GLIMPSES OF ARMY LIFE FROM WITHIN FROM 1860 TO 1895

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(Continued)

The Army Hospital Corps was for several years unfortunate in its commissioned representatives in the West Indies. I was accordingly discounted in Garrison life at the social valuation of my predecessors. My standing in the church however found me friends and work outside the Garrison coterie.

At the annual meeting of the Y.M.C.A. I was invited to second the Resolution to be proposed by the Reverend Jonothan Cadman Richardson, Wesleyan Minister of Bridgetown. I declined this on the ground that Mr. Richardson was the most ornate orator in the whole of the West Indian churches, and the contrast between us might militate against me in public services, but that I had no objection to following any of the other speakers.

I accordingly followed the Lord Bishop of the Diocese, a fine specimen of the christian overseer. The Bishop made an admirable appeal to the young men to justify their assumption of the title of "Christian Association". The Governor of the Colony (Sir W. Robinson) was in the Chair, and having good reason to know that there was a peculiar laxity in Garrison Society in Sabbath observances encouraged by the Governor. I took the opportunity to drive home the responsibility of their office, laying particular emphasis on certain social sins peculiar to European Society in tropical climes. This offended the Governor and his staff, but it met with the hearty approval and commendation of the Bishop.

As a result of the disapproval of the Governor's staff, when the invitations for The Queen's Birthday ceremony at Government House were issued I was the only commissioned officer in the Garrison omitted from this National function. Bakers, tailors, grocers and publicans were there in abundance.

Having never attended a dance or a ball during my service, I waited till the function was over, then wrote to the General-Officer-Commanding to ascertain whether Colonial Governors, who invited local tradesmen to The Queen's Birthday gathering drew the line of social demarcation at Army Quartermasters. To this the Governor replied in an apologetic strain and threw the blame on his secretary. I was prepared for this explanation, the Secretary being a brother-in-law of the Garrison Chaplain.

Having taken up the duties of Circuit Steward in the Wesleyan Methodist Church (Bethel Circuit) in December 1883, I had an opportunity of gauging the wisdom (or otherwise) of severing the West Indian Churches from the control of the Foreign Missionary Committee in London. I opposed it in the District Meeting both on financial and geographical grounds, urging as my principal objection, the absence of laity from the Annual conference as an unsuperable barrier to the success of the innovation. The agitation was pressed by the native-born West Indian ministers, who saw a ray of celestial glory behind the President's Chair.

To the ministers the outing promised an enjoyable annual re-union at the expense of the Churches, while the laymen would have the luxury of paying mail boat fare from the various islands, with hotel expenses until the fortnightly mail returned.

At the Conference of 1885 the lay representatives of the Barbados District alone attended, while at the Second Conference in Antigua only two lay representatives were present. This together with the extreme commercial depression in the Islands augured ill for the success of the movement.

The First Conference (by the casting vote of the President) decided to establish a Theological College and a Higher Grade School in St. John's Antigua. I opposed the project vehemently from the fact that one of the most successful Higher Grade Schools in our Colonial Empire was established at York Castle Jamaica under the Principalship of the Reverend Doctor Murray, one of our most talented native ministers in the West Indies.

The Antigua School was doomed to fail, but its demise was hastened by earthquakes, hurricanes, floods and fire, having in turn depleted the coffers of the supporters of the missions in the Carribean Seas. Retrenchment is fatal to spiritual progress, but in the then condition of the West Indian Islands retrenchment was an absolute necessity.

The sneering peripatetic literary tourist has now and again sought to discount the work of the West Indian missionaries, but from an extended service in Church life at Home and in our Eastern and Western Colonial Possessions I unhesitatingly affirm that as fine a specimen of the regenerated christian can be found among our coloured population as among the highly privileged christians at home, while their liberal contributions to church work would put to shame a large proportion of our church members at home. The West Indian negroes have been too long in bondage to the European planter to rise to a higher tone of moral life in the short period of their liberation from slavery. It has taken fifteen hundred years for the British Isles to rise from Paganism to its present unsatisfactory religious state, while the comparative progress of our missions in Ceylon and in the West Indies has been amazingly satisfactory.

The cruel legislation prompted by the intolerance of the State Churches in the West Indies during the eighteenth century was of a brutal nature and such as could only be conceived by the presiding genius of the Spanish Inquisition.

A dissenter found preaching the Gospel in St. Vincent was for the first offence subject to a fine of one hundred pounds sterling, or imprisonment for lengthened periods if unable to pay the fine: for the second offence thirty-nine lashes, and for the third the extreme penalty of death. Notwithstanding repeated applications of these inhuman laws, sanctified perseverance triumphed over bigotry and oppression yet the dregs of intolerance still lingers on in one form or another wherever a religion is established, be it Protestant, Papist or Heathen.

