

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I have lately seen in the Press such very different opinions expressed on this very important subject that I wish to endeavour to place it before the public in a common-sense view, which will enable it to be fully and clearly understood.

The strength of the seaman class in the Navy is maintained by the entry of boys who have previously gone through a course of training in harbour training ships, and subsequently in a masted sea-going squadron; it must, therefore, be a point of extreme importance that the course of training received in these vessels should be such as to render the boys efficient to perform the duties which they will be required to perform when they join modern sea-going ships.

Is this the case now? I assert, with a full knowledge of the subject, that it is not.

Some years ago, when masts and sails were so largely in use in our sea-going ships, it was very important that the boys under training should be fully instructed in their use; but at the present time, when masts and sails have disappeared in our fighting sea-going ships, surely it is merely waste of time to continue to instruct the boys so largely in their use.

The present system of training the boys in the training ships, although it produced excellent results when masts and sails were important factors in our fighting ships, is now quite behind the times, and should be replaced without delay by a system of training up to date.

The change in the system of training which, in my opinion, would produce really satisfactory results, and render the boys fit to take their places and perform their duties efficiently when they join sea-going ships, is as follows:—

In the harbour training ships abolish instruction in the handling of masts and sails; replace the obsolete guns at which the boys are trained by the modern guns with which our sea-going fighting ships are now armed; give really good instruction in the use of rifle and revolver, including target practice, and good instruction in handling boats, both with oars and under sail. Abolish the sailing brigs which are now attached to the training ships, and substitute gunboats armed with modern guns, to practise the boys in firing at targets at sea, and also in teaching them to steer and the use of the lead.

Having finished this course of training, they should be sent into a modern sea-going squadron for six months to get them thoroughly accustomed to the routine and work of our sea-going ships, and, having completed this, draft them into our sea-going ships. They ought, having gone through this system of training, to be quite fit to take their places with efficiency in our modern sea-going ships, which certainly is not the case now. I consider a sea-going training squadron to be a very important point, but it should consist of four or five modern third-class cruisers, and great care should be taken in the selection of the officers appointed to command these vessels, as upon them must depend to a very great extent the sea training, and especially the discipline, of our future seamen.

ADMIRAL.