GLIMPSES OF LIFE FROM WITHIN FROM 1860 TO 1895

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The Morrison's—Son (W. K.) and Father (William) 1914

EDITOR'S NOTE: Thanks to the industry and generosity of Brigadier W. K. Morrison who presented a copy of his father's autobiography which he himself had typed, we are enabled to publish the following most interesting account of life in Victoria's Army seen by an other rank. The Foreword to the biography has, appropriately, been written by Brigadier Morrison.

Foreword

Dear reader. It would be well for you to learn what manner of man the writer, my father, was. He was an evicted crofter's son and was born in Durness and spent his youth and early manhood there. His life in his croft home reminds me of Burns' "The Cotter's Saturday Night".

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er wi' patriarchal grace
The big ha' Bible ance his father's pride;
And "Let us worship GOD! he said wi' solemn air".
Princess and Lords are but the breath of Kings
"An honest man's the noblest work of GOD;"

All his Army life, he was an ardent total abstainer from any alcohol and was always an evangelical christian. I was born in 1891 and he left the Army in 1895, retiring to Edinburgh. We had family worship regularly throughout our home life. He along with my mother were very much involved in church life and Mission Work. He certainly had quite a good sense of humour and was always keen on helping other folk particularly soldiers, when he became the Secretary of the Army Scripture Readers Society in Scotland. That he was a very sensitive man I knew, when his first born, a handsome daughter died, aged 17, in 1901 I shall never forget his distress and also when he read of the loss of the R.M.S. Titanic in 1912.

I never forget how, one day in Princes' Street he saw a neighbour, who had just come out of prison after a sentence of embezzlement, my father stopped him and shook him by the hand, whereupon the neighbour burst into tears saying "You are the first and only man who has spoken to me since I came out of prison". My father did a lot of work for the Parish Council. When he lay in his coffin in 1919, the front door bell rang and when I answered it, there was a wee shelpit woman, a Highlander, who said "Can I see him?", when I led her in to the room she looked down saying "puir laddie, purr laddie". He was made a Justice of The Peace in 1907. *Brigadier W. K. Morrison*

Introduction

In presenting these pages to the public, I must apologise for the too frequent use of the personal pronoun, but in reminiscence this can scarcely be avoided. I write to show how difficult it is to rise by merit or a clean life in the Army to a place in the Commissioned ranks; yet notwithstanding, it is possible to live a useful life in the Army, and to exert a conscious influence for good on your surroundings. Strict conformity to the rules of the Service cannot fail to command the confidence of superiors and the respect of equals.

The weak point in the Army has been of late years its decadent discipline. The new regulations enlarge the meshes through which the transgressor can escape the consequences of his shortcomings encourages others to pursue devious courses to reach the goal of their ambition. The age is honeycombed with selfishness; the most prominent characteristic is "how can I best serve myself".

The army too often screens the malefactor from the consequences of his evil grasping. It requires grit to keep clean hands in such an atmosphere, yet, it is possible to do so, but its recognition is seldom appreciated. Rewards and promotion go often to the unprincipled time-server.

Chapter I

It was my misfortune to enter the world when the evicting mania, that had slumbered for twenty years, awoke to inject its venom among the tenants of the prosperous and quiet hamlet of Rispond on the northern shores of the county of Sutherland, and within 10 miles of Cape Wrath. The farmer who rented the farm of Rispond from the Agent of the Sutherland Estate, failing to make the fishing industry a profitable speculation, determined to follow his neighbours in rearing sheep. The tenants were compelled to seek new homes. Some found homes in adjoining counties. Some crossed the Atlantic and found shelter in America and Canada, while those with aged parents and large families to support were compelled to make new homes by encroaching on their already circumscribed neighbours. My father was fourteen years before he succeeded in getting a croft. As I grew up I came to hate everything associated with landlordism and persecuting factors.

I soon found that I was hopelessly debarred from making any headway in life by a severe stammer. This darkened my outlook and embittered my existence. Apparently nothing could be done for the stammerer. No help, no sympathy—only mimicry from my unfeeling companions. This made me morose and unsocial. So soon as I acquired the art of reading I could dispense with companionship, and soon found my pleasure in committing the Psalms of David to memory and the Shorter Catechism. From this early exclusive habit, I have never recovered sufficiently to mix in or appreciate the usual social fellowship of ordinary life.

My father was regarded as the best read man in the Parish. Our house was the meeting place for the winter's "ceilidh" or "story telling". The tales of suffering endured or the heroism displayed in the military or naval services of the country formed the staple conversation of our winter's fireside. The recital of the deeds of daring performed by some remote ancestor in the wars on the Continent or India could not fail to fire youthful enthusiasm and to encourage them to wish to attain to such high standards of heroism and sacrifice of the missionary martyr and self-sacrificing sailor or soldier.

The old Army pensioners—of whom there were six or seven bemedalled veterans—became object lessons to the young men nearing military age. Those pensioners of the State, surveyed life from the quiet "ingle neuk" smiling with sardonic humour at the imbecility that kept the young men at home to continue "the weary round, the common task", while it was possible to earn a competency in the service of the State, far away from the sound of the factor's whip associated with all the horrors of a might-imposed serfdom.

