GLIMPSES OF ARMY LIFE FROM WITHIN FROM 1860 – 1895

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(LIEUTENANT of ORDERLIES 1879-1881)

(continued)

Chapter IV

I JOINED at Dorchester early in October 1864, and was attached to 'A' Battery, 'B' Brigade, Royal Horse Artillery. I was happy in my surroundings here, and enjoyed the beautiful little town with its trout stream, its cricket fields, and rabbit hedges.

(Alas!) The treatment I received at the Congregational Church almost determined me never to enter another church, but my wife and another friend made me reconsider my decision, and to attend a service in the Wesleyan Methodist Church (*My father had not written the details of the incident, which was that, in his sergeant's uniform, sitting in a pew, the owner, a lady coming into the church had him removed before she would sit in that place. W.K.M.*).

Both Officials and members vied with one another in their welcome to the young sergeant and his wife. Here I discovered a new phase of practical Christianity to which I had hitherto been a stranger. From practical observations at home and abroad, I adhere to my early conviction that no section of the Christian Church takes so much interest, nor spends so much money to promote the spiritual welfare of the soldier as the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

In August 1865 I was ordered to Aberdeen for duty in the Depot Battalion Hospital. I returned to the scene of my recruit days anticipating reunions with old comrades. My predecessor had been reduced to the ranks and sent to the Depot at Netley. Pending my arrival the Steward from Edinburgh Castle was sent to Aberdeen. On taking over I found a deficiency where the sheets had been cleverly folded, where every third article counted as two instead of one. Deficiency he had to make good for £5.17.0.

In the Wardmaster, Alexander M. MacDonald, I found one of the best specimens of a superior Non-Commissioned Officer I have met in thirty-five years service. My first few months passed very happily, then Sergeant MacDonald left to join his own regiment as Hospital Sergeant. In his place came an ancient and decrepit specimen of the original Medical Staff Corps of the Crimean War days. His early education had been sadly neglected. In impertinence he was a past master. It was his duty to register the daily meteorological observations and prepare a monthly record thereof for the War Office, but he had not the remotest idea how to read or adjust the instruments, and hopelessly at sea in the preparation of the returns therewith. At the request of Surgeon-Major Grant I took charge of the observatory and the preparation of the returns, and contributed weekly papers on the weather to the "Aberdeen Journal" and to the "People's Journal" Dundee. In return for this work Surgeon-Major Grant permitted me to leave the hospital between 12 noon and 1-30 p.m. to attend the Dispensary attended by the Medical Students at the Medical School to enable me to qualify as a dispenser of

medicine—a privilege of which I took every advantage. In the winter of 1865 an amusing incident came under my notice, a recruit from the West of RossShire, Hector MacKenzie, had been enlisted by a sergeant of the 42nd Highlanders, giving him a shilling in the Queen's name between two lozenges. When he found out that he had been tricked he determined not to soldier, and after a week of "acting the fool" on parade and in the barrack-room was sent to the hospital. He made up his mind not to purchase his discharge, neither would he desert, but would seek the best method by which he could extricate himself from his enforced servitude with the least possible trouble. He concluded that the best way was to act the madman. Accordingly he met the medical officer quite serenely. Being questioned by the medical officer as to the nature of his trouble replied "acting de goat to get my discharge". He was admitted to hospital and treated for lunacy. Every possible means were taken to compel him to abandon his purpose but unsuccessfully. I remonstrated with him in his own language pointing out to him the absurdity of his plans and how unworthy of a Highlander, telling him however much the doctors believed in his madness, I was fully persuaded that he could not persuade a Medical Board to discharge him. To this he quietly replied "Famaidhe duin glic chloid an armadan" anglice "It requires a wise man to act the fool". I left the station before he left the hospital but was informed that he had been discharged in Edinburgh.

My first difficulty in Aberdeen was with the Washing Contractor for the hospital. I regarded him as a man of no principle and destitute of any regard for the truth. He resented having to pay for lost articles. I repeatedly reported him to the Purveyor, but he had a friend in the office in Edinburgh, who withheld all my complaints from the officer-in-charge. Finding that I was not open to bribes or whiskey, he wrote to the Purveyor and complained that he was paid for clothing he had never received. He was not aware that I had nothing to do with the monthly washing list, that the preparation of that list was the work of the wardmaster, and certified by the Medical Officer in charge. When he found he had laid himself open to a criminal charge he absconded. When his flight became known I had a letter from his landlord (Advocate Paul of Aberdeen) demanding the rent of the man's shop and business premises from me. He had forged my name guaranteeing his rent, which the astute lawyer accepted without making any inquiry into the standing of the guarantor, or the genuineness of the document. Early in July 1866, both medical officers of the Depot were relieved by two rather indifferent medical men. The senior was an austere man, rather limited in administrative talent. He made up in bluster what he lacked in judgement and knowledge. He ordered me to withdraw from the instructional attendance at the College dispensary, and to devote my leisure to the Meteorological instruments and reports. I informed him that this was no part of my work, that I had hitherto done it in return for the privilege Dr. Grant had extended to me in carrying on my Pharmaceutical studies, and as he had withdrawn that privilege I declined to perform a duty for which another man was paid. This aroused in the Surgeon Major the demon of vindictiveness and every effort that malignity could devise was put forth to trip me. I defied them to trip me in the discharge of my duties. Other means had to be resorted to. Some weeks previously I had refused to give the Adjutant two sets of Hospital Bed and Bedding for the use of his servants. I declined to lend Government Stores to anyone not entitled to receive them. This was felt to be a grievance to which underhand punishment must be awarded. I was then under the impression that officers were gentlemen who would appreciate the righteous discharge of public duties by subordinates. I have since seen the fallacy of my reverential devotion.

