, instilling strong leadership qualities in many officers and driving them to display great care for their troops and significant valor in combat. The negative effects on the capabilities of the corps and its members were, however, very significant. These values gave little incentive for officers to improve their military education or professional skills, and the army unsurprisingly struggled to adapt to modern conditions throughout this period. It entered the twentieth century with a backward-looking officer corps, whose capabilities and general level of training were found to be drastically uneven in quality in South Africa between 1899 and 1901, and which remained awkwardly anti-modern in its approach to its duties even in 1914. It is inescapable that these values were a significant factor in producing an army that possessed these deep faults.[119] The skills that would have strengthened the army's structures and institutions were not those incentivized by these values.

Despite this apparently conclusive judgement, the relationship between the officers living within this value-system and the modernization of the army was never defined simply by an opposition to modernity. Though Wolseley insisted that officers ought to be gentlemen, he earnestly took up the cause of "urging upon my comrades of all ranks the necessity for a thorough and careful study" of military science.[120] To him, these were not incompatible. The two could be, and frequently were, shared elements of the military officer's worldview. Living in accordance with the values of the landed classes did not prevent Adye from having a deeply

119. Spiers, *Army and Society*, 230; Harries-Jenkins, 274-275; Travers, *The Killing Ground*, 26-27, 53-55.

120. Wolseley, *Soldier's Pocket-Book*, v.

favourable opinion of both the Cardwell and Haldane reforms, both of which he felt were entirely needed in attempting to make the army a more efficient force.[121] Living in this manner also did not stop men like Smith-Dorrien and Lyttelton from writing about infantry and cavalry tactics, and remarking on the general failure of many army officers to adjust their views to account for the firepower of modern rifled small arms.[122] On an individual level, there appears to have been little perception that gentlemanly attitudes were in any way in conflict with the requirements of a modernized army during this period.

These two sets of attitudes, that of the traditional officer-gentleman and the reforming professional officer, were still intertwined in the officer corps in this period. Travers points out that by the mid-1900s the officer corps had clearly begun to polarize along these lines, with many officers gravitating towards one or the other camp. This process had not yet begun in the Late Victorian period, however, and this 'professionalism vs. traditionalism' model seems somewhat inappropriate for understanding the views that the officers of this period held.[123] Those Late Victorian officers interested in reform were still, as far as class-related values were concerned, echoing much the same attachment to a traditional sense of social class that their more conservative comrades did.[124] Though the officers of this period were willing to question some things, the values of the officer-gentleman remained a common identity generally unchallenged by the officer corps' members, even those most interested in military reform.

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121. Adye, 21.

122. Smith-Dorrien, 154, 324-325; Lyttelton, 64-65.

123. Travers, *The Killing Ground*, 5.

124. Spiers, *Army and Society*, 149.

Perhaps this explains the tendency for the officers of this period to react to technological changes, such as the development of machine guns, in a somewhat odd fashion. Rather than accept such developments on their own merits, the general reaction among reformers was to embrace them while simultaneously demanding that they fit into the army's "acceptable and traditional" principles and requirements.[125] The core values which they viewed their careers through remained firmly held, and reformers were more interested in adapting new technologies into the army's existing values and ways of doing things than in attempting to refashion the traditional view of their career around new developments. The officer corps' values and the strong sense of identity it nurtured did offer some benefits to the army, but they equally produced a variety of significant problems, some of which the corps' members themselves seem to have been quite unconscious of.

125. Travers, *The Killing Ground*, 63-64.

Conclusion

This thesis' research certainly suggests that the landed classes' values were a major, pervasive influence on the officers of the Late Victorian British Army. This is not a new discovery. This attempt to codify what these values were does, however, represent a relatively new departure in the study of the Late Victorian army. Some elements of individual values explored here have been noted by various historians before: Edward Spiers for example stressed the significance of the "officer gentleman" ideal to the lives of the army's officers throughout the Victorian era, but while he discussed some of its aspects, including sporting, paternalism and social unity, he did so only briefly and in general terms.[1] No prior historians have made analysing the components of the corps' value-system and class identity the focus of their work, and of the historians who worked on this period, only Harries-Jenkins focussed on the class identity and values of the officer corps to a significant degree. This thesis' contribution to the historiography must, then, be measured in comparison to his work.