What the past had done for those sun-bronzed veterans, the future could surely accomplish for such as would throw away their fears, and launch on an ocean that glistened with the phosphorescent glow of a promising future. A natural desire for a military career seems to have crept early into my mind, and a hunger after the qualities said to characterize the soldier—dash, daring, boldness of assertion, and an inbred disregard for danger. I was three years old when the Disruption of the Church of Scotland took place. The whole Parish, with the exception of three families followed the Minister into the Free Church.

Dogmatic theology had its militant professor in every home. State control of

religion was regarded as a remnant of Popery, and yet there was a hankering after State endowment among those who quitted the Established Church, anxious to set their teeth into the luscious steak of the State, while refusing to submit to the discipline of the gridiron, to which Rory O'More tells us the priest's dog had to submit.

Moderatism, as the dead religion of life of the ministers was then called, was not in particular favour in the Highlands. The ministers were farmers, graziers, rejoicing in fat glebes and a good stock of cattle having little else to do. This gave rise to a set of lay evangelists known as the "men" who itinerated the country particularly at communion times, enlivening the gatherings by their quaint exposition of scripture truths.

Of the representative characters found in a Highland Parish in the old days, the most striking in our Parish in my young days was the superannuated Parish Schoolmaster. He could not have risen to the standards of qualifications claimed by Oliver Goldsmith for his early teacher in the "Deserted Village". He was a very tall and even in his old days rather prepossessing, looking every inch a Highland gentleman of the pre-eviction days. He had never shown any brilliance in his work, or in his capacity as a teacher, promising that his fire-hardened leather strap was a powerful extractor of latent knowledge. He had full scope for his indulgence in his pastime so long as he withheld its caustic properties from the hands or ears of the minister's children.

There were no visions of a band of "intellectuals, except School Board" taking part in school administration and restraining the teacher from exercising his legitimate influence in the school. This has been a feature of recent growth. He was more of an angler than a teacher, and his Waltonianism frequently brought him into collision with the minister. Few streams within twenty miles of his home but had paid him tribute. From Lord Reay he obtained a permanent permission in writing to fish the Durness river from the sea to its source, of which he availed himself regardless of his school duties. He seldom brought home more than two salmon at a time, however numerous his catch, and he has been known to return fourteen salmon into the river, rather than share his success with his neighbours.

During his recurrent fits of madness he would leave the school and resort to the river, or to the loch that watered his garden wall—returning in the evening laden with his day's success. It was on the outbreak of one of those fits that he unmercifully chastised two of the minister's children and this "set the heather on fire". The minister suspended him but he refused to give up the school. He was dragged from Court to Court, each appealing in its turn, until the full Court of Sessions pronounced in the schoolmaster's favour. He returned home jubilant, lost his scholars but retained the building securing a reasonable superannuation.

Factor MacIver made several attempts to deprive him of his fishing permit, but he was as ready to fight the factor as the minister. He enjoyed his retirement to a good old age, deaf to the anathemas of the church whose teaching he repudiated.

I was seven years old before I was sent to school in the Free Church. I could read before I went to school and recite the metrical psalms. I had a remarkable knowledge of the scriptures acquired through evening discussions that took place in the home. This frequently lead me into discussion with church elders at the instigation of the schoolmaster, who claimed a degree of credit to himself for my success in this particular school instruction.

Owing to the impediment in my speech I was a recluse at school and seldom indulged in any school play save swimming and shinty. While the rest played I was learning my lessons or ploughing for the crofter nearest to the school.

Having attained my twelfth birthday I sought to find work, where I could at least earn enough for my clothes. I was offered a place in the Parish manse to tend the minister's cows, sixteen in number, to lead them to the water and to grazing, to run messages and to make myself generally useful in his bachelor home.

The Duke's nominee to the vacant church was a kindhearted inoffensive man, who gave himself very little trouble to acquire much knowledge in church polemics or polity. He found employment for his nephews after he had first educated them to enter the Church or the Excise. One of these did credit to himself and those who taught him—the late Alexander Carmichael, late of the Excise service. The Parish Church congregation consisted of the Ground Officer, his family and the bachelor Parish Schoolmaster. The ground officer was an intelligent Colour Sergeant from the 93rd Highlanders, kind and considerate in the discharge of his duties, and while a faithful servant of his employer, was most conscientious in his intercourse with the people. He was never known to deal harshly with the tenants, and often stood as the reconciling angel between them and the factor. His memory is still green and will remain so, while any who knew him survive. On the return of winter I returned to school but found little leisure to benefit myself. I had to act as an unpaid monitor much to my own loss. Pupil teachers had not yet entered school life. This monitor's employment has destroyed many a young lad's progress in acquiring useful knowledge and should be interdicted. The only one who interested himself in the youths of the Parish was the Free Church minister. He had baptised them and watched over them, breaking on many occasions the monotony of school life by his genial conversation and questions.