Colonel Gordon being on leave the command developed on Colonel Andrew Pitcairn, who was a limp tool in the hands of the Adjutant. The Adjutant found a limper tool in the hands of an illiterate Sergeant of the Medical Branch of the Army Hospital Corps, who had recently joined the station. It was arranged that he would find a fitting opportunity to place me in arrest. Some time before the Sergeant joined at Aberdeen he had a judicial separation from his wife on account of her drunken habits and neglect of her home. Finding that she could not subsist on her allowance she pleaded for forgiveness, with promises of amendment, if he took her back. She had not been back very long when she made the place a pandemonium. Surgeon Major Grant called on the Provost Sergeant to eject her from the hospital. On Surgeon Major Black's assumption of the charge of the Hospital she was allowed to return to her quarters. I protested against her return, but I might as well have appealed to the Sultan of Turkey as to Major Black. This drunken fiend had not been but a few hours in Hospital when she quarrelled with the cook, who ordered her to leave the kitchen. Her husband interfered and ordered me to take the cook to the Guard Room. I suggested that the matter should be referred to the Medical Officer in charge and then steps would be taken as he should decide. This he declined and went to the Orderly Room and got his instructions to place me in arrest for "refusing to confine Private J. Marshall Jones when ordered to do so". When brought before Colonel Pitcairn, the Adjutant informed him that he had instructed Sergeant Turner to place me in arrest if I declined his orders. To this I replied that I had not committed a crime, and that at the time a medical man and two nurses were standing by Mrs. Jones' bed and that his confinement in the Guard Room might result in her death. There was no pity in that man's soul and all he would say was "let her take her chance". I was told I would have a District Court Martial to decide the matter. Contrary to the rules and usages of the Service I was denied access to every channel of information that would assist me in the preparation of my defence, while the Charge Sheet which should have been given me twenty-four hours before the assembling of the Court, was withheld until within an hour of its assembly. In declining to plead because of this irregularity, the President declined to notice my complaint. I told him that I understood that I was not guilty until I was convicted. I gave them quotations from Simmons of Courts Martial Procedure, and others, when Captain MacDonald of the 79th Highlanders told me that I had mistaken my calling. I told him that he was but carrying coals to Newcastle. For this I was severely rebuked by the President. In cross examination of the Adjutant—the Prosecutor—I made him contradict himself in various items in his evidence, and proved to the hilt that the two witnesses who supported the first witness were in a ward on the first floor while the incident took place in the kitchen on the ground floor. At the end of three hours the Court adjourned to the next day to give me time to prepare my defence. On the assembly of the Court the next day, I declined to plead, on the ground that the animus manifested by the Adjutant militated against his office of prosecutor, and that in consequence of his disregard of the authorised procedure on Courts Martial, together with his denial of what he had previously sworn, I was entitled to an acquittal. I also complained that during the period of my arrest, he intercepted and opened all my private letters, which was an unwarranted interference that found no justification in Civil or Military Law. Again the Court was cleared and after half an hour's discussion, I was again called in and told by the President that it would be to my interest not to proceed with my opposition, nor to question the conduct of the Adjutant. In the end I was sentenced to the loss of my rank.

This was my first and last entry in the Defaulter Sheet. I was really not tried by Court Martial for refusing to confine Private John Marshall Jones. I was tried for refusing to lend Government Stores to the Adjutant of the Depot Battalion. On Colonel C. H. Gordon's return from leave, the Orderly Room clerk reported to him the circumstances of my arrest and subsequent treatment. He enquired how the woman whom he had turned out of the Hospital for her drunkenness was re-admitted without his sanction and plainly intimated to Colonel Pitcairn and to the Adjutant his displeasure at their conduct. He then wrote to the Purveyor-in-Chief and asked that my stripes might be restored and another station might be found for me in Scotland, as it would not be to my interest to leave me in Aberdeen. To this the Purveyor-in-Chief replied that I was to choose a station in Scotland and that the Steward from that station would be removed to Aberdeen. I selected Perth and joined there at once.* On the day on which I left Aberdeen, the Wardmaster's wife determined to celebrate her victory in a real carousal, the evening became so hilarious as to need her confinement in a strait waistcoat. In the morning she was a corpse. Had this occurred in England a coroner's inquest would have had a few questions to ask.

On joining at Perth (1867). The War Office and the Gas Company were at war over the price of gas, and candles and oil lamps were the only illuminations in the barracks and the hospital. I soon found that the price of oil, lamps, candles and labour cost much more than the proposed gas charge, twice as much in fact. I gave this information to a friend who passed it to the Hon Arthur Kinnaird, M.P. for the city of Perth. The War Office surrendered and Gas was restored to the barracks and hospital, to the intense satisfaction of the men.