In the month of March 1884 the Staff Officer Army Hospital Corps conceived the idea that as the Principal Medical Officer was located in Barbados the District Officer serving there might take over the duties of the Officer Army Hospital Corps Jamaica and control the doings of his subordinates one thousand miles from the base of operations. Accordingly the Officer Army Hospital Corps serving in Jamaica was ordered home and I was instructed to proceed there and relieve him of his duties, making the

necessary local arrangements for the weekly payment of the men of the Corps with proper arrangements for the oversight of Hospital stores and provisions, then return to Barbados.

The Senior Medical Officer demurred to this arrangement because of the refusal of medical officers to undertake the financial responsibility involved in the new departure. Through the crass ignorance of the Staff Officer of the Corps at the War Office the warrant officer was located in the Blue Mountains with the European troops, instead of with the Senior Medical Officer at Kingston. Being deprived of the experience of the warrant officer the Senior Medical Officer insisted that I should visit every six months. To this I had a decided objection, my experience being such as to negative the proposal.

I accompanied the Principal Medical Officer to Jamaica on Inspection duty. I pointed out to him the peculiar hardship to which I was subjected owing to the War Office Regulations limiting personal allowance to seven days to officers detached from Headquarters, the regulations compelling me to come on to the local allowance of three shillings a day during the remaining twenty-one days of our stay on the Island. I was charged seventeen shillings a day at the Hotel, while the Principal Medical Officer and the Chief Paymaster were being entertained as the Guests of Colonel Wiseman Clarke Commanding the troops on the Island.

My appeal was lightly treated and I was recommended to do as others had done similarly situated, that is to take a week at Up Park Camp, a week at Newcastle, a week at Port Royal and the fourth week at Up Park Camp and thus circumvent the War Office. I declined to act on the proposal as my duties at these stations did not justify my stay, while neither a Hotel or a Boarding House existed at these stations. I was told that I must put up with the inevitable, if I objected to follow the traditional usages of the Service. I was thus mulcted of over twenty pounds for the privilege of a month's residence in Jamaica on the public service.

I had an interesting experience when visiting the Garrison at Newcastle in relief of Quartermaster Hunt of the Army Hospital Corps. This station is over twenty miles from Kingston. From Kingston to Gordonstown we travel by ordinary cab, and from Gordonstown to the top of the Blue Mountains on horse-back through forests, along mountain ledges and crossing ravines. To my intense disgust I found the place destitute of even a common lodging house. We had intended to have a day or two in the Blue Mountains to explore its botanical treasures, notably its ferns (of which I possess over one hundred and fifty specimens), but in this we were balked owing to its primitive condition. On arrival we presented our cards at the Orderly Room and at the Officers Mess of the "Royal Scots" and returned to the Hospital to transfer the stores from the outgoing officer to the warrant officer who was taking over, and to be in permanent charge.

We naturally expected that, under existing circumstances, we would have had extended to us the usual courtesies of the Service, but being Quartermasters, branded by the War Office as having only "Honorary Rank", which the great Samuel Johnson calls "the semblance of rank" we were left out in the cold to dine and breakfast on bread and cheese from the Canteen and water from the mountain brook. We carried out the transfer of stores during the night, verified by the inventories, reporting the result by letter to the Medical Officer in charge, Surgeon Heffernan of the Army Medical Department, and left for Kingston at daybreak, hoping to reach it in time for a late breakfast.

I returned to Barbados by the next homeward mail regretting that it was beyond my power to order a contingent of War Office clerks, who frame the allowance regulations, to spend a month at a Kingston Hotel on a Quartermaster's pay and another month in the Blue Mountains on bread and cheese, after which the next Allowance Warrant would deal more reasonably with the allowances of subordinate officers. During my service an officer under the rank of Major was allowed but ten shillings a day when absent from his station for a night, while the higher ranks were allowed fifteen shillings for the same duty. Hotel keepers ignored War Office Regulations and charged all ranks alike.

The day following my return from Jamaica, I was hurriedly called to the Hospital to see an orderly of the Army Hospital Corps admitted to Hospital with a laceration of the arm from the bite of a drunken corporal of the West Indian Regiment. In submitting the charge sheet against him I was careful to include the destruction of a pair of trousers belonging to the injured man. This the Officer Commanding the West Indian Regiment (Major Patchett) deleted and tried the corporal for drunkenness only. When the Court Martial was promulgated I applied for the price of a pair of trousers and was told that, as the Court Martial had not sentenced the man to pay for the trousers the charge was inadmissible. I appealed to the General-Officer-Commanding, who ordered me to issue a pair of trousers and charge it to the public. I knew the Clothing Regulations too well to make the issue until I knew who was to pay for the trousers. Eventually after much correspondence the Officer Commanding the West Indian Depot was ordered to remit me the cash and the correspondence ceased.

Shortly after this incident the Principal Medical Officer, Deputy-Surgeon-General Holton was invalided home, to the regret of everyone whose duties brought them into contact with him, and closed the career of an able and courteous administrator and a most considerate chief.

