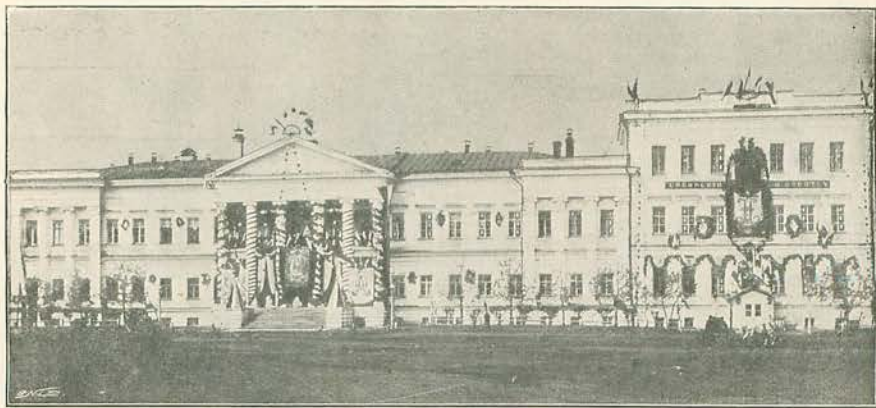


The Modern Russian Officer.

By A. ANDERSON.

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THE CADET CORPS SCHOOL AT OMSK, SIBERIA, DECORATED IN HONOUR OF THE CZAR'S BIRTHDAY.



LARGE part of the intellectual world hoped that, with the dawn of the twentieth century, reason and not mere brute force would be the arbiter in differences between nations as between individuals. Education, railways, telegraphs, would have had time to do their beneficent work, effacing frontiers, abolishing distance, dissipating prejudice, welding nations and races at last into one family with common interests and common foes: ignorance, evil, and death. The curtain concealing some of Nature's most jealously guarded secrets seemed on the eve of being lifted; the possibilities of the human brain appeared infinite. Was it credible that the new race of demi-gods would continue practices hardly worthy of their Simian ancestors? War would be a thing of the past!

What is the reality? The twentieth century is close at hand, and war and rumours of war fill the air. From one end of the universe to the other armed hosts stand waiting, momentarily expecting the word of command that will hurl them one against the other. Never has the science of war been more closely studied. In many countries the arming and training of the fighting man absorb the attention of the profoundest intellects. The fire-eating swashbuckler belongs to another age. A suitably-devised and systematic scheme of education is deemed as important for the soldier as it is for the doctor or the lawyer.

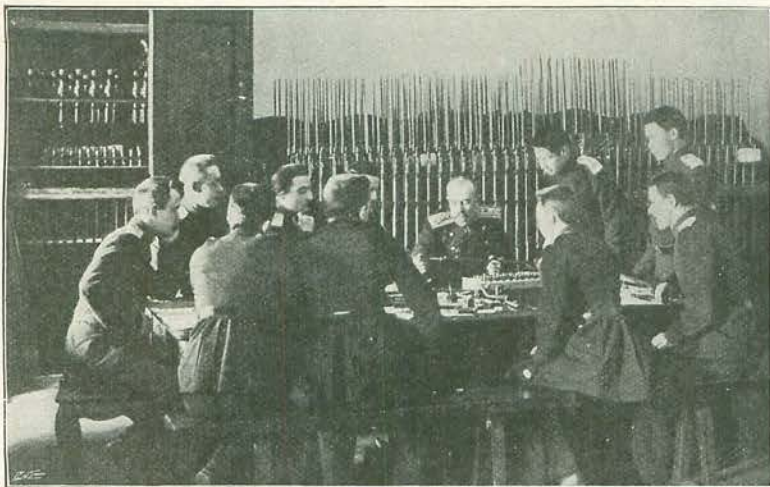
Nowhere has this idea been carried to

greater lengths than in Russia. The organization of military education in the empire is on the most matter-of-fact lines imaginable; like most other features of modern Russia, its inception is due to Peter the Great, so that it has not yet had time to grow rusty with age. It is, indeed, only within the last twenty years or so that it has definitely assumed its present form, after a constant series of modifications, each the result of experience.

