

History of the Volunteer Medical Staff Corps

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Sir J. H. Hunter K.C.M.G., M.D.

Honorary Commandant V.R.S.C.

^{humble} expression of his ~~best~~ early devotion
to the welfare of the to-be, his unswerving
labours as Chairman of the Volunteer

Medical Association ^{in gratitude} for every ~~act~~

of word, of encouragement ^{personal} & of
kindness. ~~I dedicate this work.~~

is dedicated by the Author.

In admiration of the unswerving energy,
the state of proficiency
In gratitude ^{for the many} ^{narrants, officers and command officers} to the officers, ^{of the}
1 M.S.C. when I was the honor to command
I bestow this, with the benefit of
the Sudan Division of the V. S. S. S.

In grateful remembrance of
In gratitude for many acts of kindness,
in remembrance of their forbearance under
difficulties, & in the spirit which has
sustained their adherence to the cause which
it was a trial & difficulty -
words of
Encouragement under trials & difficulties
I hereby bestow these reminiscences for
the benefit of the Sudan

Introduction Preface

The History of a Regiment or Corps in the British Army is a record of events which is strictly maintained, a memory which is fondly cherished, and a means whereby the soldier gathers respect for the uniform he wears and the command he serves.

The attempt to foster such a spirit in organizing a corps as the Volunteer Medical Staff Corps one would naturally regard at first sight as impossible, for to write the history of a military Corps which has never seen active service seems altogether a parody. But there are other points in the formation and infant life of a Corps which are worthy of record. The history of how the infant was prepared for manhood is interesting in the extreme & the account of how in the time of peace we are training for war may be not without interest. The actual shot & shell of the battle field is but a small part of the military life, it is the part which meets the public eye, but the long previous training, the forbearance, the trials, & endurance of the soldier are unrecorded on the Regimental colours. It is with such a spirit I approach the subject of the embryonic & infant life of the Volunteer Medical Corps.

The following pages are really devoted to personal reminiscences, and in transcribing such, the reader must pardon the numerous references to "I" which unfortunately must so repeatedly occur in attempting a thing of this kind. The only way to have avoided it would have been to have written in the third person or anonymously. Neither of these plans recommended themselves and I must trust my reputation to my old and tried friends of the original corps and

~~Received~~

In my dilemma as to how to cement
the Hospital Companies ~~of London~~ ^{my mind}
~~It~~ reverted to an inspection by
Her Majesty, the Queen. I wrote Lord
Wolsley concerning the matter &
reminded him of my request & his
reply of the previous year. Day after day
wrote but no reply, the middle
of July was approaching & still
I heard nothing a few days more
& the fulfilment of my scheme
would be impossible owing to the
breaking up of the Clerks. The
horizon was very dark when it
was suddenly lit by a letter
from Capt Collins A.D.C. to H.R. & the
Princes, Louise. ~~Shortly at the same~~
~~time I received a letter Lord Wolsley~~
announcing the ^{fact that} ~~fact that~~ the
Majesty, the Queen found it impossible
to ~~settle~~ ~~be present~~ ~~at~~
and comply with my ~~request~~ ^{request}
~~this year~~. ~~The letter~~ with this
year, so he had ~~forwarded~~ ^{sent} my
letter to H.R. & the Princes, Louise
^{Princesses of Rome} but he had spoken on the
subject previously.

Accordingly on July 17th I had a
letter from Capt Collins A.D.C. to
H.R. & the Princes, Louise announcing
the fact that H.R. & ~~were~~ ^{one sheet}

Currents to see the so-called
Ambulance Companies, but
that the only time at ^{H.R.H.} the dis-
posal between now & the 17th when
the shells broke ^{up} was the follow-
ing day, the 17th, at 2.30 p.m.

The sweet & bitter were here mixed
if ever they could be. The intention
that H.R.H. was ^{coming with} most gratifying,
but the time! These men were
not in barracks & to call at
by bugle; they were, ^{attempting} at different
positions, and only ^{living} so long at
their own homes or lodgings. It was
9 p.m. on the 16th when I got the
news. But in moments were
valuable, we did not discuss
the matter, but set to work
to dispatch ~~telegrams~~ ^{the number}
letters, to post cards, telegrams, in
all directions. I enlisted a number
of C.M.A. members for the evening &
then the willing hands did plenty work.
At 1 a.m. at that night I went
round to the various daily papers
& had it announced in the notices
for the ~~fast~~ day that H.R.H. Premier
Loraine ~~insisted that~~ ^{and} would allow
a S^r George Barracks (one of the
Ambulance Companies) ^{for inspection} ~~handed~~

inspection

The inspection came off not entirely
satisfactorily, but the men looked
well in their new uniforms, &
went through their work creditably.

There were a fair sprinkling of
onlookers, & after the parade the
Marquis of Lorne addressed the
Companies in a capital speech
an account of the necessities of
fairs & detailed ambulance work.

With a hearty cheer for H. R. H.
the inspection ended & once again
the members of the various companies
dispersed for holidays.

About this time two important
enlistments were made. One very
keen & blunder became my wife
on the 30th July, & about the same
time I enlisted a company of ~~leaves~~
students attending the Birkbeck
Institute. ~~From~~ ^{Regarded} ~~even~~ ^{from} ~~the~~ ^{best}
point of ~~the~~ advantage to the
medical equipment of the Volunteer
I am not sure now which was
the most important, the one volunteer
on the one hand & the company
on the other. Any one who knows
the about the history of the formation
of the Volunteer Medical Corps
knows full well the amount of
work done by the wedded volunteers;
and not only the amount of work
extending over years, but the readiness
with which the situation was
grasped & still more the ~~other~~ wise counsel
& clever initiatives which were ~~generally~~ ^{generally} ~~acted on~~ ^{acted on}.