On the retirement of General Ralph Brown, the West Indian Command fell to the lot of Major-General Sir Charles Knight Pearson, K.C.B., the Commandant of the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley. I did not look forward with any pleasure to his assumption of the Command. I had been instrumental in curtailing his interference in the routine duties of the Hospital at Netley (previous preferred to) and knowing his dislike of the Army Medical Department in general, felt that I should soon feel the full weight of his resentment. I had not long to wait.

When the building known as The Naval Hospital ceased to be used for lunatic patients of the West Indian Regiments, the War Office directed the General to re-appropriate the building as quarters for the Commanding Officer of the West Indian Regiment Depot. This officer, whose sanity had never been questioned by those who knew him, however much they might question his judgement, positively declined to be thrust into such insanitary quarters. After three unsuccessful attempts to get it certified by a medical board as fit for occupation the General decided to dispense with a certificate of the Medical Department and applied for War Office authority to convert it into quarters for the Surveyor, Royal Engineers and the Quartermaster, Army Medical Staff. The former of these officers was allowed a large consolidated allowance in lieu of Quarters and Foreign Service pay, while the latter was allowed £54 per annum for lodgings but nothing for foreign residence.

I declined after six months in these quarters to continue to live there. The Surveyor, Royal Engineers fitted up his end of the building with all the necessary sanitary arrangements, while at the end I occupied was left as it was when condemned by the Medical Board. The General refused my appeal for a bathroom. The sea was so near at hand and I could use it if I needed a bath and forget that the coast swarmed with sharks.

The newly appointed Principal Medical Officer, Deputy-Surgeon-General Muschamp declined to forward my complaint against the occupation of those quarters, but so much was the General's refusal resented by the Medical Officers that Surgeon Major W. C. Robinson vacated his quarters in my favour and he and Surgeon Major Brown occupied the latter's quarters between them.

The quarters thus placed at my disposal remained in my possession during the remainder of my residence in Barbados. My successor had to occupy the very poor Quartermaster's quarters in the old Naval Hospital, he was not given the opportunity to occupy the quarters previously loaned to me.

On the departure of the "Royal Scots" for the Cape, their place was taken by the 64th "North Staffordshire Regiment". I met this Regiment twenty years previously when under the command of Colonel Mockler, a period when Commanding Officers could remain in command so long as they were able to discharge the duties of their office to the satisfaction of the Horse Guards. New Commanding Officers must demit their office before they come to know their men.

The Regiment had lost none of its former *esprit de corps*, notwithstanding the mischievous influence of the short service enlistment Act, and the constant interchange of officers from one battalion to another. For the first time in my commissioned service I was made an "Honorary Member" of the Regimental Mess, a courtesy appreciated the more because it was conferred without my seeking it. This will always remain as a fragrant memory of the old "64th".

The flight of time brought round the season of Confidential Reports. My chief sent a very flattering one to the General regarding the performance of my duties, the influence I had over the men of the Corps, and the readiness with which I assisted the medical officers in the work of the Hospital. This did not meet with Sir Charles K. Pearson's approval.

The report was sent back with the request that a less favourable one should be sent to him, with special reference to my refusal to occupy a quarter provided for me by War Office authority. The Principal Medical Officer declined to alter a sentence, and returned it to the General. Whether he added any unfavourable comments or not I was never able to ascertain, but my reputation was so well known at the War Office that General Pearson's estimate did not trouble me much.

On his next visit to the Hospital he entered in the Visitors Book that such was the cleanliness, orderliness and general arrangements of the Hospital, that were he disposed to do so, he could find nothing on which he could ground a complaint.

On the retirement of Deputy-Surgeon-General Muschamp, Deputy-Surgeon-General Tippetts was detailed for duty in the West Indies. This officer had the misfortune to be one of those for whom, the late Director-General Sir William Muir had no particular regard and passed him over for promotion. Sir Thomas Crawford dealt

with his officers on their personal merits more than on the jaundiced reports of prejudiced superiors and on his assumption of office promoted this intelligent officer.

For the first time I served under a Chief who treated his Quartermaster with the same courtesy as he extended to his medical officers, such kindness being extremely rare in the Army Medical Department.

Shortly after the appointment of the new Principal Medical Officer I was instructed to represent the Department at a Court of Enquiry convened to enquire into the circumstances under which two rations of bread and beef appeared to have been drawn by the Hospital Steward for a period of twelve months on account of two men belonging to the Depot, West Indian Regiment, who had been returned to duty from the Station Hospital to their Corps. For this period the men were in mess and did duty in the Depot, and said to be shown in the Company states as in Hospital employ. The Hospital Steward was charged with having received the bread and meat and knowingly misappropriated the same.