The genius of the Slavonic race is at once imitative and critical. In Russia, as elsewhere, you will find people ready to maintain that a thing is necessarily good because "it is so thoroughly Russian, you know!" But such people form a very small minority. The average Russian is almost painfully diffident of his own merit, and this very characteristic renders him apt to seize upon whatever is good wherever he finds it. He is absolutely eclectic in his borrowing, and his power of assimilation, too, is great.

Peter learned the military art from the Swedes so well that he very soon was able to prove he had surpassed his teachers by beating them. Since then, Russia has borrowed from her immediate neighbour, Germany, more, perhaps, than from any other source; but to all she has borrowed she has given the stamp of her national complexion. This is especially noticeable in the case of her military schools, which furnish the principal contingent of officers for her army.

At a moment when the British soldier, or, to be correct, the British officer, has been so



STUDYING THE MECHANISM OF THE RIFLE.

severely criticised both by friends and foes, it may not be inappropriate to show what the greatest military empire in the world is doing to insure a regular supply of properly trained leaders for her vast armies; a subject of which very little is generally known in this country.

Education, in the first place, is absolutely gratuitous, the pupils being all the sons of meritorious officers or War Office officials. A few paying pupils are, it is true, admitted in addition, as a special favour, but these only number 600 in all out of a total of close upon 12,000. The cost to the State is nearly three-quarters of a million sterling annually, in addition to the sum expended on the schools for the scientific branches of the service, the artillery and engineers, which are on a separate basis.

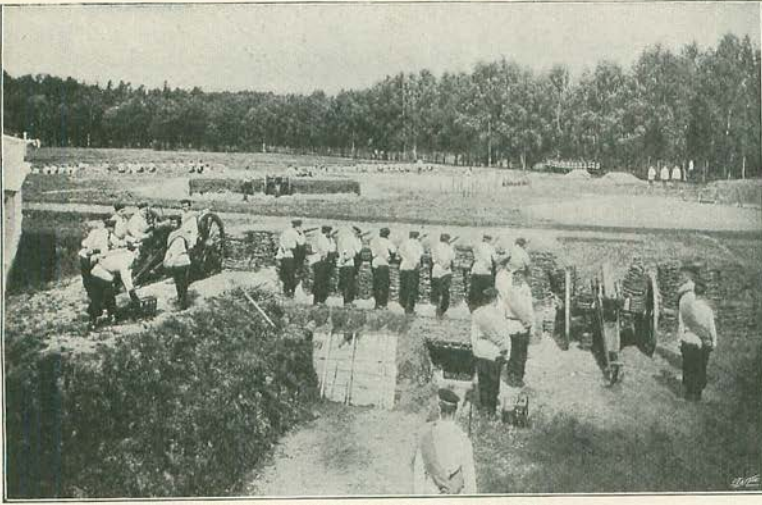
The son of a man who has attained the rank of general in the army, or an equivalent grade in the Civil service, can enter one of two "privileged" schools, where he is accorded special advantages. If his father be of inferior rank, he enters one of the twenty-four cadet corps established at various

points in European and Asiatic Russia. The cadet corps are large boarding schools containing from 300 to 500 pupils, and organized on a semi-military basis, the uniform closely resembling that worn by the regular army, while the discipline is a happy blend of much that is best in the public schools of England and Germany. To go up for the entrance examination a boy must be over ten and under twelve, the educational course lasting for seven years. The buildings of all the cadet corps are modelled on the same plan; the school at Omsk, in Siberia, of which an illustration is given, is one of the smallest.

Though the profession the boy is intended for is kept in view from the day on which he enters the school, his education partakes much more of a general than a military character, at any rate for the first five years; he is taught the proper way to salute his superiors, but there his military instruction almost ends. In the sixth and seventh classes, however, he is practised in the use of a rifle, the exercises in bad weather taking place indoors, and, generally speaking, he is



A FIRST LESSON IN GUNNERY.



FORTIFICATION AND ARTILLERY PRACTICE.

made to imbibe the elementary notions of a soldier's duties.

