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ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS (VOLUNTEERS).

THE history of what was until quite recently known as the "Volunteer Medical Staff Corps" offers still further testimony of the gigantic difficulties which have to be overcome by a new and progressive organisation aiming at permanent establishment as a national institution. There are many such instances, but few movements have been characterised by such a small beginning and such persistent progress as this.

The corps, as it exists to-day, is the development of an idea which was first put to a practical test by Mr. Cantlie, when assistant surveyor at Charing Cross Hospital. In his civil capacity, Mr. Cantlie had for some time been training the students at the hospital in the subject of medical work in the field, and in 1883 he came to the conclusion that in his humble scheme lay the nucleus of a very important movement. He accordingly called together a committee of gentlemen interested in the subject, and the ultimate result was the Volunteer Medical Staff Corps. Meanwhile the Charing Cross students had been joined by a company from University College Hospital, under the command of Captain Squire. During the next two years the numbers gradually increased, and the work went on with the permission and approval of the authorities; but it was not until 1885 that the corps was recognised officially, and formal enrolment commenced. During this probationary period, Mr. Cantlie had held the position of commandant, and Dr. Squire, who, having formerly been a combatant officer, knew his drill, acted as adjutant. On enrolment, Mr. Cantlie was appointed surgeon-commandant, and continued to act in this capacity until, eighteen months later, he went out to Hong Kong, and was succeeded in the command by Surgeon-Major Norton.

Lieut.-Colonel J. E. Squire, M.D., was appointed to command in February, 1898. He has been closely identified, not only with the history of the corps from its inception, but with the general organisation of the Volunteer Medical Service. He originally held a commission in the 4th Middlesex (West London) Rifles for nine years, during three of which he commanded a company.

During the Sudan campaign of 1895 for the relief of General Gordon the Volunteer Medical Staff Corps, then in the chrysalis state which preceded its official recognition, offered to supply a bearer company for active service, but this patriotic offer was not accepted. Colonel Squire, however, went out, and served through the campaign as Senior Medical Officer of the Red Cross Society at Suakin. For his services he received the Egypt (1885) medal with the Suakin clasp, together with the Khedivial Star. He also wears the Jubilee medal, the medal for Police Ambulance Service, the Volunteer Officers' Decoration, and the decoration of an Honorary Associate of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

In the Egyptian campaign of 1897 another offer of a bearer company was made, but was again refused. Still persevering, Colonel Squire, prior to the outbreak of hostilities in South Africa, caused a notice to be circulated among his men, asking for volunteers for active service in case of war. As a result, sixty names were sent



A CONSULTATION.

The senior officers criticising the day's work.

in to the War Office, but a reply was received to the effect that it was not proposed to use volunteers in the capacity indicated. Since that reply was sent no less than ninety officers and men (or about 28 per cent. of the total strength) have seen active service, several of these being still in the field when, happily, the war was brought to a conclusion. The men served principally in the Royal Army Medical Corps, the Imperial Yeomanry, and the Rhodesian Field Force. Three men fell—one was killed in action, and the others succumbed to disease.

The corps is very proud of the fact that two of its old members have been decorated with the Victoria Cross; and it is but fair to say that the authorities, however slow they may have been in recognising theoretical usefulness, have been prompt in rewarding actual services, for in February last it was announced in Army Orders that, in recognition of the valuable services of the Volunteer Medical Staff Corps, His Majesty had approved that the title of the regiment should be changed to "Royal Army Medical Corps" (Volunteers). At the same time, the term "surgeon" was dropped from the titles of officers of all ranks, and their prefixes are now identical with those of combatant officers of similar ranks. The five London companies of the Volunteer Medical Corps, which alone come within the range of this article, constitute a complete battalion; but there are other companies dotted about the Kingdom, and these do equally good work, and have contributed large numbers for active service. With regard to this latter point, it may be noted that when the

craving for active service was at its height—and it seems to have reached a particularly high altitude among medical men—Colonel Squire resolutely refused to enrol in his command men who merely wished by that means to reach South Africa, and, on the cessation of hostilities, to revert entirely to civil life. In the later stages of the campaign, however, this was permitted, and was carried out in some other units of the corps. The result is that the



"IN ARDUIS FIDELIS."