I repudiated the accusation and produced documentary evidence showing the date of their removal and notification of the same to the Commanding Officer and to the Paymaster. I was told by the President that I was not to question the witnesses, but simply to listen to their statements. I declined to sit there under these conditions, while such charges were being made against the Hospital Steward, and intimated my withdrawal from what I regarded as a one-sided enquiry at the same time handing my Protest to the President.

The objection to my questioning the witnesses was withdrawn and I took advantage of this to subject the Paymaster and the Officer Commanding to questions that emphasized the utter carelessness manifested in the preparation of their Ration Returns. I was intensely amused with the absence of the most superficial knowledge of the interior economy of the Corps by these officers. My mind reverted to an incident in the Court of Sessions in Edinburgh where Lord Jeffry failed to get any information in a contested will case from an illiterate witness. Henry Cockburn noticing this asked to be allowed to examine the witness and proceeded:—

“ You know the testator Tam Smith? ”. “ O! Aye! Aye Tam and I herded together as laddies ”. “ Was there anything in the crater? ”. “ Deil the het, but what the spoon pit in him ” (Scots. het = heat). “ Wud ye lippen him to sell a coo? (lippen ‘ to have confidence in ’). “ Lippen him to sell a coo? ”. “ I wadna lippen to him to sell a calf! ”.

I involuntarily came to the same conclusion regarding the gentlemen who figured as exponents of the interior economy of this usually well officered regiment. Verily, the British Officer of the 19th Century was better at fighting than at Parade or Barrack-room displays.

It was not the man but the system that was to blame. After considerable sparring with the President and Members I succeeded in clearing the Hospital Steward, and in teaching the haughty acting Paymaster that he had much to learn before he could adequately fill the position of military accountant. Having in this instance been mulct in the sum of fifteen pounds sterling, it is probable that the Paymaster's slumbering genius must have been quickened by the process.

It is wonderful how sensitive the human brain becomes when quickened by the

infliction of a monetary penalty (*W.K.M. I may be forgiven for once again noting how strange, the Father and his two sons W.K.M. and H.McL. M. all spent quite a time during their service life in "defending" soldiers. H. became a barrister-in-law and defended many after he had left the service. I asked for, and had one interview with the Judge Advocate General at the War Office on this subject*).

Being within measurable distance of completing my foreign service tour, I noted a few characteristics of the West Indian negro. In variety of colour they are as interesting as a milliner's shop window, representing every shade from Chinese yellow to the Nubian blackness depicted in the show cards of the Plymouth Dome Black Lead manufacturers.

Their religions take their colour from their surroundings, and unlike the heathen population of our Eastern possessions, have had no association with any form of theistic belief from their progenitors. Fetishism inwoven with fatalism seems to be the leading features of their religious life. Where they have been instructed properly in evangelistic schools they soon rise to an appreciation of spiritual things, and many are zealous and conscientious in the maintenance of their faith.

In intellectual development where they have fair play they are very little behind the Europeans. For sobriety in their own land, they are in advance of the Anglo-Saxon, drunkenness being very rare amongst them (1883 to 1886).

Some of them there are those who cultivate the vices of their preceptors and regard it as the first item on the progressive menu. They regard the lack of enthusiasm and ritual in Protestant worship as due to the lack of faith in its adherents.

That their intellectual grasp of spiritual truth is hazy in the extreme cannot be gainsaid, but when compared with the practical heathenism of the cultured and uncultured sections of the British community, who frequent our Divorce and Criminal Courts it requires no stretch on imagination to assert that during the period they have been under religious teaching the negro has advanced with more rapid strides towards conformity to the divine ordinances than the highly privileged Anglo-Saxon.

Here and there we have met with native christians of unblemished life, and with genuine faith in fervent prayer. An instance of this was once observed in a prayer meeting where a devoted enthusiast was appealing to Heaven to increase the intellectual equipment of her English pastor "Lord! Bless de minister and give him brains". The responsive "Amen" affirmed the principle that her discernment was superior to her discrimination.

These people have been imperfectly taught. They have been preached at, instead of being first grounded in the doctrines of the christian faith. They required the teaching of the Sunday School and not the highly ornate essay on "Thou shalt not steal". Their spiritual training has been very defective and because of this their moral obligations are deplorably defective.

A girl of fourteen years whom I employed as an assistant nurse had ten brothers and sisters, but no two could claim the same paternity. The attempt to impress on her the evils of her home surroundings called forth the remark that the majority of the married women with whom she had come into contact would have been happier if the wedding ring had been at the bottom of the sea. This is on par with the general trend of the irreligious portion of the community.

I was much amused with the metaphysical deductions of my cook. Being remonstrated with for an outburst of temper, she replied with some degree of warmth "How I know good unless I know bad first". She had a peculiar method of emphasising her opinions. Once on asking her what ailed my groom, as he failed to turn up for his work in time, she quietly replied "Well Master can I see into him's interior". The reasoning was unanswerable. Naturally rude in speech, she was thoroughly honest and trustworthy. I had no complaint to make regarding my servant and in consequence made no change during my period of service in the Command, a fact not chronicled in West Indian Garrisons.