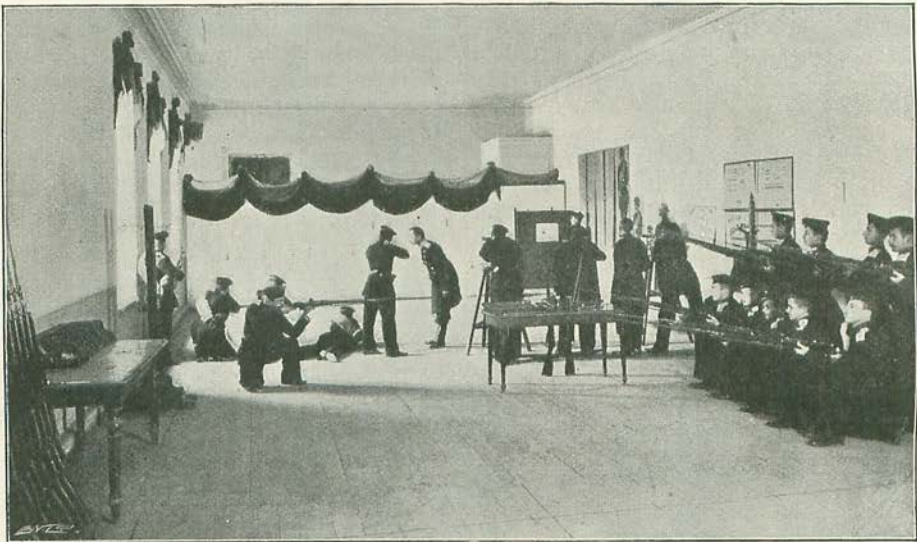
The supreme authority in each corps is the director, always a military officer of the rank of brigadier-general. Immediately below him comes the inspector, who is the chief of the teaching body proper, and represents the

less in the light of masters than of friends whose interests are identical with their own, and the officers on their side are expected to take part in all the boys' games and pursuits.

No boy is permitted to think that mere difference in age confers upon him any sort of authority over his younger comrades;

divided into divisions of twenty-five to thirty-five boys, in charge of an officer known as their "governor," who may attain the rank of lieutenant-colonel. All these officers, who are always selected with great care, are distinct from the teaching staff, and directly under the orders of the director.

The boys are encouraged in every way to regard their officers



THE SHOOTING GALLERY.

Civil authority in the community. Apart from the seven classes into which a cadet corps is divided for educational purposes, it is also divided into several companies, according to the age of the pupils, each under the charge of a commandant of the rank of colonel, and each company is again sub-

indeed, except at chapel, during meals, and on the occasion of special functions in which the whole school takes part, the different "companies" never come into contact, separate playing grounds even being provided for them. Corporal punishment is never resorted to except in extreme cases, and after



A SITTING OF THE COMMITTEE.

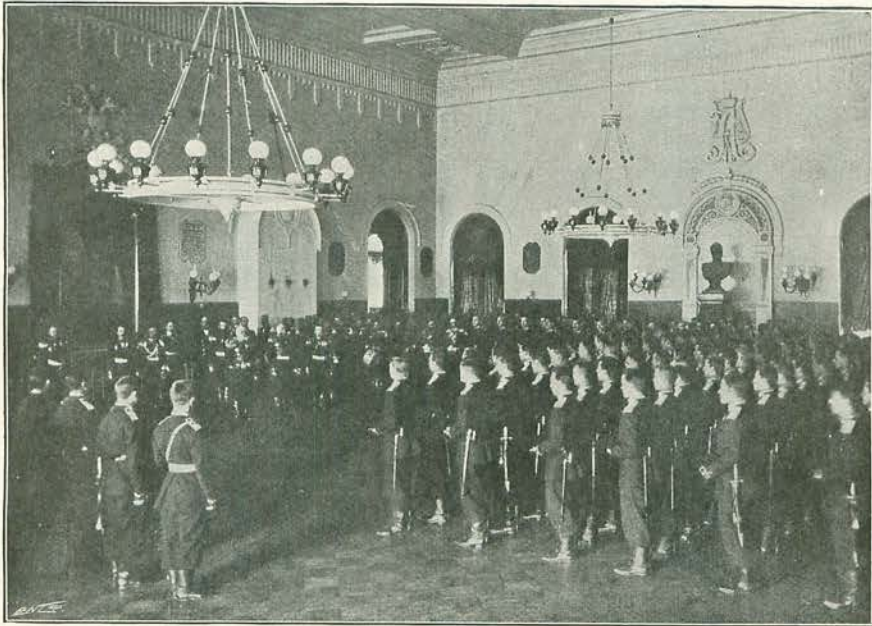
a decision by the whole committee of teachers, of which the priest invariably forms part.

