

## NEW ADMIRALTY CIRCULAR.

On Saturday a circular letter signed by Sir Evan MacGregor, the Permanent Secretary to the Admiralty, was issued to all commanders-in-chief, captains, commanders, and commanding officers of his Majesty's ships and vessels at home or abroad containing further explanatory instructions in connexion with what is generally known and described as "the new Admiralty scheme," the purport and objects of which were set forth in Lord Selborne's memorandum of Christmas Day, 1902.

In this new circular Sir Evan MacGregor states that:—

My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty having had under their consideration the question of the training of officers and men of the Royal Navy have decided to carry out certain changes affecting the existing system in the following particulars:—I. Training of seamen in mechanical and stokehold work; II. Physical and gymnastic training; III. Mechanical and gunnery, &c., training of boys; IV. Training of seamen in naval barracks and gunnery and torpedo schools; V. Organization of naval barracks; VI. Lodging and victualling allowances at the home ports; VII. New ratings of boy artificer, mechanic, yeoman of stores, and allowance to engineer's writer; VIII. Promotion to chief engine-room artificer; IX. Promotion to artificer engineer; X. New rank of chief artificer engineer; XI. Promotion of warrant officers to the rank of lieutenant or equal relative rank; XII. Employment of sub-lieutenants and midshipmen and chief petty officers; XIII. Alterations in rank of Engineer officers; XIV. Employment of officers of Royal Marines; XV. Training of lieutenants, sub-lieutenants, and cadets in shore establishments.

The information given under each of the above headings amplifies and explains, and at the same time gives the sanction of authority to, the regulations relating to training, the rates of pay, and the institution of new grades and offices which were foreshadowed as parts of the system established by the Christmas Day memorandum. The more important of the changes will be found in the following summary of the contents of the circular.

On and after October 1, 1903, every "ordinary seaman" will be put through a course of training under a chief or leading stoker mechanic in the use of simple tools, the working of water-tight doors, sluices, fire-mains, &c., and the general duties of the stokehold, and will undergo an examination as to his proficiency in these matters before he can qualify for the rating of "A.B." (able seaman). While under this instruction he will be considered as attached to the engine-room complement. He will be taught the use of levers, jacks, purchases, hammers, drifts, punches, braces, spanners, and all the other simple mechanical tools, will have to sweep tubes, work in the bunkers, clean the fires, and obtain a general knowledge of stokehold work with both cylindrical and water-tube boilers. In future, therefore, every able seaman will be something of a mechanic as well as a qualified stoker. The questions of the grant of a money payment or gratuitous clothing to compensate for extra wear and tear of the men's clothes has yet to be settled; but whenever assistance from the deck is required in the stokehold, for which extra pay is given, the qualified men are to have the preference.

On April 1 of this year a new system of physical and gymnastic training for officers and men will begin, and will gradually be extended with such modifications as are found to be necessary. At each of the depôts at the home ports a gymnasium with a proper staff of instructors will be provided, the headquarters being at Portsmouth, and the system will be extended throughout the whole Fleet. A commander has already been appointed superintendent of gymnasia, with a lieutenant R.N. as his assistant, and two lieutenants of Marines have been embarked in the flagships of the Mediterranean and Channel Squadrons as inspectors. Thirty-six seamen have also passed through a six-months' course of gymnastics, and have been allotted to the ships of the above-mentioned squadrons as instructors. Ultimately it is proposed that the gymnastic staff shall consist of 17 officers and 443 instructors. Detailed regulations regarding the selection, training, and pay of the staff are laid down in the circular and as to the number to be employed in the instruction of men and boys afloat and in the colleges, depôts, and training-ships. Section III., which deals with the training of boys, refers to a new curriculum for the instruction of the boys by which it is intended to substitute physical and mechanical training for mast and sail drill and such other drills as are not suited to the training of a modern seaman.

The new regulations for the training of seamen in naval barracks and the gunnery and torpedo schools referred to in Section IV. will be framed in such a manner as to admit of the instruction of the lower gunnery and torpedo ratings being carried out to a much larger extent than at present at sea and at the barracks, by which means the staff in the schools will be left freer to devote their time to the instruction of the higher and more specialized ratings. A note in the circular states that:—

The new arrangements for the training of men and boys mentioned in Sections III. and IV. will be brought into operation in the first place at Portsmouth, for trial before general adoption at the other ports, and the necessary detailed orders for this new scheme will be shortly issued in association with modifications of the courses of instruction in the gunnery and torpedo schools, and changes in the organization of the naval barracks.