I then re-opened my Bible Class, which was much appreciated by the men, and had much sympathy and support from the Commanding Captain Arbuthnot 14th Hussars and from the Reverend William Blatch, the acting chaplain and incumbent of St. John's Episcopal Church. I never met his equal in spiritual work among our soldiers. He was a welcome visitor to the hospital wards. Protestants and Roman Catholics alike welcomed him on his visits. In conversation with an Irishman, I asked him the secret of Mr. Blatch's popularity among the men. He replied "My priest comes to the ward and asks 'Any Catholics here', if no answer he goes away. The Presbyterian minister does the same. Mr. Blatch never asks, just comes in and has a friendly word with us all. We like to see him come into the ward".

An interesting incident encouraged me very much. A Corporal of the 72nd Highlanders came to collect a prisoner on discharge. For the night the corporal was accommodated in a barrack room of the 14th Hussars. The next morning he knelt by his bed in the barrack room, and while he prayed silence pervaded the room. On rising from his knees, one of the men tapped him on the shoulder and remarked "Friend, you have come to the wrong shop; you go to the hospital in the corner of the square, they will welcome you there, as you are evidently one of their kind". At breakfast he told us of this interesting experience in a cavalry barrack room. The soldier is not slow in recognising the real professing christian and the spurious one.

In the first quarter of 1868 the 42nd Royal Highlanders returned from India the Headquarters being stationed in Stirling, while three companies came to Perth. A new

* *W.K.M. His Pay Book shows 'Reduced 7th September 1866' : Perth 1867. Promoted to Corporal 18th April 1867.*

Commanding Officer withdrew the privilege of my using the schoolroom for my bible class and temperance meetings.

Chapter V

In October 1868 I was asked by the Purveyor if I would agree to go to Leith as Steward and Wardmaster. He candidly informed me that the Medical Officer was difficult to work with, that in two years he had had six stewards there, but all had asked to leave on account of the irritable temper of the medical officer. I told him that I had no hesitancy in serving under any crank provided he was just in dealing with his men. I preferred a strict officer to a slack one.

I had not been many days at Leith, when I found I had made a mistake. I found that my chief was not a strict officer, but a most unreasonable crank. I had hardly finished my first week, when he began nagging. It was impossible to please him. I tried to bear with his idiosyncrasies, but the more I did so the more unreasonable he became. He complained that I was not sufficiently strict with the sick, and too indulgent in catering to their whims. I offended his pride when I told him that I had more faith in gentle and careful nursing than in medicines too often administered under a system of empiricism. His interference was in the paltry things of daily life.

Shortly after I joined at Leith he pointed out two Gunners of the Royal Artillery, who had been on detached duty for two years drilling volunteers and had been sent in to die. "These drink themselves to death, or near it, before they are sent here to die. Ten or more die every year". I remarked "I am not surprised that they die, when you feed them on what has poisoned them. Clear it out of their blood first, then see if they die". That morning he struck them off their bottle of Bass. One went back to work at the end of three months. The other was invalided out and sent to friends in Belfast.

Life under such a man became intolerable. I had given the cook permission to allow women of the Royal Artillery to bake a cake or a dinner in the Hospital kitchen on Sundays and washing days. This in no way interfered with our work in the kitchen, the accommodation being ample for five times the number we had in hospital. The Medical Officer came to know that this was done, and ordered it to be discontinued. On the following Sunday morning on returning from church I was hurriedly called into the Surgery and asked if I still allowed women to cook their cakes in the kitchen. I replied that I had given instructions to the cook to cease the practice and that I was not aware that he had infringed the order. The cook was called and questioned by the medical officer: "Holmes, did you cook a dinner for a soldier's wife to-day?". "No, Sir". The question was repeated, and the same reply given. Turning in his chair he repeated the question, with a look of severity. To this the cook replied "I did not Sir, but I baked a cake for the Quartermaster-Sergeant's wife". This was too much for the questioner and the cook was ordered to retire. His roughness in dealing with the sick was inexcusable. One case in particular aroused my indignation. This was the case of Gunner Brown, the Battery cook. He was admitted to hospital with a complicated attack of bronchitis and pneumonia. I nursed him assiduously night and day, until he reached the convalescent stage. One morning I was informed by the medical officer that he was going on leave for two days and that Dr. MacNair would see the patients on the following morning and to tell him to discharge Gunner Brown to duty. I said I didn't think Gunner Brown

was really fit enough for discharge to duty. With anger he said " You know better than I do?. Do as I tell you ". I gave Dr. MacNair the message. Dr. MacNair thought he was not yet fit for discharge and declined to discharge him. About an hour after the doctor had left the hospital, an orderly came running into the surgery with the cry " Brown is calling for you ". I ran into the ward and found him with a lump of congealed blood in his throat. I removed the obstruction, a clot, and sent for the nearest medical man, but before the orderly could reach the doctor, the patient was dead.