A cadet rises at six o'clock every morning, and has four meals daily, at three of which—breakfast, lunch, and supper—tea is served. The employment of every moment

of less fortunate youths in all countries; but, on the other hand, he learns thoroughly both French and German, the two languages likely to be of most use to him in his subsequent career. English finds no place in the educational programme.

tion of lessons, the youngest pupils have four classes daily of fifty minutes each to attend, ten minutes' recreation, at least, being always allowed between two consecutive lessons; the elder pupils have five lessons daily.

A cadet is not troubled with the dead languages that take up so much of the time



A SCHOOL INSPECTION.

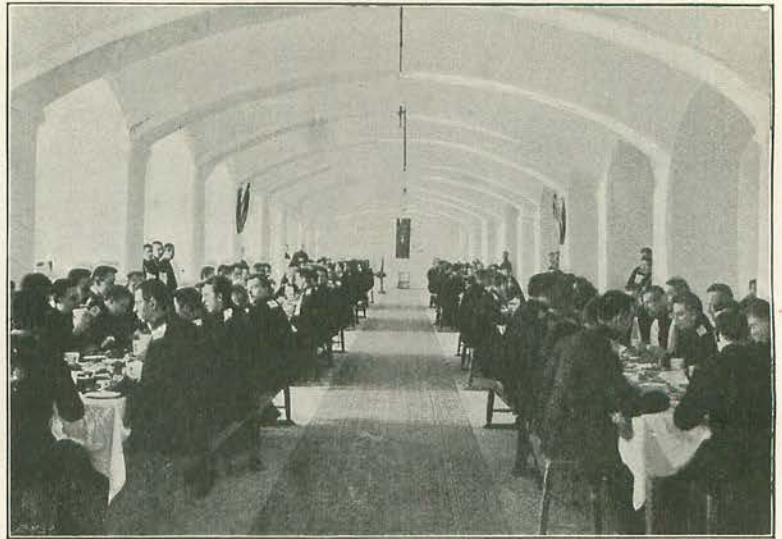
of his time between that of his getting up and going to bed is carefully regulated, quarter-hour by quarter-hour lessons and recreation being interspersed, so that mental and physical fatigue may be equally avoided. Apart from the hours devoted to the prepara-

of less fortunate youths in all countries; but, on the other hand, he learns thoroughly both French and German, the two languages likely to be of most use to him in his subsequent career. English finds no place in the educational programme.

Two of the obligatory subjects are chorus singing and dancing, though the days when, according to popular belief, a Russian officer could waltz himself into the very highest military honours, or by *gaucherie* at Court have his career marred, are now gone by. In the upper classes, however, the boys are instructed in all the little *finesses* of ball-room courtesy. Whether as

the result of this training or not, the Russian officer is probably one of the politest men to be met with; to the Briton, indeed, he appears even phenomenally so. With women he is as deferential as Louis XIV., or as an Englishman who is certain of his descent for at least half a score of generations.

Manual labour, which principally takes the form of carpentry, is taught to the cadets who do not specially cultivate music. This is done not so much with a view of contributing to their physical development as to enhance in their eyes the dignity of honest



THE DINING-ROOM.

toil and awaken an intelligent and sympathetic interest in the labours of their humbler fellow-creatures.