Harries-Jenkins' study of this subject was problematic in several ways, and this thesis' conclusions differ from his in several significant ways. The most obvious point of disagreement is Harries-Jenkins' general characterization of the officer corps as "aristocratic."[2] This was intended to refer to the corps across the entire Victorian period. It was argued that since the officer corps projected the appearance of being aristocratic, and was conceived of as such by its "parent society," this was its defining feature even if it did include non-aristocratic members.[3]

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1. Spiers, *The Army and Society*, 1, 5-6, 22-23, 25-26.

2. Harries-Jenkins, 58.

3. Harries-Jenkins, 58.

While such a characterization of the corps' values is appropriate, the fact that the majority of army officers in this period did not possess an aristocratic background or level of income suggests that this is not quite the right term. The army's officers attempted to conform to a set of values appropriate to aristocrats, but this was a conscious act of image-projection, for both social and professional reasons. It was not a natural product of their background for most officers in the way that labelling the corps' identity as 'aristocratic' suggests.

This thesis' more important contribution to the historiography is to suggest a new understanding of how these values impacted the army's effectiveness. This was also the focus of Harries-Jenkins' argument, in which such values were deployed to explain why the army adapted poorly to modern conditions and technological change. His argument, that the adherence of the army to the ideals of the landed classes "contributed to a rejection of… pressure for enhanced professionalism," was not incorrect, but his explanation of this process lacks some of the nuance this thesis reveals.[4] Supposedly, the officer corps was defined by conservatism and "with some notable exceptions, officered by men from the past who were resolutely opposed to technological and administrative innovation," exhibiting a "continuing pre-occupation with the niceties of Victorian social life," rather than engaging seriously with their profession.[5] This is not inaccurate, but it also cannot explain why the officer corps' members remained so attached to the set of values discussed here. This thesis suggests that the real values of the Late Victorian army's officers were engaged with in a much more complicated way than Harries-Jenkins suggested.

This thesis' research reveals several problems with applying this understanding of the subject to the Late Victorian period, and attempts to reconceptualize the officer corps' value-

4. Harries-Jenkins, 278

5. Harries-Jenkins, 276-277, 100.

system. While landed society's values were influential throughout the officer corps, they were not simply carried over from the officer corps' civilian lives as Harries-Jenkins seems to suggest, nor were they maintained in the army simply due to a lack of interest in the art of war. This set of values was informed by those of the civilian landed elite, but was engaged with consciously by the army's officers. Adhering to these values was conceived of as both a status symbol, and as a practice believed to be of utility to the military officer's role.

These values offer a distinct view of what the military profession's requirements were imagined to be in this period. These were radically different from the demands of a twentieth century military, but while they held the army back from adapting to modern conditions they were neither incoherent nor entirely irrational. The officer corps did not live by values which were "social rather than functional," but rather believed that their values fulfilled both social and functional roles.[6] They prioritized maintaining an image of authority, and training the officer as a leader, but also failed to encourage the growth of officers' technical skills and command abilities. This makes any characterization of this value-system, whether as a positive or negative influence on the army, somewhat difficult. While it was certainly a major influence on the army, its effects produced a major imbalance in the capabilities of officers rather than a net gain or loss in their abilities.

This interpretation seems to be borne out by recent assessments of the army's performance in the First World War, which have discussed similar imbalances in officer training and values that remained a part of the army in the 1910s. Spencer Jones and Christopher Moore-Bick have noted that the British Army's officers in the First World War were the products of a system of values that was still remarkably similar to the one studied here. This system

6. Harries-Jenkins, 276.

encouraged officers to display a sense of paternalism, to value courage and personal exertion on the battlefield, and to cultivate a strong group identity and sense of community within the officer corps. These elements appear to have had positive effects on officers' performance.[7] Jones and Moore-Bick assessed that the officers of this period demonstrated a high standard of personal leadership and dedication to their duties and their troops, even while their generally deficient training in staff-work and technical matters left many poorly-prepared to act as staff officers or command on a large scale.[8] The British Army's officer corps in 1914 remained a deeply flawed body.