He sought to find out a boy's inclinations and aptitude for any particular work-seeking to trace and foster the special bias for any particular calling.*

Shortly after my return to school he questioned me as to what particular line of life I had selected for myself. I replied that I had made up my mind to be a soldier. To this he remarked "and should the soldiers not have you, what will you do?" "I shall become a sailor." "and if the sailors refuse you, what will you do?" "Then I'll be a Minister". This amused him very much, not did he ever forget my estimation of the ministerial profession. He was even then aware that I had saturated my little soul with Rob Donn's appreciation of the ministerial element in the Tongue Presbytery that only one pearl could be got in twenty ministerial shells. I continued on the school register until my sixteenth year, seeking casual labour in the summer, as opportunity offered and returning to school in the winter. On attaining my 16th birthday, I had a pressing invitation to spend a few days or months with a relative, an old pensioned non-commissioned officer of the 93rd Highlanders, who had lost a leg at the battle of New Orleans.

I was regaled with frequent dissertations about the 44th Regiment at the battle of New Orleans, how they were ordered to retreat when they should have been ordered to

* Note by W. K. M. The Minister was The Reverend William Findlater. Author of the *Statistical Account of Scotland* "Parish of Durness". Volume XV, published in 1845.

charge. So insisted this old soldier-warrior. His step-father was a soldier, as were he and his brother while seven of his nephews had served in the Crimea during the war with Russia. This visit most assuredly intensified my wish to become a soldier.

Before I attained my seventeenth year I became a tutor to two lads of my own age. Here environment exercised a never to be forgotten influence in my life. The genial home of John Douglas and his saintly wife, at the southern part and foot of Ben Clibrick, became to me an earthly paradise. Morning and evening the incense of prayer and praise, to which I was accustomed at home, ascended to the Author of all our mercies while the pious life and bearing of this estimable couple quickened my young mind to enquire with an appreciation and open mind into the realities of the Christian faith and practice. The time spent in that home, that happy home, exercised an undying influence on my life afterwards.

Returning home after the completion of my engagement I was appointed to the sole charge of a school of forty or more scholars on the North side of Loch Erriboll, maintained by the Free Church of Scotland. I had in my last situation unlimited freedom with all the enjoyment that hill or stream could provide. I found it hard to conform to the rigid routine of prescribed school hours, and felt restraint to be exceedingly disagreeable to a naturally restless disposition. I sought the pleasures of hill and stream more than the parents of the children felt disposed to allow me. They complained to the minister. I resented their interference and threw up the appointment at the end of six months and returned home determined to try some other calling in life less irksome than teaching.

A month after returning home I engaged with Mr. William Mackay of Badnabay to reside in his house and teach two other families in the neighbourhood. As the summer called the young men to work, I had to seek other employment and directed my steps to the stone quarries in the Hill of Forss. I had to face real manual labour. The pleasant memories of six weeks of hard work at Lybster remains with me among the happy memories of my young life. Returning home, my former master at Badnabay recommended me to Mr. John Thomson Glendhu, to teach his children, where I spent an exceedingly happy nine months. Then I spent the next six months teaching at school again but finally abandoned all idea of going further in the teaching line. (*W. K. M. His brother was killed in the relief of Lucknow 1857*). 1

In the month of June 1860 I joined the RossShire Militia and was ordered to join at Fort George for 27 days training. The atmosphere of the Barrack room was most uncongenial. I had for the first time come into contact with town heathenism. I could hardly conceive that such manifestations of impiety could be possible anywhere in the United Kingdom. After the first week of training the regiment was formed into county companies and so far as possible the officers belonged to the same district as the men. This relieved us country lads of the wild and townbred lads.

The regiment was disbanded in Dingwall on the 3rd July 1860. A recruiting party of the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders awaited the disbandment of the regiment, so that the army was opened up for me to enlist into my county regiment. I was medically examined as to my fitness for service by Surgeon Major Brydon, C.B. (the remnant of the Invading Army that entered Afghanistan in 1842). Having satisfied his keen scrutiny I left Dingwall by route march across the Black Isle to Kessock Ferry and spent two days in Inverness the Mecca of the Patriotic Highlander.

Chapter II

On the 9th July 1860 I reached the Depot of the Regiment, then forming a section of the 23rd Depot Battalion located in Castlehill Barracks, Aberdeen. I soon found myself in most uncongenial company. The room allotted to the recruits until they were clothed was a veritable pandemonium: in charge of a land shark, a corporal of the 78th Highlanders, whose chief end was to find an easy acceptance of his polished sophistry. He purchased the civilian clothing of the recruits for a shilling or two and sold some for a pound sterling or more. This was my first experience of townbred specimens of the human race. On being posted to a Company I determined to cut out a path for myself at whatever cost. I soon found that this was not an easy matter. I soon became the butt of the inebriate set.

The non-commissioned officers were (with few exceptions) saturated whiskey sponges, liable at any moment to spontaneous combustion, and woe betide the recruit who refused to join in their drinking carousals. One particular non-commissioned officer undertook to test my determination by threatening me he would carry me to the canteen and saturate me with beer from head to foot. I appealed to his sense of honour, and informed him that I was a pledged abstainer from thirteen years of age, to which the remark came "Tell that to the marines, old soldiers will not believe you". Seeing that he was about to carry out his threat, I warned him that if he attempted it, he must take the consequences, as whatever his rank, the man who attempted it would be unrecognisable by his mother. "You will fight for it?" was his sardonic remark. To this I replied that he would have his answer so soon as he attempted to enforce his purpose. I was left severely alone for some days.

