

RECRUITMENT

Sergeant R. Lamb, Royal Welch Fusiliers

August 1773

I had now arrived at a remarkable epoch in my life; since it was that which in a great measure gave a cast to its future operations. It was on the 10th of August, 1773, then in my 17th year, when being seduced to gambling by some evil companions, with whom I thoughtlessly associated, I lost my little all. This juvenile stage of existence is truly critical to both sexes. Forgetful of all the moral lessons so anxiously inculcated in my mind by my father, I was blind to my danger, and united with those who became my corrupters, and worst enemies. Afraid to return and tell my father of my indiscretions, who would have rebuked and forgiven me, I shrank from my best hope, parental admonition, and formed the resolution of entering for a soldier. Accordingly I went to one serjeant Jenkins, who kept a public house opposite the lower barrack gate, and enlisted with him for the 9th Regiment of Foot, which was then stationed in Waterford. On the 24th I joined the regiment, and was put into the hands of a drill serjeant, and taught to walk and step out like a soldier. This at first was a disagreeable task to me. During twenty-one days I was thus drilled four hours each day. However, having at last rectified the most prominent appearance of my awkwardness, I received a set of accoutrements, and a firelock, and was marched every morning from the barrack to the bowling green, near the water-side, to be instructed in the manual exercise.

The most disagreeable days of a soldier, are these in which he begins to learn his exercise. And it is seldom that he entertains much regard for those who teach it him. Hence the office of a drill serjeant, although one of the most important, is not one of the most thankful. However, without disparaging the soldier's character (an offence of which, I hope, I shall not be thought guilty), I must own that some of the old drill-serjeants were unnecessarily, if not wantonly severe.

R. Lamb. *Memoir of His Own Life*. (Dublin: 1811)