In the evening my own medical officer returned and paying an evening visit, contrary to his usual practice of calling into the surgery, he went straight into the ward and seeing Brown's bed folded up, asked " Where's Brown?." One of the men answered " He's in the Dead-house, Sir." He shouted " Dead! Dead! Dead!" and ran down the corridor into the surgery, shouting as he entered " Brown's dead! Brown's dead!" To this I replied " I told you Brown was dying but you would not believe me." His next question was " Did you say anything to him about his soul?" I replied that " there were people paid for looking after his soul, as well as his body, but that neither realized their responsibility until it was too late." At this he bolted out of the surgery as if he had been bitten by a mad dog. I saw no more of him until I had finished the post-mortem, which revealed the cause of death to be an aneurism rupture.

Being a careful dispenser of medicine (though unpaid) I had to exercise particular care over my crank's prescription. One afternoon an officer's servant brought me a prescription for an officer of the Royal Artillery. On examination, I noted that one of the ingredients was poisonous being eight times the maximum dose. I went to his quarters to have it rectified. He raged at my disturbing him, but on telling him what he had done, he told me to go back with the altered prescription and dispense the medicine.

After that incident he became much more amenable to work with. I was now with the aid of a " coach " from Edinburgh, back again to my school-books working hard to pass the Matriculation of the London University, the War Secretary, Cardwell having promised me a commission in the Purveyors' Department, on the nomination of R. A. MacFee, M.P. for Leith. I asked permission from the medical officer to attend the evening classes in the Watts School of Arts, but was denied this, being told that I should be satisfied with such provision as was made in the Corps for those whose lot in life was to serve. I appealed to the Principal Medical Officer, who granted my request, also permission to wear plain clothes, much to the annoyance of my crank.

In consequence of a quarrel with the Principal Medical Officer, he was ordered to St. Helena and the feeling in Leith Fort on seeing his face for the last time was for all of us to sing the doxology.

On the amalgamation of the several working Departmental Branches of the Army into one unwieldy mass in 1869 under the designation of " Control Department ". I was informed by Lord S. G. Osborne, that in consequence of the amalgamation I would have to wait for some time before I could get the promised commission, as the supernumeraries of the Purveyors Department must be absorbed first.

The Departmental amalgamation removed such of the Barrack Sergeants as were qualified clerks into the central control offices being replaced by the Sergeants of the Army Hospital Corps. The Steward in the Military Hospital at Perth, who never had a step of promotion in his former regiment positively refused to accept the combined

duties from a consciousness of his inability to discharge them. I was detailed to relieve him, and to undertake the new duties.

Had I the qualifications of Boyle Roche's bird, I might have done justice to this ill-advised conglomeration, as it was I found it impossible to please all parties. (*W.K.M. Brewer's dictionary* (1954) P. 775, *Sir Boyle Roche's bird* (1743-1807. *Irish M.P. noted for his "bulls":—"Mr. Speaker, it is impossible I could have been in two places at once, unless I were a bird."*)

The Medical Officer insisted that I should prepare his returns, dispense his medicines, feed and clothe his patients, supervise the discipline in his wards, and write all official letters. The Commanding Royal Engineer whose office was in Aberdeen, demanded that I should supervise buildings, roofs, drains, water, and any other maintenance work, while the Commissary of Supplies demanded that my attention to the Commissariat and store requirements of the troops, and that all returns connected with the Commissariat should be in his office in Stirling on the 1st of each month.

Commanding Officers of Volunteers expected that a portion of my time should be reserved for the issue of ammunition as they might require their supplies from the magazine in my charge. I was bound to disappoint someone, and threw over the medical officer leaving him to do his own returns, dispense his medicines, superintend his wards, undertaking only to feed and clothe his patients and look after the change of linen. I had already mastered every detail of Hospital work, and had nothing to learn, while the work of the Engineering Department and Commissariat Department opened up a new field of general information and usefulness. I determined to succeed if possible. I was aware that six other non-commissioned officers of our Corp had taken up this work in Scotland, and I was determined that whoever failed I would not. I applied myself to the task with the consciousness that it would require a deal of energy to carry it to a successful issue. I recognised that I had undertaken more than I could carry through if I were to reserve any portion of the day for myself. I had to abandon my studies, and give up all hope of reaching what I had aimed at.

At the end of the financial year (31st March) I took stock of my coalyard and found that I had twenty-five tons of coal surplus in store. I reported this find to the officer under whom I was serving and requested the usual W.O. Forms to credit the "find" to the Public, telling him that I had taken it on charge in my store ledger. I was told to take no action in the matter until he came to Perth, and that, after the inspection he would deal with the subject of my letter. On the following day, without any warning, he appeared on the scene. I was verbally instructed to tell the coal contractor to send him twenty-five tons of coal to Stirling and to take the surplus on charge in Perth as received from the Contractor, as his Barrack Sergeant was thirty tons deficient. I suggested that if he was deficient, he should pay for what he was deficient of, as no coalyard in the Kingdom but should credit the public with from thirty to fifty tons of coal in a year according to the strength of the garrison I told him I could not accede to his request. I asked him whether he expected me to tell the officers who would come to inspect, that it had come in the previous day. I asked him if I were to forge a delivery voucher, if so, I would decline to do it. I was peremptorily ordered to carry out his instructions, or it would be the worse for me. I reminded him that I had already taken them on charge.