A burly recruit of twelve stone in weight, who terrorised the young men in the barrack room sought in various ways to force a quarrel, and having at last succeeded, the dispute was settled in the wash house. That evening after dusk he left the barracks with such a disfigured face, made his way home and forgot to trace his way back. From that day I was left severely alone.

On presenting myself at the Quartermaster's Stores I was served out with an Enfield rifle bearing the number 1287. The man in the Arm chest in charge told us with a very solemn face that on payment of half a crown he would give each of us a set of accoutrement warranted to keep clean and an ammunition pouch warranted to keep clean without any polishing. A dozen or more believed him and paid the money. I declined to part with my half crown and demanded belts numbered 1287, I was at once denounced by the rogue as a deserter and threatened with a night in the guardroom to cool my military ardour. I told him that I had just completed a month's training in the RossShire Rifles and benefitted by that training to spoil his little game.

My first surprise I had in my new calling was to find the gross educational ignorance of townbred recruits. I naturally supposed that every young man reared in town would be a walking encyclopaedia of general information, but a week in the barrack room disillusioned me. The general ignorance of the men who enlisted from town and city life astounded me.

The old Depot Battalion was an excellent school for character study. Every type of face and character was found there. I had early in life cherished the idea that the face was sure indication of character and of mental and moral possibilities. The longer I

live the more deeply is that axiom impressed on my mind. In our Adjutant Captain—I had an object lesson. A face strongly marked with intelligence, amiability and determination of will power, he inspired the recruits to revere him, rather than fear him. He had served for some years in the ranks, and was commissioned in the Crimea. One day on Guard mounting duty parade, noticing a not over-clean soldier belonging to the 78th Highlanders he called the regimental orderly sergeant, and pointing to the man remarked “that’s a very strong man you have here on parade; he is carrying two dozen elephants all loaded with muck”. The 78th Highlanders had then an elephant on the regimental button.

An amusing incident that would have aroused the most stolid Englishman to a hearty laugh came under my observation, some months after joining the Battalion in which Captain Padfield figured. A young man belonging to the 74th Highlanders had an idea that because he bore a Highland name, that by some process of nature, he could without application manipulate the Highland bagpipes. He was accordingly handed over to the pipe-major to transform the stolid lowlander into a veritable MacCrimmon. Naturally morose, unintelligent and lacking the genius to acquire by tuition what Adam had acquired in his garden without an instructor, he made little progress in his undertaking. After practising twelve times he arranged to play the first breakfast pipes but was peculiarly unfortunate in the attempt. Captain Padfield was sitting in the Orderly Room after discussing the morning drill. Hearing the unearthly groans, he ran out into the passage shouting “Who is that killing the cats?” The unfortunate aspirant to pibroch honours was returned to duty in the ranks, leaving the Band room to the tune that wrecked his reputation “Bundle and go” the first warning pipe of the Highland regiments for the various meals.

To while away the idle hours I attended the voluntary evening classes in the Battalion school. To my surprise the Master became very much interested in my accent and asked my birthplace. He informed me that he too was reared in Sutherland and his father was catechist in Elphin. On learning my father’s name he remarked “I knew your uncles whom the factor’s edicts expatriated from their hospitable homes to the more democratic soil of Upper Canada. To my intense regret he was in the following month ordered to New Zealand to join the 50th Regiment.

After five month’s recruit drill and completion of the first course of musketry practice my company was ordered to Fort George to relieve the overcrowding of the barracks. The change was regarded as nothing short of banishment to some out of the way penal settlement.

To me it was an enjoyable escape from the turmoil of town life to the pure and wholesome bliss of country life. Fort George is not a desirable military station. Isolated from the markets as from social intercourse with the outside world, it is an expensive luxury to sojourn there. At the time we were sent there the Garrison consisted of a dozen gunners and three or four non-commissioned officers of the Coast Brigade Royal Artillery. Their duty consisted of watching the old guns, and firing the Royal and other salutes as chanced to fall in the Calendar on certain days. They were of no use to God or Man, if we except the manufacturers of gunpowder. The Coast Brigade men were splendid touts for the Canteen keeper in cajoling recruits into the tap rooms. The Barrack rooms were small and comfortable. When the militia regiments were in occupation large mud-floored cellars called bombproofs under the ramparts were used for the

accommodation of the men. These cellars might have been bombproof never having been tested, but they were not rainproof nor fit by any means for human occupation but became excellent hatcheries for consumption and rheumatism. We were not long in the fort when some of the leading spirits among the officers and men started a regimental theatre, with very decided success. The Royal Engineers contractor—a Mr. Fraser from Inverness was the principal manager in the concern. This kept the men in good spirits, and from the temptations of the canteen. The place had now become endurable. The only provision made by the Military Authorities for residents in this forlorn wilderness was a school church, a canteen for the manufacturers of drunkards and three cells in which to incarcerate the fruit of the traffic.