Nor is this the only attempt made to nip in the bud that spirit of snobbishness and silly vanity so characteristic of many military men in every country. Sporting propensities are, if anything, discouraged. Though the many advantages of sport are duly recognised, they are held to be more than counter-balanced by the disadvantages inherent to it. Not only is sport considered to make a man a specialist in one pursuit, to the detri-

ment of his general equilibrium, but, though it may induce habits of perseverance and endurance, it at the same time leads its devotees to adopt all the evil habits connected with games of chance — betting, egotism, a partisan spirit, and a pitiless feeling for one's adversary. In addition to this the "Instructions" say sport incites to the adoption of "eccentric costumes, not in harmony with that simplicity



THE GAME OF CHESS IS ENCOURAGED BY THE GOVERNOR.



A DANCING LESSON.

come improved, it being now recognised that during youth the eyes are as capable of being educated as any other organ. The utility of fencing, for instance, is thought to consist principally in the rapid adjustment it implies of the organ of vision.

The best attitude to be adopted in writing has been made the subject of long and patient investigation, the result being one

and noble modesty that form the best ornament of a healthy-minded, virile individual."

The system of physical education may be described as a modified form of that in vogue in Sweden. The general idea that has presided at its elaboration is that the whole body should be rendered capable of supporting long and continuous labour, not that certain muscles alone should be inordinately developed, as if the boy were intended to gain his livelihood as a professional athlete. Much of the apparatus used in English gymnasiums, trapeze, rings, etc., is excluded as tending to make the pupils perform athletic tricks which have no ulterior or general utility. Even the games partake somewhat of the character of lessons, the governor of each division, who is always with his pupils, taking care that the rules of the game are strictly observed, and that a game once commenced is not stopped or interrupted out of mere caprice.

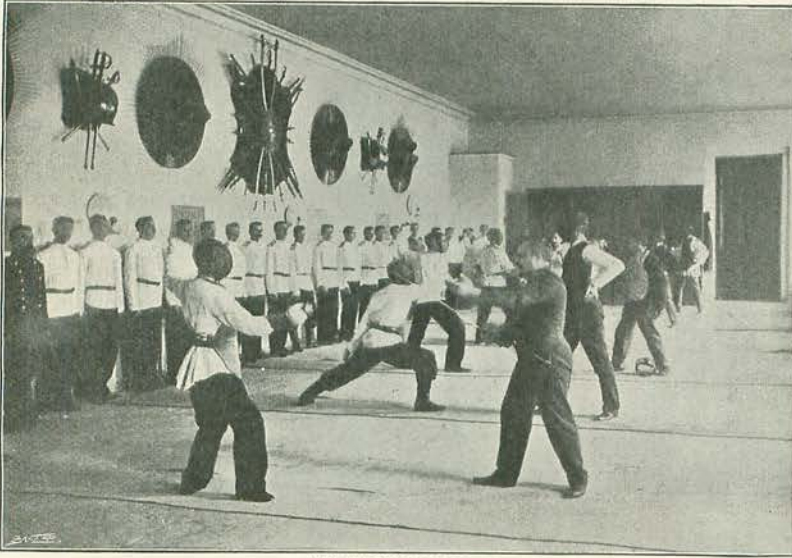
One of the chief objects kept in view is that the eyesight of the cadets shall not only remain unimpaired, but be

well calculated to cause the writing masters who have tortured so many generations of English youths to turn in their graves. Sloping writing, some of our most recent pedagogues admit at last, requires an abnormal position of the body; therefore, say they, instead of writing on the slope, let the letters be made perpendicularly. This may be called the simple method of solving a problem.

Because sloping writing predisposes one to adopt an unnatural position, it does not, therefore, follow that an unnatural position is indispensable, retorts the Russian teacher. On the other hand, sloping writing for many reasons is preferable to perpendicular writing. In order to keep the body straight and at the



THE CARPENTERS' SHOP.



THE FENCING SCHOOL.