He came to Perth next day and inspected my stores. He found a hospital padded chair brought there for repairs, and asked if I could get it done in the barracks. I had it done, having been an otter trapper in my young days, I was always on the look-out for anyone who would try and trap me. I sent him a receipted bill and instead of sending me the cash, he instructed the repairing contractor to ask me to cash the cheque. This I declined to do. I now had proofs of his threat to 'pin' me. I defied him or anyone else to 'pin' me in the discharge of my duties. Hoping that his trap would turn out to be successful, he asked The Controller to give him permission to find out what happened to that cheque and to whom it was paid into the Bank.

The answer was a local grocer Mr. Andrew Laing, who told him that the repairing contractor's sister had presented it to him and that he had sent it to the bank. Mr. Laing gave him his mind on the matter. He went back discomfited. Nine months after that episode, the War Office, in a minute written by Sir Wm. Drake reprimanded him for his treatment of the non-commissioned officers of the Army Hospital Corps, several of whom he had removed for inefficiency. Sir Wm. Drake said "It strikes me that Deputy Commissioner . . . expects more of the non-commissioned officers of the Army Hospital Corps than they were ever intended for." This aroused his ire, and he replied in an angry minute to the Deputy Controller, as follows:— "I regret the tone of Sir Wm. Drake's letter, but beg to state that I have no non-commissioned officers of that Corps in the Sub-District fit for his post, save Lance-Sergeant Morrison at Perth, and he is lower in rank and pay than those on whom I have unfavourably reported."

To my surprise I was granted eight pence a day while performing the duties at Perth. Unfortunately, promotion was stopped owing to the re-organisation of the Purveyors' Department. (*W.K.M. He then records, with satisfaction, his share in getting Army Canteens closed to civilians on The Sabbath, he writes "that in Perth as many as 4000 civilians would use the canteen on the Sabbath."*).

On taking over charge at Perth in 1870 I was perplexed at the utter disregard of the Canteen Manager for the provisions of the Forbes MacKenzie Act. After reading the canteen man's terms of tenancy I watched the crowd of civilians flocking into the canteen on Sunday after 12 Noon. There were 4000 between 12 Noon and 9-30 p.m. The Canteen Manager said that it was the Sunday traffic that induced him to take the canteen and which gave him all his profits. Major MacBean, the Commanding Officer, when approached by the Canteen Manager, sent for him and having read The Act told the Manager that there was no option for him but to stop the practice. He appealed to the Officer Commanding, North British District, who referred the matter to the War Office who upheld the decision to stop this civilian traffic.

A few days after the canteen incident, the acting Sergeant Major drew my attention to a serious quarrelling at the Magazine Gate at midnight the previous night and asked who had the keys for this gate. I told him that No One had any right to the Magazine Gate Key. There were three private gates into the barracks, one of these the Magazine Gate for which I was solely responsible. I knew that these gates were frequently used by unauthorised persons and so I had new locks made to each gate. The Surgeon-Major came and demanded a key from me saying that he had paid my predecessor for the key. I referred him to the Commanding Officer and that closed the episode, as the Commanding Officer thoroughly approved of my efforts to serve the detachments. Not surprisingly I made a few bitter enemies.

The monthly barrack damages have always been the bete noire in the Army, I determined to lessen this pernicious imposition if possible and to make my inspections quarterly and not monthly. The usual practice was for "barrack damages" to appear in the Pay-Sergeant's accounts every month. For six months, with a Troop of Cavalry and three Companies of Infantry, I had nothing to assess in the way of barrack damages. As the Cavalry never exercised on the grass plot within the Barrack Enclosure, I suggested to the Officer Commanding that the grass should be sold and the proceeds invested in a dozen trees to be planted within the enclosure. The trees stand to-day (late 1900) as a monument to what improvements can be initiated on slender resources.

At the end of my first year's of office, I found that the gross expenditure for the year for the whole of the barracks was less by Five Hundred Pounds Sterling than in the previous year, while the second year was a few pounds less than the first, while everything in the barracks was most satisfactory. The Deputy Commissary under whom I was serving was extremely angry. He informed me that my retrenchments reflected on the officers and the others who preceded me and would hamper my successors. I pointed out to him that the system hitherto tolerated in the Barrack Department was a disgrace to any administration. If the system was unknown the more shame on those who administered it. The Barrack Sergeants, many of whom would have no difficulty in securing positions in civilian life worth ten shillings a day or more, were remunerated with the paltry daily wage of two shillings a day and quarters.

After twenty-one years faithful service as a non-commissioned officer all he would expect was a pension of two shillings a day. The consequence was a power that lay in his own hands and he had but to find an unscrupulous confederate and he could have every contract in the barracks. I first saw the system in Aberdeen, then I saw it in Perth and as Steward of the Hospital began to take notes. One instance, out of many, an instance of a glaring character cropped up in the records of the office.

In three successive years, the flooring of the Riding School cost the Government a bill of £22.17.6 for renewing the tan and sawdust. Having some knowledge of how the thing was done. I was satisfied it was not being honestly done. I met the man who signed the receipts for the work having been done. I asked him what the transaction cost him. After some fencing, he told me that he had no hand in the matter but only signed his name that the work had been done and for which signature he always received one bottle of brandy. The floor on each occasion was only turned over and raked.