In the month of February 1861 I mounted my first step in the promotion ladder, but it carried no pay. There being no school available I had to look about to find some means of recreation beyond the drillbook and the ball alley. I determined to acquire some proficiency in pipe music. When the weather was favourable for outdoor practice the ramparts afforded ample room for outdoor practice.

In the month of May 1861 an order emanated from the Horse Guards calling for volunteers from the Depot Battalions in Scotland to raise the 26th Cameronians to war strength in anticipation of trouble with the United States on account of the seizure of the Confederate agents on board the British steamship Trent. In company with 25 others I volunteered to the Cameronians hoping to reach Canada, the home of the evicted from the straths and glens from the mal-administered County of Sutherland. One hundred and twenty volunteered to the call from the Highland Depots but we were sadly disappointed to find there was no war with the United States (*Father Morrison suddenly jumps from this narrative, without any introduction to Edinburgh Castle.*

W.K.M.).

The training and discipline of the Cameronians was unique. Its interior economy was in its conception and practical application faultless, while the pains taken to induce young non-commissioned officers to qualify for the duties of their calling were unparalleled in the Service. The non-commissioned had to attend school from 2 to 3 p.m. for the first four working days of the week. Whenever a lance-corporal was promoted he was ordered to report himself to the regimental drill instructor and remained with him until qualified to take any position on the parade ground from covering sergeant to the command of a company. It would be difficult to find the four superiors of the four *makers* of a regiment in the British Service for smartness and efficiency as—The Officer Commanding (Colonel Frances Carey), the Adjutant (Lieutenant George Meldrum), the Sergeant-Major and the Drill Instructor.

Among the transfers from the 79th Highlanders was a young soldier with an easy manner of life, caring for nothing as long as he had his food and daily pay without involving him in any trouble. He had no ambition and was always untidy. Returning from town one evening he passed two officers in the esplanade. The officers were in mufti. He took no notice of them. One of them called him back and sternly demanded why he had not saluted them. To which David quietly replied “I didna ken ye were officers.” “How long are you in the regiment?” “Am sax weeks in the regiment.” “You are sax weeks in the regiment and dinna ken your officers?” “I dinna ken any of them, except the yun wi’ the big belly they ca Geordie.” This was enough and David was allowed to pass and “Geordie” got his share of the banter in consequence.

Lieutenant (Geordie) Meldrum was about the last class of officers (1862) who had made and upheld the discipline of the British Army. The adjutants from the ranks, promoted from the ranks—wherever these were found insisted that discipline and drill were maintained at a high standard. Since then those appointments have ceased to be made (that is from the other ranks). Discipline has been gradually relaxed, until now it has ceased to be recognised as an essential element in the life of a soldier. On joining a regiment the highland recruit naturally passes his first comments on the Pipe Band. The Cameronians of 1861 had a motley squad as representatives of MacCrimmon. An Irish Lance-Corporal acted as Pipe-Major, an Englishman, a Highlander and three hybrid Lowlanders completed the squad I first heard trying to do justice to a Highland air “Struagh nach bu leis an t’sigh-dear Mi” anglice. Pity I am not the soldier’s (possession)”. They varied considerably in their manipulation of the instruments from which they thought to inspire their fellows, but as connoisseurs of Scotch whiskey, stood second to none in their devotion to the products of Glen Livet.

A story was current in the Regiment of one of those bibulous mortals who under a former pipe-major forgot to play the Mess Dinner call pipes. The pipe-major having exhausted his stock of Highland anathemas, at last marched the delinquent to the Orderly Room to be dealt with by the Adjutant. Questioned as to whether the man habitually absented himself from his duty, the pipe-major replied “O! No she’ll was no have a habit of it, but she’ll does it regular”.

Among the many advantages to be derived from a strict military training none stands so conspicuous as the cleanliness and smart bearing of the well trained soldier. Amongst sergeants of the Regiment was one that struck the newcomer with a certain degree of respectful reverence, tall, handsome and exceedingly neat in his personal appearance, he was regarded as a standing testimony to what military training can accomplish in the transformation of an ordinary country-bred recruit.

On joining the Service, a stranger to town life, he was made the butt of the town raff. It was reported that when he mounted his first guard he was a stranger to the formalities of barrack discipline and practice. An officer returning to barracks in the early hours of the morning was challenged on approaching this lad’s post with the usual “Who comes there?” To this, the officer replied “Friend”, to which the young soldier, in genuine sincerity, responded “Aye Mon! your’e a big lear” anglice ‘liar’ “All my friends are in Fife”. This very promising young non-commissioned officer left the Regiment on completion of his first terms of service to take up a municipal situation to the great regret of all who knew him.

Among the social wrecks in the ranks of the Cameronians at that time I joined were several men of good families and superior educational attainments. Three were disrobed Roman Catholic priests, one an ex-Presbyterian minister, an ex-editor of a popular daily newspaper, a Headmaster of a Secondary School, a Cashier from the Royal Bank of Ireland and eight Medical Students, victims of the curse of intemperance. Notwithstanding this, the tyro in social reformation clamours for the spread of education as the only panacea for the destruction of this foul blot on our social escutcheon.