London Volunteer officers of the R.A.M.C.

Reading from left to right the names are—Standing: Capt. W. F. Miles, Capt. C. T. D. Oughart, M.B., Capt. E. R. Waggett, M.B., Capt. J. W. Bennett, Major V. Matthews, Lieut. H. E. L. Fowell, Capt. W. Salisbury Sharpe, Capt. J. Harper, M.D., and Capt. G. H. Gage-Brown, M.D. Sitting: Lieut.-Col. J. E. Squire, M.D., V.D., and Major and Adj. L. Wray, R.A.M.C.



A DRESSING STATION.

With waggon containing casualties from the front.



FIRST AID.

A well-known feature on a London holiday.



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HORS DE COMBAT.

Loading an ambulance for despatch to the Field Hospital.

"Navy & Army."

statistics are somewhat baffling, and scarcely reliable for purposes of comparison. Of the five London companies three are recruited entirely from the medical profession, and two are open to civilians. All members, however, whether medical or otherwise, are put through exactly the same course of training, and although there may be more skill exhibited among the professional men, there is this advantage about the civilians—they never become qualified practitioners in civil life, and consequently continue available for a much longer period as bearers and dressers. All recruits are trained by the permanent staff, and have to learn stretcher drill, first aid and bandaging, field organisation, and, generally, all subjects in the Royal Army Medical Corps Manual. They also have to become proficient in company and battalion drill, duties of orderlies, etc., before they can be passed into the ranks by the adjutant. From the medical companies a considerable number of men obtain commissions in the regular forces (both Naval and Military) and in the Indian Service.

Each company is composed of 100 men, with three officers (who must be medical men) and a quartermaster, who may be a civilian.

The transport, which is, of course, an all-important feature of a medical corps, is under the command of Captain F. J. L. Warwick, M.B. This section is 160 strong, and is formed chiefly of veterinary students. Although there is provision for 260 horses and full transport in case of mobilisation, a considerably reduced number of waggons is available for training purposes. The regiment goes to Aldershot every summer and is attached to the Royal Army Medical Corps Depot. This is the most valuable part of the training, as a full supply of appliances is available, but the regiment has many instruction parades in the neighbourhood of London. Our illustrations of the men at work were taken on Barrow Common, and despite a drenching down-pour of rain, a crowd of small boys, who had been attracted by the band, were quite willing to act as patients. They were duly labelled to show exactly what was the matter with them, and despatched to various parts of the battle-field. They showed the utmost fortitude while being "collected" and "dressed," and were particularly cheerful when being removed to the ambulances on stretchers.

The officer second in command is Major V. Matthews. Together with another officer of the Corps, Captain J. Harper, he is joint author of "A Handbook for Volunteer Medical Officers," which is the text-book adopted by the Volunteer Medical Association for their officers' class.

The adjutant, Major L. Way, has been with the regiment since 1898. He has successfully brought the men to a high standard of excellence, and has been granted an extension of the period of his adjutancy, a concession which is unique in the Army Medical service. Major Way served through the Manipur Expedition of 1891, and the Kachin (N.E. Frontier) Expedition of 1891-92.

Asked as to the probable effects of the altered conditions of Volunteering, Colonel Squire said that he very much feared the intimate connection which had always existed between this regiment and the London medical schools was in imminent danger, owing to the impossibility of carrying on drills at the various hospitals in such a way as to comply with the new regulations. He pointed out that in this particular branch of the Service, it is individual and not combined action which is of supreme importance, and that small groups for purposes of training are not only more practicable, but distinctly preferable.