My predecessor, hearing that I had been exploring too minutely into past history, came on a holiday excursion from Edinburgh to Perth. He called upon me at my office. After some conversation, he asked for a glass of water. I had to go upstairs to get the glass of water. When I came down he had bolted, and had slashed with a razor all the pages of his own transactions in the book. I complained to my officer but he declined to take any action in the matter. Later I was told I would be relieved by a Barrack Sergeant and I should return to my work as Steward in the hospital. An ex-Sergeant Major of Infantry came in October to take over the barrack stores work. He had been told that the job was a gold-mine and that he could expect to make £3000. I heard afterwards, on being asked by a friend how he was getting on, he said "the fellow who went before me made it impossible to do what was done before he came." He asked for a transfer to Stirling, I applied to return to my Depot at Netley.

Chapter VI

In connection with the Methodist Church, Wesleyan Methodist, in Perth, we had a most interesting Literary Association. Its members came from several churches in the City. The officials were office bearers in their churches. It is impossible to estimate how much I owe to my association with those genial young men. Literary contributions were criticised in a spirit of kindness, sometimes severe, but never offensive. So far as I have been able to trace the members of the class, none of them have failed to justify early anticipation and some have made their mark in medicine, law, banking, engineering and general commercial life.

It was my privilege to have been appointed Editor of our Magazine. Contributions were sent to the Senior Vice-President under two covers with special marks, he retained the outer cover and address of the sender, passing the contribution to the Editor, who after transcription, sealed it and returned it to the Vice-President, and neither knew the piece contributed under the mark on the outer envelope bearing the sender's address. This Magazine brought about the dissolution of our association. One young aspirant to poetic fame sought to immortalize our office-bearers by devoting a verse to each one in a contribution to the Magazine. The irate President demanded the name of the young man who he called a lampooner: our punishment was to be denied any further use of the hall. The verse was:

"But who is he, who stalks along,
proud of his mental powers
In office as in body strong
Our President he towers,

The only Reverend here we see,
Is a Ruler, though not ruled.
Though he be not yet a great D.D.
But only Reverend Isaac Gould."

The Good Templar movement came into Scotland in 1870 resulting in blessings to many. It took hold in Perth and crowds flocked to its standard. I was amongst the first of its members becoming Chaplain of the "Star of Hope" Lodge, becoming a few months after W.C.T. of the "Ark of Safety Lodge" with over two hundred members, when I left during the last week of October 1871. Among my most prized mementoes of my peripatetic wanderings is a handsome writing desk, presented to me on leaving The Fair City by the members of the Ark of Safety Lodge (*W.K.M. I remember my father's folding writing desk, but I do not recall his ever telling me its history or origin*).

I left Perth in the last week of 1871 for Netley Hospital and was delighted to find that the Commandant of 1863 had relinquished office. Colonel Charles Evans Gordon was an officer of a very different stamp to the first Commandant. He judged a man on his business capacity, and not on the size of his prayer book. On arrival I was appointed Assistant Steward. I held the appointment but three weeks only, when the Commandant placed me in charge of the wives and families of invalids returning from foreign stations. This gave me a large field of observation of human character in its strength and in its weakness.

In addition to this, I was clerical assistant to the medical officer attending the women and children and hospital staff. This officer was a study for the physiognomist. Demure and unsocial; he was a difficult character to humour. He had removed my predecessor for insolence, and I determined that he would have no reason to complain of me on that score. He was a studious man, irritable by nature, but a gentleman who excelled in considerate attention to his patients, never neglecting them for social functions or sport.

He was a medical man, fulfilling the functions of his calling, and not a military popinjay.

I was informed by the Adjutant that I was the first whom he had recommended for promotion in fourteen years. I was honoured by being recommended by such a judge of human character as Dr. James Young Donaldson. I had in his place a Surgeon-Major of a very different character, who took very little interest in his work, and too indolent to trouble himself or others. He had his lathe, it was enough (*W.K.M. I had a friend who said "The less you do the less risk you have of getting into trouble." Another friend, who died recently, said "I have a reputation for being lazy and doing little and so I Am Not Asked to do much. You know me well enough that when I am given a job I will always carry it out" he was quite right, so he just sauntered through his Army life until he married a rich woman*”).

I had not been long in this post when I recognised the absolute need for the provision of a Female Hospital. I mentioned the matter to the Medical Officer in charge of Women and Children, who told me I was faithfully to carry out the instructions I received, but to keep dormant the faculty of thinking, that others were paid for thinking for me, and that my place was to give practical effect to their thinking. He remarked laconically that the Institution had done so far without a Female Hospital and that if such a suggestion was made it must emanate from those who administered the establishment. I declined to accept his dictum as to my place in life and told him that I had been accustomed to think for the Public and for my subordinates, when forced to do so by the indifference of those whose thinking was exclusively confined to their own personal interests. His evasiveness did not satisfy me, and I resolved in my mind how I could circumvent him, my superior, and gain the ear of the Principal Medical Officer. I had not long to wait. A batch of 750 invalids arrived home one day from India, in 1872, a cold April morning. Two of the women were helpless invalids, one Mrs. Holt of the 65th Regiment suffering from carcinoma, the other Mrs. Robinson of the Royal Scots enfeebled by Phthisis Pulmonalis. I had them removed from the train on the stretchers on which they had come from Portsmouth, but having no barrack room beds or straw mattresses, I left them on the stretchers, having put them into their room through the window. My wife undertook to nurse them and to provide for them what ever they needed until I could find a nurse.