To the initiated in the customs of the higher and middle class life, where education had had the fullest opportunity for effecting reformation, few will be bold enough to controvert the well known fact that education is powerless to restrain the acquired taste and craving for alcoholic liquors. Two of my earliest school-fellows, one a minister, the

other a medical man were both ruined by indulgence in alcohol. The minister was disrobed, pardoned and readmitted—to be a second time expelled. The medical man entered the Navy. At the end of six years he was tried by Court Martial and cashiered. Six months after, he was readmitted on account of his previous service, in an epidemic of yellow fever in the West Indies, but within six months was again dismissed the Service. Taking duty on a boat to New Zealand, he landed joined in a drunken brawl and was killed and buried in an orange box.

The British Army has for ages paid its annual tribute to Bacchus in its best intellects. Inebriate hatcheries are provided by the Government in every Barrack under the name of Canteens and Messes, both for officers and non-commissioned officers, veritable pest-houses for the destruction of the young who are drawn into their vortex. This was painfully evident in all ranks of the Cameronians and those who strove to lessen the evils of social demoralization had few sympathisers in the Regiment. In 1861 a few of us formed one of the first Total Abstinence Societies formed in the Army, but it was shortlived. In eight months I was the only member. The Sergeant's Mess has been the destruction of many a promising career and should be abolished as a drinking institution.

In the Cameronians we had what was called Staff Parade at what was known as the Last Post. Every non-commissioned officer off duty paraded by companies and when the Roll Call reports were given in, the N.C.Os were wheeled into line, the ranks open, and the sergeant-major and his aide inspected each man. What a thrill of hope ran through the lance-corporals as the sergeant-major called for the orderly sergeant of a company, to march some unfortunate inebriate into confinement.

"It expedites promotion" was the callous rejoinder as the oft-expressed note of commiseration "poor beggar" was heard in condemnation of the Tattoo parade. With the publication of that questionable compendium of military information Sir Garnet Wolsely's "Soldiers Pocket Book" the last relic of the good old days of the British disciplined Army disappeared, and officers and men in uniform paraded the street with tobacco pipes burning. So much the worse for the soldier and the Service.

In November of 1861 a never to be forgotten incident was engraved on my mental tablets. I had been spending an evening with a relative in the High Street of Edinburgh. When the hour came to return to barracks was hailing in sight, my friends insisted that I should wait until within ten minutes of midnight. This I declined and left for barracks impelled to move on. I had not been but a few minutes in Barracks, when the building, to which I had been a frequent visitor collapsed, where a relative I had on night duty lodged, and over twenty souls hurried into eternity, through the greed of the improvident speculator who neglected to keep his property in good condition. The restored building is marked by an incident in that sad catastrophe. When the workmen were removing the debris after a few days work, they heard a voice imploring help "Heave awa boy I'm nae deid yet". (*W. K. M. How curious he does not say anything about his relative or friends*).

Chapter III

Early in May 1862, the Regiment moved to Aldershot and quartered in the West Infantry Barracks. Having to appear in court as a witness in a case of assault, where an old offender attempted to rescue a prisoner from the piquet. I was left in the Castle and

attached to the 25th Regiment. As the man assaulted had deserted in the interval the case was put back and I was ordered to rejoin my Regiment. In the course of a few weeks the man was apprehended. I was sent in charge of the deserter who was to give evidence against his assailant and then brought back to Aldershot for trial.

Before returning to Edinburgh, the charge of Barrack Damages amounting to nearly one hundred pounds sterling had been forwarded by the Barrack Officer of Edinburgh to the Commanding Officer. The damages were said to have been adjusted and immediate payment demanded. I was instructed by Colonel Carey to present his compliments to the Officer Commanding 25th Regiment and ask to be allowed to inspect the damages said to have been adjusted. I was accompanied by the QMS Sergeant of the 25th Regiment and examined every item. I found the most noteworthy items as we found them coming into the barracks and as others had done half a century before. The coal box in the Guard Room was cast in the days of James VI and had probably done duty there for three hundred years or more, but it is difficult to decide whether the Government or the Barrack Officer reaped the revenue it produced each year from the crack. Each Regiment paid the bill without making any enquiry. We would have done the same but for my journey to Edinburgh. Tommie Atkins had to pay the damages "his is not to reason why". On returning, my report was given in at Aldershot and then submitted to the General-Officer Commanding in Scotland and as the outcome of my report the assessment was reduced to £50.

Shortly after my return from Edinburgh I was promoted Corporal in No. 4 Company. (*W. K. M. This was 1862, it is interesting to read later on that in 1894 when he was i/c Guards Hospital Stores, when he was drawing attention to items requiring adjustment, he was told not to worry, the Guards would willingly make good any deficiencies*).