These conclusions on the quality of the officer corps fifteen years after the end of this thesis' period of focus seem to be echoed here. Jones' pithy assessment that the British Army of 1914 was "well led yet poorly commanded" could just as easily have been made of the Late Victorian army.[9] Though a great deal of administrative and organizational reform occurred in the Edwardian army, the class-related values of that army remained similar to those of the Victorian officers that had preceded them, just as the army's institutions retained many of the same fundamental problems they had entered the new century with.[10] The value-system this thesis has outlined was an enduring one, and was clearly a significant influence on the army well into the early twentieth century.

Despite the major problems they produced within the army, we should not be surprised that the Victorians perceived living by the values of the landed classes to be appropriate for the

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7. Moore-Bick, 160-162, 184-185, 210-211, 224-226.

8. Spencer Jones, "Introduction" to *Stemming the Tide*, 20-22; Moore-Bick, 236-237.

9. Spencer Jones, "Introduction" to *Stemming the Tide*, 22.

10. Travers, *The Killing Ground*, 27.

army's officers. The landed elite among whom these values originated had long considered themselves to be Britain's "warrior class," the natural leaders of the nation both in peace and especially in war.[11] The sons of this elite would flock to the colors when Britain went to war in 1914, and suffer disproportionate losses in the process.[12] The class which idolized these martial virtues remained the pinnacle of respectability in British society in the late nineteenth century. It is unsurprising that their values continued to be perceived as proper for the military's leaders, even if these attitudes were rapidly becoming outdated. It is equally hard to imagine that the army would have abandoned these ideals without the experience of a major European war. Without such a shocking demonstration of their failings, the weaknesses that adhering to these values had bred within the army would remain present. Even when the First World War finally came, the officers of the army continued to subscribe to modified interpretations of these ideals, whether they were entirely appropriate to their circumstances or not.[13] They had become a part of the army's culture, and were likely too deeply embedded to be easily cast aside.

The complex values based on class that the officer corps lived by were, in conclusion, neither entirely divorced from the needs of military service nor simply a reflection of aristocratic origins. Instead, this research reveals that they were the product of a coherent, elite-derived set of supposed requirements for a serving military officer. These requirements were built on specific beliefs of what was both socially appropriate and necessary for military service, and the officer corps' values and identity were consequently heavily informed by both. This was not a set of beliefs that cultivated a modern, professional approach to military service. They were at least

11. Cannadine, 73-74.

12. Cannadine, 37.

13. Moore-Bick, 263-264.

partially responsible for making the British Army's transition into modernity a difficult, protracted process. However, these values did far more than simply impede the modernization of the army. The reality was far more complicated, producing an officer corps of heavily imbalanced capabilities, well prepared for some elements of their careers and very badly prepared for others. Such an understanding defies easy characterization as simply a positive or negative influence on the army's performance.

This more complicated reality is one this thesis could not hope to fully explore all the implications of. The limited amount of material able to be accommodated in a work of this length means that the private correspondences and inner lives of the officers studied here have not been explored in any great depth. Even with such limitations, however, the sources consulted here reveal much about the values of the officer corps that has been relegated to background detail in previous work. There is nothing wrong with this. Most historians of the military have simply had other priorities, and naturally tailored their research to match them. Yet, the values of the officer corps were a significant factor influencing the behaviour of the army's officers throughout this period. This thesis' research begins to offer a new understanding of this complex topic, free from some of the judgements that characterized the prior treatment of this subject.

Much work remains to be done if we are to develop a detailed understanding of this topic. Deeper archival research will be needed to come to a better understanding of officers' private beliefs, especially those of the great majority of officers whose careers were not noteworthy enough for them to have written memoirs. Officers' values on a variety of topics, including social ones unrelated to their military service, could be usefully probed to reveal how much their worldview may have differed from that of civil society. Likewise, comparative studies of the army before and after 1871 are needed to determine how closely these values were related to

those of previous generations of officers, and how these values may have changed over time. Only once such deeper work has been done can we hope to have a fully nuanced understanding of the values that thrived in the army in this period, and of their true impact upon the army as both an institution, and as a social body. It is hoped that this thesis, limited in scope as it is, will not be the last work examining this complex and multi-faceted topic.

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