I called on the Treasurer of the Regimental Charity Fund, the Reverend Mr. Ponsford, Chaplain of the Episcopalian troops. He asked “What is their religion?” I replied they might be like the majority of mankind and follow the religion of their own country, the one a Roman Catholic and the other a Presbyterian. I got a very emphatic refusal and told that my responsibility was for their bodies and not their souls. I said that I would see the Commandant. This Fund was not an episcopalian fund, but one to which all regiments subscribed.

I called on Mrs. Deeble, the Superintendent of Nurses, she came with me to the Married Quarters. She was very much touched with the helpless condition of these women and wondered how she and others had overlooked the pressing claims of sick women returning from India. I sought to palliate their obtuseness by remarking that it was the trying journey home which resulted in diminishing the need for help for women invalids on arrival at the home ports. She asked what did I want, I said for her to come with me to the Principal Medical Officer to back up what I wanted, as I was sure to get a kind hearing from Surgeon-General F. W. Innes.

After a long talk with him, we went to the Commandant's office, where Colonel Gordon was deeply interested in the proposal that immediate provision should be made for sick women and sent us to the Commissariat Officer in charge, who listened sympathetically and asked what I had to suggest. I suggested that Ward 42 B the end Ward in the Convalescent Division, as it was really a small hospital complete in itself with kitchen, bath, lavatories and 20 beds, that we should first ask the War Office for authority for this appropriation and we should allow the Charity Fund to pay for the nurse. If it was a success we should then ask for authority for rations and the pay of the nurse.

This was done for twelve months with success and then a building originally intended for a Mortuary was converted into a Female Hospital. Contact with what was usually good and Christ-like among the various sections of the Christian churches with which I had been associated, had by this time mellowed my previously conceived religious ideas as a radical dissenter. I conducted a Bible Class on Wednesdays in the evening in Netley Village for soldiers, sailors and villagers with most encouraging results, with a weekly average of eight souls. We met in the house of Corporal Smith of the Army Hospital Corps, who was employed on special duty in the hospital. No sooner did Parson Ponsford hear of this Bible Class that he told Corporal Smith that, if he did not turn the Bible Class out of his house, he would have him turned out of his billet in the hospital. Lady Harvey hearing of this offered us her dining room. A few weeks afterwards her brother (the late Earl of Caven) called on her, and on hearing from her the story of the Bible Class shortly afterwards came back from London with sufficient funds to open a comfortable Hall for the Class meetings, and Sunday services—much to the annoyance and discomfiture of the parson.

At the request of an invalid of the 61st Regiment (2nd Bn. The Gloucester Regiment), I visited the Superintendent of the Methodist Church in Southampton to ask him to visit Netley Hospital and meet an invalid just home from the West Indies—a member of the Methodist Church. I asked the Wardmaster to admit the Reverend J. J. Prescott should he come in my absence and to introduce him to this patient. This he accordingly did—a few minutes later I joined them and remained with him while he conversed with the sick soldier.

Soon our militant chaplain arrived and reaching the bed, scowled and retreated. He went to the Wardmaster and rebuked him for allowing a non-conformist parson to come into the ward and visit this sick soldier. He got no satisfaction there. He made off at once to the Commandant and registered his complaint. I was hastily summoned to attend at the Commandant's office, and questioned as to my conduct in allowing a strange chaplain, and that a non-conformist, to visit a patient.

I repudiated the claim and questioned his right to challenge any minister who came to the hospital to see any member of his Church. I was told that if I acted again like that the Army Discipline Act would be applied. I informed him that there was a letter in the files in his office, from the Commander-in-Chief asking the Commandant to recognise the minister appointed by the Wesleyan Conference to minister to the spiritual necessities of soldiers belonging to that Church, whether serving soldiers or patients. I then informed him that a letter would be in the hands of the Secretary of our Committee of Privileges by nine o'clock the following morning, to teach the parson that others have rights as well as himself.

On request I explained the nature of this Committee, it consisted of Members of Parliament, Members from Commerce, from the Law and retired Naval and Army Officers. On my leaving his office, he had sent for the Captain of Orderlies to stop any reference to this Committee. I had written in the interval to the Reverend Charles Prest, the Secretary of the Home Mission Committee. Four days after my interview with the Commandant, a communication came from the Horse Guards directing him to receive and recognise the Reverend William Moister, Wesleyan Chaplain to minister to the Wesleyan Methodist soldiers in the Royal Victoria Hospital.

Some time after this skirmish, I was summoned to the Commandants' office. I found the Commandant and the Captain of Orderlies discussing the question of Canteen supplies. I was asked my opinion on their quality and prices and why I and others preferred to go into Southampton grocers. I knew I was on dangerous ground, if I said anything about the administration of the Canteen. I gave instances of quality and prices. The Adjutant and the Captain of Orderlies disagreed with me, tried to discount my statements but the Commandant supported me and changes took place. On my return to my quarters, my orderly Phelan, was patiently awaiting my return, to know the reason for my hasty summons to the office. I detailed the nature of my visit, to which he quietly remarked "and shure you may as well begin to pack up, as if you said anything against John Rofs and the Canteen you will soon find yourself as far from Netley as they can send you".