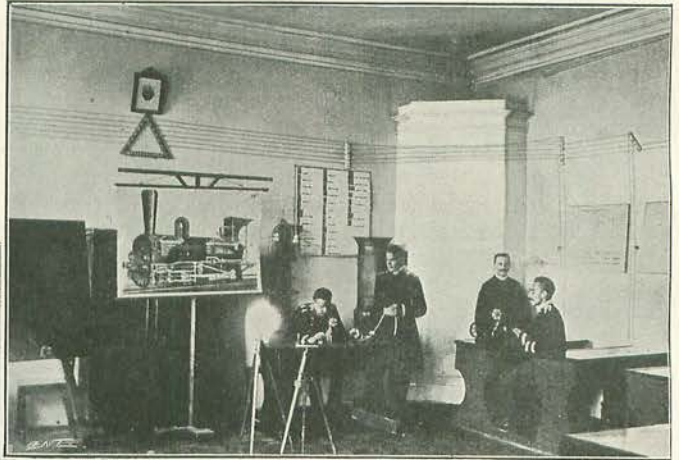
same time write on the slope, all that is necessary is to place your paper at an angle to the body, instead of parallel to it, and slide it up and down gradually as required. Many people, it must be said, do this instinctively, though not without a qualm of conscience, as soon as they are safe from the schoolmaster's ruler.



THE INFIRMARY—THE DOCTOR'S DAILY VISIT.

Attached to every cadet corps is an infirmary, large enough to accommodate 10 per cent. of the total number of pupils in the establishment, and each patient must be visited by the doctor at least twice daily. Independently of this, every cadet has to undergo twice annually, in spring and autumn, a minute medical

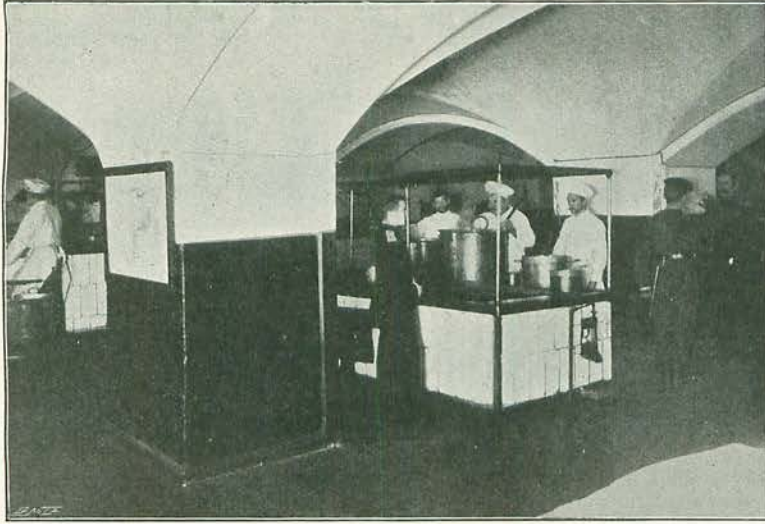
examination, with the object of establishing a record of his health and physical develop-



A LESSON IN TELEGRAPHY.

ment, so that anything abnormal may be at once made the object of investigation.

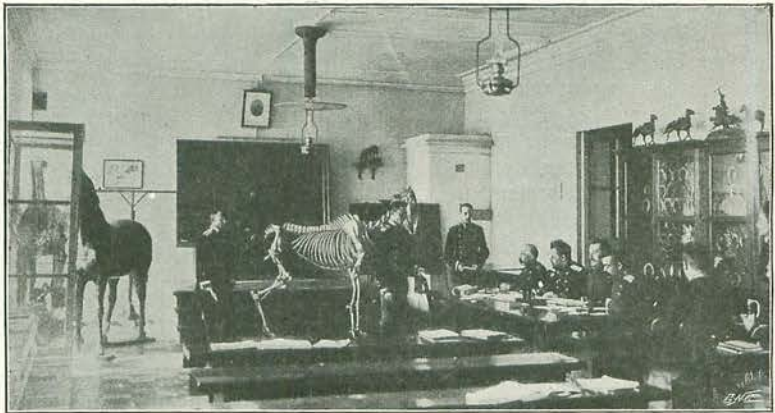
Incidentally, this regular periodical examination has already enabled a Russian professor, Dr. Atlasoff, who is in medical charge of the cadet corps at Orenburg, to formulate some intensely interesting theories on the growth of the human organism. A child, it seems, grows not regularly, but by a series of leaps and bounds, as it were; a period of quiescence being followed by a period of physical



A COOKING LESSON.