The scheme above referred to for the organization of naval barracks is to come into force in the Portsmouth command after the summer manoeuvres, with a view to seeing what is the best system which can uniformly be applied to each of the home ports. When, too, the new barracks are occupied, all lodging and victualling allowances are to cease for officers of all grades without exception, as far as accommodation permits.

Sections VII. to X., which deal with the new ratings established in the engine-room department, need but brief mention, as they mainly refer to the qualifications, duties, and pay of these ratings. As regards the boy artificers, however, while the larger number will be selected by open competition, a limited proportion of candidates, not exceeding 15 annually, will be selected from the sons of warrant, chief, and first-class petty officers of the Navy, warrant officers and non-commissioned officers of and above the rank of sergeant of the Marines, and skilled artisans of the dockyards not below the rank of charginan. As it will be possible for these boy artificers to rise to the newly-instituted commissioned rank of chief artificer engineer and a certain number of officers from this grade will be advanced to that of lieutenant every year, a source from which the present engineers has been drawn, at least in part, will not under the new scheme be shut out from the prospect of rising to the quarter-deck. Chief artificer engineers, like chief gunners, chief boatswains, and chief carpenters, are to rise by certain qualifications from the warrant ranks next below them, and will be eligible for promotion to the rank of lieutenant either for acts of gallantry or daring or for other reasons. The total number of lieutenants from the gunners' and boatswains' lists, engineer lieutenants from the artificer engineers' list, and carpenter lieutenants from the carpenters' list is to be fixed at 100; and these officers will rank with lieutenants and with corresponding ranks of other branches according to their dates of seniority. An outfit allowance of £50 is to be granted to every officer on promotion, and their pay rises from 14s. 6d. to 16s. 6d. a day according to length of service. They are also eligible for pensions, the maximum being of the amount of £200 a year. Command money, lodging allowances, widows' pensions, compassionate allowances and pensions for wounds and injuries are generally on the same scale as those for all other lieutenants.

It is notified in regard to sub-lieutenants and midshipmen that in future these officers are again to be employed in the duties of "mates of decks," as was previously the custom of the service, and the appointment of warrant officers for these services will gradually cease.

The alterations in rank and pay of the engineer officers, which were notified by circular letter at the time of the issue of Lord Selborne's memorandum on the new scheme, are to take effect from April 1 this year; and the position of these officers in the official Navy List will be rearranged at the same time.

Whilst the assumption of these new titles does not affect generally the status of the engineer officers, it will facilitate the fusion that must take place when the

Regulations are also laid down by which the position of present engineer officers ranking with flag officers, captains, and commanders is to be governed, and for supplying each ship with instructions in reference to the new rates of pay and allowances. Similarly instructions will be issued in reference to the new scale of pay of marine officers and for the utilization of the services of these officers by assigning them a more active part in the duties of the ship.

The concluding section of the circular refers to the training of lieutenants, sub-lieutenants, and cadets in shore establishments. Now that the Director of Naval Education has been nominated, the elaboration of the scheme of training in the Osborne Cadets' College will be proceeded with at once, and when complete will be issued for general information.

Arrangements have been made for providing all the necessary means for giving practical seagoing instruction in engineering, navigation, and the other portions of an officer's duties to the cadets during their instructional course, and further careful consideration is being given to apportioning such time as is desirable to instruction in a seagoing training ship either during or towards the end of the first four years of the cadet's period of service. The experience in the Isis has shown the great value of such an arrangement—either during or subsequent to the cadets' course. Cadets failing to qualify by satisfying the tests of progress at the end of each of the first four years, or judged for any reason to be unsuitable, will be withdrawn from the service. The question of the courses of instruction at Greenwich, Portsmouth, and Keyham, when the cadets reach sub-lieutenant's rank, will receive further careful examination with the view of making a more effective use of the time to be spent at those shore establishments. It is hoped to obviate the necessity that exists under present arrangements for devoting so much time to these courses of instruction, which have the ill effect of congregating a very large body of young officers at shore establishments for a lengthened period at a time of their service which would be more profitably spent at sea.

Finally, it is proposed to shorten the time now spent on shore by officers qualifying for gunnery and torpedo lieutenants, and to rearrange the regulations for the instruction of navigating officers so as to provide for a course of practical training in an instructional seagoing ship, and to make other changes tending to render these officers more eligible than at present for combining the duties required in the associated appointment of first lieutenant and navigator. The effect of these modifications and rearrangements is in the direction of adding to the seagoing training of young officers, which is fully recognized as a most desirable improvement.