I had by this time passed my examination as a dispenser of medicines and was liable to removal whenever a vacancy presented itself. Phelan's prophecy was not long in being literally fulfilled. The Commandant went on leave and the administration virtually fell into the hands of the Captain of Orderlies. It was at once arranged that I should proceed to Aldershot to take up the duties of Staff Dispenser. This was the second occasion on which I had to leave Netley, solely because I had exposed the shortcomings of those who should have been the custodians of the moral purity of the place. On his return from leave, the Commandant was very angry when he heard of my removal and wanted to insist on my recall, but as I was a qualified dispenser I could not be allowed to remain in the post to which I was casually appointed. I joined at Aldershot in June 1872 for duty in the Divisional Staff Surgery. A few days after joining, I was appointed by the Apothecary to take charge of the Army Medical Stores in addition to my other work, as the Sergeant in charge was detailed for manoeuvres. I was told that, as this duty was of a temporary nature I need not take stock of the stores. I declined to take over the stores on such a condition and insisted on taking stock. I took an accurate inventory of everything in the store and found that the values of the deficiencies was twenty-five pounds sterling. The Apothecary Captain of Orderlies, trusted too much on the integrity of his subordinates. On presenting Captain Collins with the list of deficiencies he was furious against the absent storekeeper. He came back to me with a list and a letter which he proposed to send to the Principal Medical Officer asking the Paymaster to recover the amount. I chaffed him on his simplicity in allowing the storekeeper to fool him and to expect the P.M.O. to sympathise with him!

I suggested that he should go to the Government Contractor and buy the drugs at wholesale prices and so replace them. The culprit, some months afterwards drowned himself in the hospital water-tank.

I made a mental note that not only cooks and stewards found avenues of speculation but that the medical store-keepers found avenues through which it was possible to dispose of high class drugs without fear of detection when the apothecaries of that day failed in doing their duty. (*W.K.M. I note that after arriving in Aldershot in June 1872, the Apothecary to the Forces, Joseph Collins wrote a tribute to Lance-Sergeant Morrison in these words "I beg most strongly to recommend Lance-Sergeant Morrison for promotion to a full Sergeant, he is not only a most efficient, well-educated man himself, but exerts a moral influence for good on those that work with him, or under him. I consider him an ornament and acquisition to the Corps, but he feels his inequality with other Sergeants, few of whom would be found his equal, in those qualities necessary for more important positions, which I trust and believe Lance-Sergeant Morrison is destined to fill."*)

(Signed JOSEPH COLLINS

Apothecary to the Forces

Aldershot, 7 November 1872

The original tribute is filed in his Newspaper Cuttings File: I do not recall his ever mentioning or showing it to me).

(To be continued)

JOURNALS RECEIVED

The following Journals/Publications have been received and are available in the Royal Army Medical College Library.

Australian Journal of Surgery, The; Australian and New Zealand Journal of Surgery, The; Archives of Surgery; Acta Belgica de Arte Medicinali et Pharmaceutica Militari; Annales Chirurgiae et Gynaecologiae Fenniae; Annals of Clinical Research; Armed Forces Medical Journal, A.R.E.

British Medical Journal; British Journal of Surgery, The; British Medical Bulletin; Bulletin of the American Health Organisation; Boletín de la Oficina Sanitaria Panamericana; Canadian Journal of Public Health; Central African Journal of Medicine, The; Fire; Giornale di Medicina Militare; Hellenic Armed Forces Medical Review; Indian Journal of Medical Research, The; Investigation Clinica.

J.A.M.A. The Journal of the American Medical Association; Journal of the Irish Medical Association; Journal of the Royal Naval Medical Services; Journal of the Oslo City Hospitals; Lancet; Leprosy Review; Latpikh Enidegphée.

Medical Journal of Australia; Medical Digest; Medicine Tropicale; Military Medicine; Military Review; Military Medicine; Materia Medica Polona; National Defence Medical Journal.

Practitioner, The; Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine; Quarterly Journal of Medicine, The.

Revue Internationale des Services de Santé; Revista de la Sanidad Militar Argentina; Revista Cuban Medicina Tropical; Revista Portuguesa de Medicina Militar; Royal Society of Health Journal; Royal Engineers Journal, The.

Scottish Medical Journal; South African Journal of Medical Sciences, The; South African Medical Journal, The; Societe Medico-Chirurgicale des Hopitaux et Formations Sanitaires des Armees. St. Bartholomew's Hospital Journal.

Transactions of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene; Transactions and Studies of the Royal College of Physicians of Philadelphia; Tropical Diseases Bulletin; Ulster Medical Journal, The.

W.H.O. Chronicle; Wehrmedizinische Monatsschrift.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Annual Report of the City Medical Officer of Health, Durban; After the Battle; Broadway; India News; King's Gazette; London Hospital Gazette, The; Star & Garter Magazine, The; W.H.O. Technical Report Series; W.H.O. Food Additive Series; W.H.O. Laboratory Techniques in Rabies; W.H.O. World Directory of Veterinary Schools 1971. W.H.O. World Directory of Medical Schools 1970.