

## The Royal Marines in 1915

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THE ROYAL MARINES. A CORPS OF GREAT TRADITIONS.  
(By E. CHARLES VIVIAN.)

Somebody once went to Eastney Barracks, one of the four Divisions whence the Royal Marines go out to the ships of the fleet & to work of every kind in every part of the world: that somebody was shown round the various shops & drill grounds & appliances with which a Marine becomes familiar in the course of his training, & finally that somebody turned to the man who had acted as his guide:- "But nobody ever hears of the Marines," he said. "What do you do?" "Oh, nothing," his guide answered, rather wearily. The reproof took effect, & the visitor apologised. For the Marines do everything, & the man who sets out to compile a record of what they do is as venturesome an individual as he who sets out to compile the history of the corps. In the first case, one might set down every form of military & naval activity, & in the second case, one might set to work to write the histories of the Navy & Army, omitting only the military work on the Indian frontier.

Ordinary regiments have their colours, on which are inscribed the actions & campaigns in which the owners of the colours distinguish themselves: the Marines adopt as their badge the globe, this stating simply that no colours (though the Royal Marines Light Infantry have them) could contain their world-wide distinction, & their motto - "Per Mare Per Terram," - backs the tacit statement. The word "Gibraltar," at which place they put up their long & memorable defence, & a laurel wreath which commemorates their gallantry in the taking of Belleisle, complete the badge. Such a list of distinctions as regiments place on their colours would, in the case of the Marines be a recital of practically every campaign, & nearly every action, in which the British Navy & Army have taken part.

Raised first when Charles was on the British Throne, abolished as a corps & then raised again, the Marines retain one small distinction until this day that calls for mention. In the bad old days when seamen mutinied - as in the mutiny at Nore, for instance - the Marines alone could be depended on to support lawful authority, & the trust thus reposed in them was never once abused. In consequence of this, the mess deck of the Marines on battleships & cruisers is placed between that of the seamen & the officers' mess; all cause for this has long since disappeared, but the unshakeable loyalty of this Royal regiment in earlier days is still marked by the position of their mess deck on every capital ship of the senior service. As already noted, their history is as lengthy a record as a list of their achievements, & thus it has no place here in detail. We are more concerned with the Marines of to-day, with the men themselves, than with any dry record of facts. As a corps, they are lacking in one particular; they have never mastered the art of self-advertisement: The man in the street knows that such a body of men as the Royal Marines is in existence, & usually he has a vague idea that they do something on ships. There, however, his knowledge ends.

On entering the Barracks one is struck by the mere atmosphere of the place in which these men are trained; outside the barrack gate are jerry-built houses, little shops, & all that one would expect in this suburb of a naval town; inside is cleanliness, solidity & neat efficiency, - one passes into a world that is better ordered, better managed, & of more healthy atmosphere than the civilian world outside. From the magnificent mess room of the officers' mess to the great central kitchen in which the men's meals are prepared, one gathers a sense of things done in the best possible way, & that sense persists in surveying the

training of the men, the provisions for their comfort, the range of sport & recreation provided for their spare time - for every detail of their lives in the period of training. From this period they pass equipped, mentally & physically, to take their places in the ships of the Fleet, with the Armies in France & the Dardanelles, in German South-West Africa, or on anti-aircraft service in the United Kingdom. For the Marines are ubiquitous & in every aspect of this present campaign they have their share.

Primarily, of course, the Marines are intended for service at sea, where they man the guns of the Fleet. In every capital ship of the service, a certain proportion of the guns are manned by Marines, & in times of peace there is a perpetual & healthy rivalry between the Marines & the seamen with regard to gun-drill & shooting capabilities; the magnificent shooting records of the Marines prove that this rivalry is not without its uses. On land, the Marines are used for manning coast defences & certain naval bases, for manning siege & heavy artillery in France, Belgium & South Africa; for contributing to the strength of colonial expeditionary forces, in manning anti-aircraft guns where needed, in working all the motor transport used in connection with their duties, & as an infantry brigade now forming part of the Royal Naval Division in the Dardanelles.

The corps is the most self-contained, the most nearly self-supporting of any branch of the Services; even the clothing & boots worn by the men are manufactured by & under auspices of the authorities at the Barracks; trained as both sailors & soldiers, Marines comprise shoemakers, tailors, & mechanics of every kind; on a foundation of infantry training they build a knowledge of every gun in use in both Navy & Army, & if the camels used in the Egyptian campaign may be counted, there have also been mounted Marines. The colloquialism, "Tell that to the Marines," is in the nature of a compliment to the corps, in reality, though it may appear as ridicule on the surface; its origin lay in the fact that a Marine is so well instructed & so intelligent that, if he will believe a thing, it must be true, & if it were not true the teller would meet his just reward.