While quartered in the old Naval Hospital pending the promised reconstruction, I applied to the Assistant-Adjutant-General for a labourer from the Corps of Military Labourers for fatigue duties. My request was unceremoniously refused. I pointed out to him that half a dozen or more were attached to each of the Public Quarters appropriated to officers in the Garrison and I was the only Departmental officer in the Garrison occupying a public quarter with grounds attached to whom this privilege was denied. I was told that I must hire a civilian to keep the Government grounds in order (The Assistant-Adjutant-General was the Commanding Officer of the Corps of Military Labourers available for fatigue duties). On his refusal to assist with my legitimate appeal for help, I told him that before I was six months in England, there would be no labourers available to distribute among favoured officers. I was told that men of higher rank and social position than I had tried to disband them and had failed.

Shortly after my return to England some friends, who consulted me in 1883, on matters connected with the Army Medical Department during the sitting of the Morley Committee, suggested to Lord Randolph Churchill, that he should ask me some questions on West Indian Expenditure bearing on his retrenchment crusade (*W.K.M. Lord Randolph Churchill—Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1886*). His Private Secretary applied to me to furnish him with such items of public expenditure to which I considered the pruning knife could be applied without interfering with the efficiency of the service.

Accordingly I submitted a few suggestions bearing on unnecessary expenditure giving special prominence to the disbandment of the Military Labourers, the withdrawal of the Deputy-Surgeon-General and Quartermaster Army Medical Staff and constituting Barbados and Jamaica into two separate charges, and various minor items connected with Garrison expenditure.

I had previously submitted the proposal regarding the Army Medical arrangements to the Director-General Sir Thomas Crawford, who at once fell in with the suggestion. The Military Labourers disappeared from Estimates notwithstanding a stubborn resistance from the local military authorities. A friend writing from Barbados some time after remarked that I might be thankful that the Atlantic was between me and the ire of the Barbados Garrison.

Thanks to the sanitary improvements effected in Barrack construction in Barbados it is not the death trap it formerly was. Pure water has been brought into the Garrison and private dwellings in town and the suburbs, but the common people must still beg water from their more opulent neighbours or trust for their supplies on brackish water from surface wells. In the Hastings District the poor were deprived of the luxury of pure water because a local publican refused to pay the water rate. He thought it might

endanger his trade. Indifference to the ultimate effects of their traffic is written large on every action of retailers of alcoholic liquors.

The dread scourge of West Indian Islands is the periodic epidemics of Yellow Fever. This will gradually disappear before the advancing wave of sanitary science. An intelligent sanitary officer making an inspection of the town of Bridgetown would wonder how an epidemic of smallpox has not swept out of existence the dwellers of that densely populated District (Since writing the above, Barbados has been visited by an epidemic of smallpox more virulent in its character than yellow fever). If a merciful providence withholds this scourge it will not be because of the foresight of those responsible for the health and cleanliness of this congested town.

There is no real drainage in the town (1886), the officials taking it for granted that the porous nature of the soil will atone for the culpable neglect of sanitary requirements. This accounts for the enormous prevalence of enteric fever. There is no more enjoyable Island in the West Indies than Barbados, but this is due to its climate rather than to the Sanitary Authorities.

A few days before leaving the Island, when taking farewell of the resting place of my three children. I noticed in close proximity to the cemetery, an erection of monolithic appearance. On enquiry I ascertained that it was a lighthouse in course of erection. On a close inspection I concluded that by the time the lantern platform was reached, a rat could not squeeze himself through the aperture. On returning to my quarters I twitted the Assistant Surveyor, Royal Engineers on the superior intelligence of his draughtsman who had designed the edifice. I was informed that the Department of the Royal Engineers was responsible for its erection only. Next morning the Commanding Officer, Royal Engineers was informed of my criticism and summoned the designer into his presence and upbraided him for allowing the imperfect plan to reach the contractor without verification. The inside measurements had been substituted for the outside in his direction to the contractor. Next morning it was raised to the ground.

Having completed my three years in the West Indian Command I was informed that I would be relieved in due course and return home by the troopship engaged in Colonial Trooping Service. As this ship was to make a tour of the Indian Ocean before returning to England, I protested on the ground of expenses and concluded that it would be cheaper to pay the Homeward passage by the Royal Mail than take a tour through Eastern Waters in expiation of my opposition to the ruling powers at Netley during my stay there. My relief having turned up a month before the Troopship I was allowed to return to England by the Royal Mail. The Detachment Army Hospital Corps consisting of one warrant officer, six sergeants, fifteen orderlies with half a dozen women and a large batch of children embarked by the troopship via the Cape, Mauritius, Singapore, Ceylon and Bombay, returning by the Cape, arriving in England five months after leaving Barbados.