of fifteen. These periods invariably correspond with a marked falling off in the boy's mental capacity, and to make any attempt to overburden his brain at such times is to risk undermining him mentally and physically. Parents, says Dr. Atlassoff, need never despair if their children appear to become temporarily stupid; when the spasmodic period of growth has abated

development, and *vice versa*. During the seven years passed at school the majority of the cadets add one-third to their stature. According to Dr. Atlassoff's observations this increase is usually acquired in three or, occasionally, four periods, the greatest growing energy manifesting itself about the age



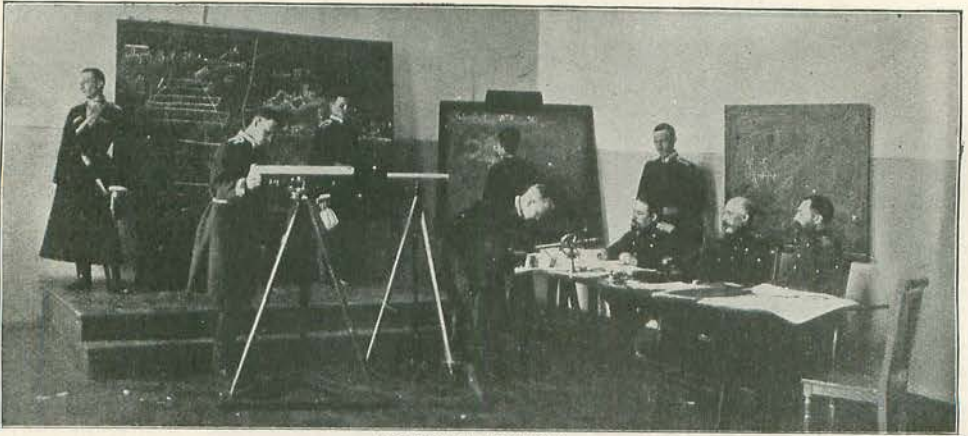
A LESSON IN ANATOMY.



A LESSON IN HORSE-SHOEING.

the child, if left alone, will frequently display mental vigour greater than before.

Dr. Atlassoff's conclusions are not the only interesting ones made in connection with cadet schools. It is laid down, for instance, as an axiom that no pupil can be expected to remain too long in an attitude of constrained attention. A boy of eleven



A LESSON IN SURVEYING.

or twelve cannot sit upright and motionless, closely following a teacher's explanations, for more than ten or fifteen minutes consecutively, and, even in the case of a young man of twenty, half an hour is about the average limit of profitable attention. When the teacher happens to be a bore the length of attention is proportionately curtailed. One does not require, however, to be a pupil of a Russian cadet corps to know this; it was an Englishman who found the simile, "As tedious as a twice-told tale vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man" (or boy).

On leaving school at the age of eighteen, the pupil, if he passes his final examinations satisfactorily, goes through a two years' course in one of the higher military schools, either infantry or cavalry. Here, with the exception of French and German, the subjects taught are exclusively military, and the pupil is regarded as already holding an officer's commission. Here also he, or rather his parents, have nothing to pay, though it is calculated that each pupil costs the

Government £65 annually in the infantry school and double this in the cavalry school. The practical education inaugurated in the cadet corps goes on: the young man is prepared for all the eventualities of a soldier's career. He takes his turn in the kitchen superintending the cooks; in the cavalry

school he not only learns the anatomy of the horse, but how to shoe it as well. The mysteries of telegraphy and engineering are also explained to him. Such, in brief, is an outline of some of the salient features of Russia's system of military education; the future alone can prove its soundness.

An important detail, not to be overlooked, is the touching friendliness which, without any detriment to discipline, exists between the average Russian officer and his men, but, as the French say, "Ça, c'est une autre histoire," the cause of such a relationship not being due to any special mode of education, but having its source in the impalpable workings of the human conscience, or, perhaps, simply in the natural *bonhomie* characteristic of the whole race.

I have only to add that for most of my facts I am indebted to the courtesy of a distinguished Russian general officer whose own personality is, perhaps, as eloquent a testimony as any in favour of the system I have attempted to describe.



A GROUP OF INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS. IN THE CENTRE IS THE GRAND DUKE, THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE RUSSIAN ARMY.