PHYSICAL TRAINING IN THE ARMY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE " JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS."

Sir,—With reference to physical training in the Army, it appears to me that the majority of officers do not understand anything about this training and hence all the benefit a recruit obtains from it in the depot is quite thrown away afterwards. During the past ten months I have examined hundreds of recruits and trained soldiers. Almost invariably I have found that the recruit is hard and fit and the trained man soft and fat, the only trained men fit to take the field being members of the gymnasium staff. The time required by men, who have undergone a recruit’s course of training, to perform sufficient exercises to keep them hard and in good health is so small, at the outside about thirty minutes a day, that it seems to me absurd physical training should be dropped when a man is passed on from the depot to the battalion. If the full effect of physical training is to be obtained when it is most needed, i.e., on Field Service, then it should be one of the daily routine parades whilst troops are in barracks. If this suggestion were to be adopted, there is a good chance that men would form the habit, which they would take with them into civil life, of doing certain exercises daily. If this proved to be so, on being recalled to the colours, the reservist would be physically a fitter man than he usually is. There is no doubt that the habitual performance of physical exercises increases keenness; quite recently a physical training instructor complained of the lack of keenness in the depot staff in taking part in tournaments, etc.

I should be glad if other officers interested in this subject would ventilate their views.

I am, etc.,

F. W. COTTON.

Lieut.-Colonel, R.A.M.O.

Medical Inspector of Recruits,

Western Command.

Chester,

March 12, 1921.