This arrangement emanated from the Medical Officer doing Staff Officer at the War Office: this atrocious blunder would not have occurred with an officer of the Army Hospital Corps doing duty as Staff Officer, nor by an officer from the ranks.

Before leaving Barbados I appealed to the Principal Medical Officer to interpose and to send the detachment home by the mail when relieved by the incoming detachment, as the arrangements were so monstrously absurd that the Quartermaster-General would alter it, if it was brought to his notice. Knowing the aversion of the General-

Officer-Commanding to show the least interest in the welfare of the Army Hospital Corps, he declined to move in the matter.

On 28 October 1886, I embarked on board the Steamship "Para" for England. The voyage was tame and uninteresting: the passengers few in number, and apparently invalids, returning home after having exhausted their energies "gathering gear by every wile", too often disregarding the poet's dictum "that's justified by honour" a clause that seldom enters into a successful colonist's consideration.

Among them was a lady going to join her husband on the West Coast of Africa. Her anaemic condition led the ship's doctor to prescribe the usual remedy of the inexperienced, a daily portion of Hennessy's Three Stars "vinum Gallaci" from a consciousness that what he enjoyed others would find a palatable "cure all". Having finished the first quarter bottle, she confided her dislike of it to a clergyman returning home from British Guiana, on leave from a Government Reformatory. This worthy underestimated the sincerity of the run of the general penitents and rudely replied "You seem to take very kindly to it", an expression of opinion that commanded general confirmation. After twelve days run we reached Plymouth and to avoid crossing to France en route to Southampton, most of the passengers landed in Plymouth and trained to London.

On reaching London I reported my arrival at the Army Medical Department. I first interviewed the Staff Officer Army Hospital Corps with the hope of inducing him to send the West Indian Relief Army Hospital Corps home by the Mail and save the women and children the discomforts of five months purgatorial suffering on a Troopship. He declined to take any action.

He had blundered and the arrangement must stand. They were only soldiers' wives and had no representative in Parliament and no voice would be raised there to expose the inhuman treatment. If found in a romance this story of administrative incompetence would be regarded as incredible even on the part of a War Office Official. I left the office with a supreme contempt for the man who was pitchforked into an office for which he was wholly unfitted. This was the officer, who in 1881 illegally altered the status of the officers of the Army Hospital Corps from combatant to relative rank.

My interview with the Director-General Sir Thomas Crawford, K.C.B. was of a much more cordial nature. He informed me that he had a request from the Senior Medical Officer in Chatham, Brigade Surgeon Wade, who was my Commanding Officer in Aldershot in 1880, urging him to send me to him on my return home. Sir Thomas added that he had been to Devonport on the previous week and that the condition of the hospital was deplorable and that he had determined to send me there, but as this was the first personal application he ever had for an officer of our Corps he would leave me to make my choice. I decided to go to Devonport this being the larger hospital.

Having settled this point, he enquired very minutely as to matters of public interest affecting the Department in the West Indies. I pointed out that keeping a Deputy-Surgeon-General in Barbados, having the medical administration of scattered Garrisons from the Bahamas to Demarara involving a fortnight's stay in each Garrison for an inspection that could be carried out in five hours, was unsound administration. In Jamaica the compulsory stay was for one month.

It seemed better to withdraw the Deputy-Surgeon-General and the Quartermaster, and to appoint a Brigade Surgeon in Barbados for the Windward Islands and British Guiana, with another in Jamaica for that Colony, including British Honduras and the Bahamas. I explained that questions of administration first came to Barbados, remained there a fortnight before it could be sent out to any other station, and a whole month in Jamaica before it could be sent back to Barbados, remain there another fortnight before it could be sent on to London. The change was shortly afterwards carried out on the score of efficiency.

On the 15th November 1886, I joined for duty in Devonport. I found the place the reverse of a bed of roses. The Sergeant-Major was my senior as a Staff-Sergeant, when we were both employed at the War Office (1879), and the supercession rankled in his mind. He exerted himself to thwart me at every point, and was assisted in this by the Senior Medical Officer, Brigade Surgeon Herbert. As a disciplinarian the Sergeant-Major was woefully deficient, but as a statistical clerk he had few equals in the Service. He was verily a round pin put into a square hole. I was made to understand that I was not wanted there, whatever the Director-General might think of the Hospital's needs.

I went on my way quietly until I finished taking over the ward equipment and stores. On reaching the Medical Stores I was informed by the Brigade Surgeon that he had placed the medical stores in charge of a surgeon and that his decision was final. I told him that finality was a most inappropriate phrase to use in the Army Medical Department and referred him to the Regulations on the subject, remarking that I allowed no one to usurp my duties assigned to me by the Regulations of the Department, and that, if he persisted in his opposition I would complain to the Director-General. He refused to submit my complaint to the Principal Medical Officer. I then informed him that if he persisted in his attitude that I would pass him and the Principal Medical Officer and would interview the Director-General on the following Sunday.

