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[Michael Roberts, The Military Revolution, 1560-1660, p. 24-25]

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Présentation de la fiche

Coteb013_f0171

SourceBoite_013 | Bibliographies diverses. Pauvreté. Hermaphrodites. Anormalité. Criminalité. Onan

LangueFrançais

TypeFicheLecture

RelationNumérisation d'un manuscrit original consultable à la BnF, département des Manuscrits, cote NAF 28730

Références éditoriales

Éditeuréquipe FFL (projet ANR *Fiches de lecture de Michel Foucault*) ; projet EMAN (Thalim, CNRS-ENS-Sorbonne nouvelle).

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the lance the European nobility tended to abandon heavy cavalry to the professionals, while light cavalry had long appeared to them almost as socially subversive, since it eliminated the difference, in mount, arms and equipment, between the noble and his esquire. The decline of expensive heavy armour, which was a consequence of the growing realization that no armour could stop a musket ball, and that in any case few musket balls hit their mark, had obvious social implications too. The obliteration of the old distinction between cavalry and foot, gentlemen and others, is a matter of common remark in the seventeenth century.¹ The new armies, in fact, served as the social escalators of the age; the eternal wars favoured interstratic mobility; and for a young man with some capital behind him a regiment could be a brilliant investment: Wallhausen lamented that war was ceasing to be an honourable profession, and was becoming a mere traffic.² But even for the youth who had no other assets than a native pugnacity and the habit of survival, advancement was now probable. He could not, indeed, feel that he carried a baton in his knapsack. Very few of the leading commanders on the continent were of humble origin: Aldringen had been a lackey, Derfflinger was a tailor's apprentice, Jean de Werth rose from absolute obscurity;³ but the great names are still noble names: even Catinat came from the *noblesse de la robe*. Nevertheless, though the highest positions might in practice remain unattainable, the impecunious commoner might at least aspire to a majority; and in France, at all events, three generations of military service would enable his family to claim reception into the *noblesse*

1. e.g. Turner, *Pallas Armata*, p. 166: "But hereby you may easily fancy that the ancient distinction and difference between the Cavalry and Infantry, as to their birth and breeding, is wholly taken away, men's qualities and extractions, being little or rather just nothing either regarded or enquired after; the most of the Horsemen, as well as of the Foot, being composed of the very Scum of the Commons." Or as Wallhausen put it, when lamenting the decline of the lance, "on est contraint de se servir de gens basses et vils" (*Art militaire à cheval*, p. 3); and cf. similar remarks in Richelieu, *Testament politique*, p. 476.

2. Wallhausen, *L'Art militaire pour l'Infanterie*, pp. 9-10.

3. There is a good discussion of the question in H. J. C. von Grimmelshausen, *Simplicissimus the Vagabond* [trans. A. T. S. Goodrick], (1912) in chapters xvi-xvii: "Who was the Imperialist John de Werth? Who was the Swede Stalhans [i.e. Stålhandske]? Who were the Hessians, Little Jakob and St André? Of their kind there were many yet well known, whom . . . I forbear to mention". He argues that this is no new state of affairs; but when he proceeds to give a list of earlier examples, he can think of no instance between Hugh Capet and Pizzaro (who is surely to be considered a special case) except Tamerlane. *Simplicissimus* was mistaken about Stålhandske, moreover: his father had been *kammarjunkare* to Erik XIV. *op. cit.*, p. 38.

de race.¹ Nor were the possibilities of employment restricted to the army in the field. A host of clerks and secretaries was now required to keep the muster- and pay-rolls, and conduct the correspondence of semi-literate commanders;² administrators were in brisk demand for the new War Offices;³ business heads were needed to solve the widening problems of logistics. The importance of the civilian, bourgeois, administrators in bringing order and method into the management of the fighting services has often been remarked, and Colbert and Louvois are the most famous representatives of this development. But it has less often been pointed out that it was the purely military changes of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that opened to the middle classes a quite new field of activity, and tempting prospects of social advancement. How good those prospects could be, may best be seen from a glance at the peerages conferred by successive Swedish monarchs upon persons of this sort.

It is true that the enhanced opportunities provided by the new style of army tended, before the century was out, to be somewhat restricted. The decay of heavy cavalry, the decline of individualist warfare, was accompanied by the gradual withering away of such remnants of the old noble obligation of military service as had survived from the middle ages. In France, in Sweden, in Brandenburg, knight-service had vanished for all practical purposes by the third quarter of the century.⁴ It was outmoded and inefficient, disorderly and unreliable, and subversive of the new principle of concentrating military power under the absolute control of the sovereign. But the nobility found, in the new standing armies, an

1. Roland Mousnier, *La Vénalité des Offices sous Henri IV et Louis XIII*, (Rouen, n.d.), p. 506; cf. Frauenholz, *Söldnertum*, I. 27: "vom Ritterschlag hört man nichts mehr, an denen Stelle tritt die Nobilitierung". For conditions in Sweden, E. Ingers, *Bonden i svensk historia*, (Stockholm, 1943), I. 234; B. Steckzén, *Johan Baner*, p. 57: "Their [sc. Swedish infantry officers'] coats of arms are often of recent origin, and many of them are not easily distinguishable from the young peasant lads that serve as N.C.O.s, or fill the ranks as privates."

2. It was said of the *Feldschreiber* that "er muss fast des Hauptmanns Meister sein, der selber oftmals nicht schreiben und rechnen kann": Loewe, *op. cit.*, p. 20. Grimmelshausen makes Herzbruder's father a muster-clerk in the Saxon army; and the merchant's son, Oliver, becomes secretary to a Swedish general.

3. As for instance in the Great Elector's *Generalkriegskommissariat*: "From the beginning its civilian officials interfered with military affairs and acted very independently of the army command": F. L. Carsten, *The Origins of Prussia* (Oxford, 1954), p. 263.

4. Richelieu, *Testament*, pp. 393-4, condemns *ban* and *arrière-ban*; and see, for Sweden, P. Sörensson, 'Adelns rusttjänst och adelsfanans organisation', *Historisk Tidskrift*, 42 (1922), 145-150, 221-3; and for Brandenburg, Jany, I. 10-12.