Among the characters in No. 4 Company the wrinkled face and wry mouth of Tom Mills rises from the buried past to recall hours of hilarious enjoyment to which he unconsciously contributed. Garrison Guards invariably drew out the latent humour of his genial spirit. Tom was a favourite on any monotonous expedition, as his smart rejoinders to the would-be-wit usually recoiled on the aggressor with scathing force.

One day the second Brigade Guard came from a notoriously smart English Regiment. While the corporals were relieving the sentries, the smart young sergeant of the relieving guard sought to air his wit at the expense of his surroundings. Taking stock of Tom Mills from head to foot and addressing Tom, whose bayonet coming off guard was not particularly bright, remarked "Do you ever clean your bayonets in the Cameronians?" Tom, whose grey hawk eyes had been leisurely scanning his inquisitor naively replied "I dinna ken whether we clean wur bayonets or no, but we clean wur lugs". The repartee was too apparent to justify a retort.

Having secured my 1st Class School Certificate I volunteered for service with the Army Hospital Corps, hoping that I might get to the New Zealand War then in its initial stage. Colonel Carey flatly refused my transfer. Again and again Principal Purveyor Minney repeated his application.

In May 1863 the Regiment left Aldershot for the Gosport Forts. The daily routine of duties in Haslar Barracks were of the usual one Company Detachment humdrum style. Card playing and loafing about the canteen occupied the evening hours of the ordinary soldier. Drill was reduced to a minimum and officers and men soon relaxed the usual regime of the Headquarters. Life was truly monotonous, enlivened now and

again by cricket and foot races and sea bathing. Debarred from attending school and doomed to this inane life I determined to bring private influence to bear on Headquarters at the Horse Guards to compel my Commanding Officer to sanction my transfer to the Army Hospital Corps. Early in July a communication from the Horse Guards directed my transfer to the Army Hospital Corps, to Netley Hospital on three months probation in the Purveyors Branch of the Army Hospital Corps. The red ink note then printed on all transfer applications "If there is no regimental objection" was crossed out. This the Colonel took for a peremptory order from the Duke of Cambridge and sought to set it aside with the aid of the regimental surgeon. I was then examined by this functionary with scrupulous care, and with much more minuteness than when I joined as a recruit. He hinted that he could find no ground on which he could reject me for service in the Army Hospital Corps. I understood from the Adjutant in the caution given me by him, that the Colonel resented the Horse Guards Order for my compulsory transfer. I left the Cameronians on the 12th July 1863 while the Orangemen in the Regiment were celebrating the crossing of the Boyne by the Protestant Dutchman who rescued our nation from the tyranny of the Stuarts.

I began duty in the Purveyors Department in ignorance of the dissimilarity in the matter of promotion between the store and the Medical Branches of the Corps. The Purveyors men were stewards, clerks, store-keepers, gardeners, cooks and wardmasters in Detachment Hospitals for which they received no pay, nor recognition of any kind. They had the nominal rank of Lance-Sergeant and sixpence per diem working pay, both rank and pay being relinquished on removal from these special duties. In the Medical Branch of the Corps the private was promoted to effective sergeant, such promotion carrying every privilege of the Service. Promotion in the Medical Branch Army Hospital Corps was vested in the Commandant at Netley and, at that time, was too often awarded to a man on the size of his prayer book and on the help he could render to the Church Choir.

After six weeks probation I was appointed to the charge of the Hospital Pack Store in relief of a colour-sergeant who was removed for tampering with the personal effects of deceased soldiers. To avoid a public scandal he was sent to New Zealand with a draft under orders for that Colony.

I had been in that store but a few days when an order came from the Officer Commanding the 13th Hussars asking for the return of three Cavalry cloaks and three pairs of spurs brought to Netley by men who were subsequently discharged from the Service. I produced my books and satisfied the Commandant that the transaction was in the time of my predecessor, the Commandant remarking that the expense must fall on the Purveyor; upbraiding him with laxity of supervision. Turning to the Commandant I suggested that application should be made to the Staff Officers of Pensioners into whose district the men had gone to reside and ascertain if the men had brought these articles with them, if so Colour-Sergeant Evans should be made to pay the cost of them. He thanked me and instructed the Purveyor to do so at once. About a fortnight after, the Commandant sent for me to his office and told me that my surmises regarding the cloaks were correct, that they were not withdrawn and that the Colour-Sergeant was reduced to Sergeant and made to pay in £3.17.6d.

Passing through the hospital from the Commandant's office, smarting under the

refusal of my second appeal to be allowed to join the next draft to the New Zealand War, I noticed what seemed to be an unwarranted misappropriation of the patient's rations. To have lodged a complaint to the Captain of Orderlies, I knew, would run my neck into a noose and probably a court-martial. I followed up the trail and after a few day's quiet work arrived at very definite conclusions.

I sent a letter to the "United Service Gazette" the only paper open to receive a soldier's complaint. The result was a searching enquiry by the Commandant resulting in justifying the letter, but the writer must be smoked out whatever the cost. The sergeant cook purchased his discharge and set up in an hotel. He boasted in my hearing that before the letter appeared he pocketed twenty shillings a day out of the cookhouse. His partners in the speculation trembled and determined to get rid of such a dangerous fellow as a newspaper correspondent*.