Finding that I was determined to assert my prerogative he forwarded my letter and in reply he was severely reprimanded, and told he was there not to make Regulations, but to enforce those made for him. He was requested to give me every help to carry out my duties.

When he found that I had the confidence of the Director-General he changed his tactics. A few mornings after the matter of the medical stores was settled, I found two patients on an "entire" diet and a pint of porter in one of the wards. I found nothing was known in the office about the reason for these extras. I sent for the previous twelve months diet sheets from the Commissariat Office and found that seventeen different medical officers had treated those men in ten months not one of them changed or notified the various stages that had supervened during the ten months. No entry was made in a case book and only by the diet sheets could any information be obtained.

The Brigade Surgeon railed at the unfortunate officer who had charge of the ward. He sought to purge himself of negligence in supervision by blaming the man who had the least responsibility in the matter. He hinted that a pair of vigilant eyes might be better employed than overlooking the shortcomings of men whose multifarious duties condoned their negligence.

I had not been long in the station, when I suspected the existence of the usual peculative mania on the part of the cook. The difficulty was to secure a conviction. I gave the cook to understand that I was dissatisfied with the weight of the diets after

they were distributed. A few days after, an order came from the War Office directing the transfer of the cook to one of the hospitals in the Home District. He had applied to one of the sergeants in the War Office to get himself transferred to one of the hospitals in the Home District fearing he might come to grief in the appropriation of what might be regarded as his righteous perquisites, but which I regarded in a different light.

His successor was an adept in prevaricative ingenuity. Finding twelve pounds of beef concealed in a drawer in the kitchen after the diets had been in process of cooking. I questioned him as to how it came there. He informed me that he was in the habit of "boning" the roasting meat, so as to improve the soup diets by the addition of the bones. I remarked that "boning" the roast meat was a peculiarity of Hospital Cooks for other purposes than the improvement of the soup and ordered him to discontinue the practice and placed him in arrest for having meat in his possession when it should have been in the oven. He had an accomplice that assisted him out of his difficulties and when the case went before the Principal Medical Officer, I found it has been discussed in my absence and he was only given a reprimand.

Next morning he waylaid the Senior Medical Officer and asked to be allowed to continue his former practice for the improvement of the soup. He succeeded in his appeal and boasted that he had checkmated the quartermaster. I dared him to repeat this questionable practice and told the Senior Medical Officer that it was subversive of discipline to allow this man to ignore my ruling in order for him to carry out his nefarious practices. He at once cancelled the permission given under a misapprehension. Within a year I placed the cook four times in arrest for robbing the patients, but the Principal Medical Officer's clerk always arranged for his release before the case came up for disposal. On one occasion I found three pounds of tea hidden away in a corner. He insisted it was given to him by his mother when on furlough. I declined to accept his plausible statement and gave as my reason that this blend of tea was only issued by the Government. I took possession of the packet and left it in the charge of the steward while I went to report the matter to the Senior Medical Officer.

After his spending half an hour of discursive talk trying to impress on me the disgrace involved in bringing a non-commissioned officer to trial for theft, two medical officers were sent with me to examine and report on the find. During my absence some green kapok tea had been added to the packet. I protested against this addition but the steward persisted that no one had interfered with it. This satisfied the medical officers who accepted the cook's story when backed up by Sergeant Quelch (whose piety was unquestioned, it being generally known that he spent two weeks out of every year doing penance for his shortcomings in a monastery in the neighbourhood of Buckfastleigh). Personally I had come to the conclusion that this was a most inadequate expiation for a year's spiritual transgressions.

The medical Officers admitted that without the addition of the green tea it was a perfect example of Government tea. I was again baffled in securing a conviction but arranged with the Staff Officer to remove him from the district. He was sent on foreign service. I thus got rid of him. After he had left the station, the Sergeant-Major informed me that I was right in my surmise regarding the tea added during my absence at the Senior Medical Officer's office. The steward sent his wife to the nearest grocer's shop for green tea and mixed it with the tea left by me in his custody. Such has been the

disciplinary instinct for many years of the average soldier bequeathed to the nation by the Cardwellian system. The information in the possession of the Sergeant-Major was withheld until it was of no use.

On the assembling of the Militia Medical Staff I was requested to apportion then their work on fatigue duties in the passage, the cookhouse and grounds. As I had been specially interested in the original suggestion for the formation of a militia medical staff, I was specially interested in their efficient training and suggested they should have lectures, drills and ward instruction in nursing the sick. I argued that the Director-General would not send thirty men there for fatigue duties. This was, at first, bitterly resented as it would encroach on the leisure of the medical officers, but on producing the War Office Orders it was seen that their proficiency had to be reported on. This had not been done previously. After a month's training the men were better sick nurses than some of the Army Hospital Corps orderlies who had been over twelve months in training. The Militia Medical Staff took to the work with a willingness to learn so as to be of some use in civil life on the completion of their training.