In the matter of instruction, the range of subjects is too great for a detailed list to be given. As an outline, however, it may be said that the foundation of training is instruction in infantry drill & in musketry, together with the physical training that every soldier undergoes. Then the men are taught to row, to swim, & are instructed in signalling & after that they come to gunnery. There are guns of every calibre & kind up to the six-inch & models & working parts of the larger guns. Ingenious devices reproduce the actual conditions on a cruiser or battleship rolling at sea, & under these conditions the men are taught to use the guns, & to pass out at gun-laying before they are drafted to the Fleet.

There are courses of instruction in coast defence & appliances, of siege guns & appliances, & even in the use of such mighty weapons as correspond to the howitzers with which the Germans battered down the defences of Liege & Maubeuge. There is training in the use, construction & repair of field telephones, in motor transport work, both heavy & light, in field battery work, & in a score of other subjects. It is not generally known that the Royal Naval School of Music is at Eastney, & that all the bands of British Navy are sent out from the great training establishment of the Royal Marines.

From this very brief summary of the work of the Royal Marines two or three inevitable conclusions arise. First of these is the unending interest of the work. An infantryman trains to a certain routine - & there he ends. He can go on

perfecting himself in his work, developing himself, but there is no unending list of new things such as is at the command of the Marine, who is infantryman, artilleryman, & generally sailor as well by training. The driving force of the soldier are discipline & initiative, or perhaps it might be better put as discipline backed by initiative; the driving force of the sailor is handiness - he has to get things done & he gets them done; but the Marine, hybrid by training, has to combine discipline, initiative, & handiness with an uncanny quickness in getting things done, & it is safe to say that there is more scope for intelligence in the Royal Marines than in any branch of either Navy or Army.

Given average intelligence & the desire to learn, the man in the Marines has more chance of fitting himself for & taking promotion than any other man. As an instance of this, at the outbreak of war the Royal Marines furnished a number of instructors to the Army - & many of those men have already been granted commissions from the units to which they were sent. Yet another point with regard to this diversity of training is the fitness of the men for almost any kind of employment on their return to civil life. Infantry, cavalry, or artillery, on putting off uniform, are still soldiers by habit: the Marine, having been everything & done everything, is able to take up any form of civilian work as easily as he turned from the use of a big gun to the repair of a field telephone or the running of a motor-car. And the popularity of the Marine service among the men who have served is evidenced by the fact that generation after generation of a family enrolls, while not infrequently father & sons are serving at the same time in the same corps.

The second conclusion is the value of the work. Ultimately, the very bread we eat is dependent on the shooting ability of the Marine & his kind, for there is not a capital ship in the Navy that is without Marines to man its guns, & on those guns depends the national food supply - & the life of the nation itself.

Coast defence service, anti-aircraft service, service with the big guns, & as an infantry brigade in France & the Dardanelles, are all part of the vital work of guarding the Empire, auxiliary to that maintenance of sea-power with which the Royal Marines have always been so closely connected. From a patriotic standpoint, there is no higher form of service than with the Royal Marines.

And then, a last conclusion, there is the spirit in which the men of the corps are trained, & the resulting spirit of the men themselves. One may see things in the classes training at gun-laying, where every man knows that the score on his card must be good, for the credit of the corps of which he is a member; in the squads swinging out to drill, made up of finely-developed, bronzed healthy-looking men, from which the best is asked & by whom the best is given, for the credit of the corps: in the care, the individual instruction, the study of best methods, with which every instructor devotes himself to his task, for the credit of the corps; in the disciplined efficiency evident at every turn, by reason of which the Royal Marines consider themselves - & with justice - the finest body of men in the British forces. It is a corps of great traditions; of unequalled distinctions. It is "nobody's-child," soldiers trained for sea service, & sailors ashore, capable of doing the work of both. This lack of official parentage has given rise to self-reliance & self-sufficiency, so that whatever arises to be done, the Marine can do it. In their work & their manner of doing it, as in the matter of pre-eminence in sport, the Marines yield place to none; the man who joins this corps is not only fitting himself for service with the best trained body of men that the Navy & Army possess, but he is also educating himself in ways that will be useful for the rest of his life .