The author of this incriminating letter must be run to earth. Accordingly the suspects were ordered to school for certificates of education. On the third day I accompanied the batch and trying my progress in Geography, Arithmetic and Mathematics, was requested to write a few foolscap pages on an invalid's stay at Netley from leaving his ship until his dismissal from the hospital by death, discharge from the Service or to his Depot. Next morning I was waited upon by the Schoolmaster asking permission to print the paper I had written in the "Illustrated Weekly Times" to which he was a frequent contributor. The seamy side of the invalid's treatment was not criticised nor in any manner exposed to view. I was next day presented with a First Class Certificate of Education signed by the Commandant and the Schoolmaster, the second time this worthless piece of cardboard was presented to me in the Service. I had seen men who could not obtain a Third Class Certificate of Education promoted before me. I was at once branded as the writer of the exposure in the "United Service Gazette".

Two days afterwards, I was ordered to Alderney, by the Commandant for duty in the Royal Artillery Hospital. The Purveyor under whom I worked protested but to no purpose. The Commandant was determined that I should leave the Royal Victoria Hospital. The interior economy of the Royal Establishment must not be unveiled to the public gaze. He never anticipated that, within seventeen years, I would return to teach the Commandant of the day that his powers were disciplinary only. I landed at Alderney on the 21st January 1864. On landing I found I was to take over charge of the Royal Artillery Hospital. I was not much enamoured with my surroundings. The sergeant who preceeded me was removed to the Guernsey Military Hospital as a dipsomaniac.

The hospital was in charge of the only Civil medical practitioner on the island, and he had just resigned and daily expected the arrival of a superannuated Civil Service medical officer from one of the West Indian convict Establishments. I soon began to experience a different atmosphere from that under his predecessor and was repeatedly asked to be less stringent in my dealing with contractors. I told him I was responsible for the supplies for the sick, their quality and quantity, I had nothing to do with the prices. The doctor should side with the sick and not with the contractors.

A contractor appealed to the Purveyor's clerk-in-charge in Jersey. He came quickly to Alderney and telling me that the stewards in the District were all very considerate for the contractors. "I shall be the exception" I said. He threatened that he would

* In 1873, ten years later, a Commissariat Officer and a Captain of Orderlies were tried by District Court Martial and dismissed the Service for similar speculations.

take me to Jersey and then asked me for six pounds of composite candles that my predecessor always gave him. I said I required all the candles for studying at night. I asked him to refer the question of my removal to my Commanding Officer. Hearing my request, he having a horror of the military authorities, took a knife and cut the stripes off my tunic. He recovered from his mad fit and asked me to go with him to Jersey. A gunner in the Royal Artillery was put in charge of the stores. I went with him to Guernsey and when we got there he insisted that I share his quarters with strict injunction that I was not to go out. I was not to go near the barracks. I watched my opportunity and left the house and called on Major Nelson, the Fort Major. I had met him before; I told him the whole story. He told me to go to the Hospital and report Monday morning at the General's office. On the Sabbath, when the purveyor found I had disappeared, he went to the hospital and asking Sergeant Carson, had an altercation with him and then placed him under arrest. The Medical Officer in charge suggested a medical examination of the Purveyor's clerk, who was then relegated to half-pay and I went back to Alderney.

I then applied for leave to marry. The application was refused and I was warned that if I married without permission I would never get on the married establishment. The warning was unheeded: the certificate of marriage duly forwarded to the Commandant at Netley. I was instructed to return to Headquarters at Netley. At Netley I was treated to a homily on the wickedness of disobedience and openly told I would get no indulgence whatever. I was denied the privilege of sleeping out of barracks. I was to have no indulgence that could be denied me. Such was the commands of the pious Richard Wilbraham, Major-General Commanding at Netley and his friends.

My own friends realizing that I had been most unjustly treated moved in the matter. Colonel Holcombe waited on The Duke of Cambridge (The C. in C.) and explained my case to him. The Duke called in the Purveyor-in-Chief to his office. He passed the Duke's invective to Netley.

I was ordered to take a course of instruction in Cookery at Netley. This did not satisfy Mr. Scott Robertson and he made an official inspection of all the hospitals in the Channel Islands, and made a minute enquiry into all the circumstances of my treatment and removal. To justify my recall I was sent into the Cookhouse for a two months course of instruction. The Sergeant Cook resented my presence there, remarking that the cookhouse was never intended for First Class Certificate men. I had nothing to learn from them in cooking. With two month's instruction I was certified as a Cook. Mr. Scott Robertson had now returned from the Channel Islands, and told my friends that he would soon find me a station where I would find a good home.

Early one Sabbath morning I was called to the Commandant's office when the Adjutant put into my hand a letter from the Purveyor-in-Chief. It ran as follows "Dear Colonel Wilbraham". I want a steward and ward-master for Dorchester. Can you spare me Morrison?" I was informed by the Adjutant, that as it was a personal application the Commandant could not well refuse it, and I was cautioned to have no more to do with the Press. I did not return to Netley during Colonel Wilbraham's tenure of office.

(to be continued)