On joining at Devonport I found that a canteen was established in the hospital supervised by the Quartermaster and two Medical Officers, but really controlled by the sergeants of the Detachment, who each in his turn held the Stewardship for a month at a time. The object of each was to pocket as much as he could. Some of them ordered beer on their own account and pocketed the proceeds. I determined to upset this arrangement but found that I had to contend with unseen influences. I suggested an appeal to the General-Officer-Commanding the District to place the canteen under a pensioner Sergeant. On the application being submitted to the Assistant-Adjutant-General, the Principal Medical Officer's clerk sought the assistance of the General's chief clerk to refuse the application, which was accordingly done.

For more than a year I had to witness the demoralization of the men of the Detachment to enrich five or six sergeants of the Corps by the Monopoly. One morning I accompanied the Adjutant-General Colonel Vaughan-Jones round the hospital wards and in course of conversation he asked if I could find an opening for a good old soldier about to be discharged from the permanent staff of the 3rd Battalion D.C.L.I. he had been the Colour Sergeant with 'Captain' Vaughan-Jones in his regimental days and had ever since received many favours from his former Captain. I suggested that a place could be found for him as steward of the Hospital Canteen, if the General would approve of a change being made in its management. I reminded him of my previous application and its refusal. I was told to renew it, which was at once carried out. I was determined to suppress what I regarded as an unmitigated curse. The application was reluctantly forwarded by the Principal Medical Officer and was immediately sanctioned.

Before the new regime was six months old the men of the Detachment had a boat, a football and cricket club, all well-stocked out of the profits of the Canteen, with also a decided improvement in their messing.

Shortly after the Canteen was established on proper working lines, I was visited by a Brewer's Traveller with price lists and testimonials. His firm had been recommended to me some months previously by an officer, who in the absence of the General-Officer-Commanding, came from one of the Regimental Districts to inspect the Station Hospital. On enquiry, I found that this officer was a Director of the Concern hence his commendation. The traveller was sanguine of success and informed me that he had

"squared" the other members of the Committee to which I took to be some mystic touch in Freemasonry to which I was a stranger, and asked him to explain the reference. He had been told by a member of the Committee that he had first to convince me that his Firm supplied a better article than the one from which I got my supplies, and that as I was the working member of the Committee business transaction were left in my hands. If I approved, he was to send a nine-gallon cask to the Canteen as a sample, and if approved by the men he would have a twelve-month's contract. I informed him that I was a life abstainer and could not, except by analysis, differentiate between his beer and our Contractor's, Mr. Carton of Bristol, against whom I never had a complaint, but so far as I was concerned I was disposed to leave it to the men to make their own selection. I demanded an explanation of what he wished to convey in the phrase "squaring the Committee", as I know the President to be a gentleman who would not be "squared" by anyone on unworthy grounds, and as for the other member, I did not know him sufficiently to sit in judgement on his motives. He was not prepared to give me the required explanation but rose to take his departure, whispering as he did so that if I gave him the contract he would on the first order give me ten sovereigns. I immediately opened the door and bowed him out.

The sample cask came the following day, was consumed and favourably reported upon by those who partook of it. I made out a cheque for the contents of the cask, and having signed it brought it to the President for his signature. He declined to sign it as it was a sample cask and as it was favourably reported on, I was henceforth to order my supplies from that Firm. To this I replied that so far as this firm was concerned, the supply could not be changed so that the cask must be paid for. On this he became rather crusty and informed me that he had promised it to the traveller. I remarked that I had very strong reasons for not giving it to that Firm.

I was requested to accompany him to the Brigade Surgeon's office, where he stated his case and requested that I should be ordered to comply with the wishes of the majority of the Committee. The Brigade Surgeon saw no reason for withholding the supply from that Firm in question seeing that at his last inspection, the Inspecting Officer recommended that particular Firm. I then informed him of the offer made to me and added that the men thought that every canteen manager had his price, but having for the whole of my service scrupulously avoided taking gifts from contractors, it was too late to begin it on completion of my thirtieth year of service.

The Commanding Officer approved of my action, the cheque was signed and duly transmitted. That this unhallowed practice is largely carried on in the Army, from the War Office to the Drummers' Mess Room is well known to every rank in the Service, carried on with unscrupulous audacity at Home and Abroad. Discussing this disreputable practice with an Edinburgh tradesman (after leaving the Service), he informed me that on one occasion he had to give the Commanding Officer of one Unit 5 per cent discount on the year's supply to the Sergeants Mess on behalf of some Regimental Charity. Such a practice would not have been countenanced in the "purchase" days, the officers of that period maintained regimental charities without outside aid.

(to be continued)