Gradually the drills were attended
more more by men in uniform
until at last all except recruits
appeared at Battalion drill in
St Jeger's Barracks. We were getting
now a goodly number as many
as 260 men belonging to the
corps, & without ^{much} ~~much~~ they
cemented together & ~~the~~ learned Battalion
drill. There was however still a
little friction, the separate Hospital
notion ~~was~~ had not yet ^{quite} died out.
But Battalion drill was a
great leveller; the companies had
to be equalled & so many men
had to fall off out of their own
Hospital ranks & join those of ^{others}
and then. We hesitated about ~~the~~
^{the experiment} ~~movement~~ at first but knowing
that ~~we~~ ^{we} ~~could~~ ^{could} do as well as the
corps existed ^{by} ~~by~~ ^{the} good ^{of} ~~of~~ ^{its} ~~its~~ ^{members}
~~we~~ ^{we} ~~know~~ ^{we} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~fact~~ ^{fact}
point ^{present} ~~present~~ in every student's mind.
~~How~~ ^{How} ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~the~~
at first the corps was drawn
up ~~at~~ in separate companies
according to ~~the~~ Hospital;
& as we had as many as six
by July 1884. The numbers were
~~at~~ ^{at} ~~very~~ ^{very} ~~unequal~~ ^{unequal} it can be
^{imagined} that Battalion movements
^{were impossible} ~~were impossible~~.
The ~~original~~ ^{original} ~~had~~ ^{had} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~be~~ ^{be} ~~shown~~
for once & the companies properly
equalled. At the time no demand
was made the students on par with
at all times obeyed ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ ^{with} ~~with~~ ^{precision} ~~precision~~.

The summer of 1884 wore on &
gradually the men were getting
their new uniforms & seemed
quite pleased of them. And good
reason too, for they look smart
& trim. The first man ~~glad~~
the uniform was Charles Bonte,
Fiddler, well known in the Corps
afterwards as Assistant Sargeant
Major. Fiddler's previous Army training
~~stood~~ him out in good stead.
I was anxious that the authorities
should see the uniform "tried on"
& ~~to~~ with Mr. W. L. Sere as a guide
~~to them~~ we showed ~~to~~ the intric-
cacies of the war office & showed
Fiddler to the Director General A. G. D.;
The P. M. O. Home District, Sir James
Hambury K. C. B.; Colonel Methuen C. B.;
& General Elkington C. B. commanding
the auxiliary force. The uniform
was approved of & created some
wonder ~~at the~~ amongst the soldiers
& others ^{about} ~~the~~ ~~war~~ office
~~as to~~ ~~what~~ ~~it~~ ~~was~~ especially as
Fiddler carried himself well &
obedient with soldierly instinct &
gravity. The real object of the
visit was to get the red ^{brown} stripe
passed. As we saw ~~any~~ thing
against it I suppose it was the
wrong time & place, at any rate
we considered it ^{again} ~~that~~ that it
was not condemned there ~~then~~ & we
in allowing it for the Corps generally.

Thereof,

a pleasant episode will suffice
to close this chapter. On the 25th July
1885, Sir William Macbarnet sent for
me & announced the fact that
the National Aid Society had
granted £250 towards forwarding
the ~~subsidy~~ ^{training} ~~of~~ ^{of} Ambulance Companies. The
encouragement received, not to mention
the substantial aid in money, was highly
appreciated & more especially as emanating
from such a source. We had as it were
two strings to our bow. Should the Government
not receive us, the National Aid Society
would no doubt allow us to enlist under
their auspices, & develop a most valuable
body of trained medical men &
Hospital Assistants ready to
take the field in any national
emergency. ~~Had we to throw~~ ^{Had} ~~we~~ ^{had} we
thrown our lot in with the latter,
~~we~~ ^{we} a rival body, to a certain
extent, ~~had~~ ^{although} at the same time
a ~~valuable~~ ^{valuable} Reserve of civilians,
would have stood facing the ~~market~~ ^{army},
~~medical department~~ ^{and by them} ~~and by them~~ ^{and by them} ~~and by them~~
~~disputed~~ ^{not known} ~~and~~ ^{and} what the Government
would do with us ~~in some~~ ^{in some} ~~cases~~ ^{cases} with
~~force~~ ^{force} should the necessity arise.
Happily such a ~~contingency~~ ^{contingency} was not the fate
of the National Aid Society, for their generous
gift, deserves the thanks not only of the volunteers
but of the nation, for contributing so largely towards
providing medical men ~~trained~~ ^{trained} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ambulance work

So that whether it be in ~~the~~
remote country districts, in crowded
towns or far in mines or factories
~~the village surgeon~~ ^{public may wonder a} ~~may be~~
"Surgeon" ~~has~~ ^{nevertheless} ~~practically~~
acquainted with the movement of
^{by stretcher - by cart ~~or~~ or by rail}
patients, the improvising of stretchers
& all the knowledge necessary ~~to~~
wholly to provide for the comfort
of feet the sick in a ~~practical~~ surgery
with the unheeded.

~~My interview with~~
Present with Sir William Macdonald at the
interview was Professor Langmore of ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~present~~
Sir Thomas Langmore K.C.B., ~~the~~ ^{he would present} ~~the~~
~~of course~~ ^{owing to} ~~his~~ ~~connection~~ with
the National Aid Society, but ~~with~~ ~~with~~
the I felt that behind him was the
moral support
~~that~~ ~~with~~ ~~the~~ ~~back~~ from the a high
authority in the Army Medical Service.
~~at~~ ~~to~~ ~~to~~ ~~to~~ I had to ask per-
mission of my generous friends to cut
the meeting short, as I had to catch
the 8th train in about half-an-hour
which set out on my journey to Egypt.

Corn

Thos. Scott



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