GLIMPSES OF ARMY LIFE FROM WITHIN FROM 1860 TO 1895

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(Lieutenant of Orderlies 1879-1881)*

(Continued)

William Morrison about 1910

I had not been long in Devonport when the Foreman of Works, Royal Engineer Department called at my office and asked for a covering requisition for fifteen days of a slater on the Hospital roof. Having never ordered a slater for the roof, I declined to give him the requisition telling him that as long as I was in charge no requisition would be certified for unauthorised repairs. I was well aware that the roof was the usual milch

cow from which unauthorised adornments to certain quarters were invariably recouped. I have seen Green Houses and alterations carried out that never appeared in the Annual Army Estimates.

An entry in my note-book about this time recalls an unpleasant incident. A small non-dieted Hospital was situated in one of the Forts above Turnchapel, Plymouth District. The quartermaster Medical Staff had to visit this Fort on inspection duty, crossing by the Ferry Boat. Tram and boat cost five-pence. Having made four such visits he presented a bill for one shilling and eight pence for counter-signature by the Principal Medical Officer. Critically examining the document the Principal Medical Officer refused to sign it, on the ground that the War Office allowed thirteen shillings and sixpence for the journey, and as he and others charged that amount, the Quartermaster must do the same. The Quartermaster declined to alter it, having to certify that the amount charged had actually been paid, so the amount due was never recovered.

With Principal Medical Officers and officers of the Medical Department in general, Quartermasters have been treated as of the barrack-room caste and ineligible for participation in social functions. They were made to understand that the tennis court was forbidden to them, that they were to see that the grass was kept cut, but they were to view the game from a distance. One quartermaster audaciously presented himself at the residence of the Principal Medical Officer, and was graciously received by the family to whom his rank was unknown. Being intelligent and well-read he could hold his own in general conversation, and always made a good impression on those with whom he conversed. On the arrival of a Surgeon of the Department (the son of a local dancing-master) the status of the Quartermaster was revealed and immediately he found himself transported into the Arctic regions. The Quartermaster was the better educated of the two and by far the more intelligent, but he had the misfortune to have graduated through the barrack-room and that was enough to disqualify him for acceptance in the military social circle.

I could offer him no commiseration as I felt that he should have saved himself the indignity. If he performs his varied duties in strict accordance with the Regulations of his Department the quartermaster's position is not an enviable one. He is the only officer in the Service who is on duty daily from reveille until tattoo. He is branded by Horse Guards Regulations as being incapable of being entrusted with money, except when it serves the purpose of the War Office, or exercise his knowledge or his common sense in dealing with supplies, and is seldom a person *persona grata* with superiors or subordinates.

It has been my misfortune always to have insisted, scrupulously, on the letter of the Regulations rather than seek to interpret its hidden meaning. By those Regulations I was officially debarred from passing judgement on the quality of supplies delivered into the Hospital stores, but had simply to see that the quantities ordered were delivered. The inexperienced medical officer on joining the Service can accept or reject supplies, but the Quartermaster of forty years service is forbidden to exercise his judgement or knowledge in that matter.

One morning a recently joined Surgeon Major was orderly officer. I was aware that he had a *penchant* for discounting the Quartermaster in the presence of subordinates, and felt that the sooner we came to grips the better friends we were likely to be in the end. I examined and weighed the meat, setting aside such portions as were in accordance with my requisition, and put the remainder back into the Butcher's basket, and directed

him to hasten back to the shop and tell his master to comply with my requisition at once. On this, the Surgeon Major stepped forward and laying his hand on the basket, remarked with startling emphasis "You forget that it is my prerogative to reject or accept the meat". To this I quietly replied "You should know by this time that your prerogative begins where mine ends, I do not reject, I only return what I did not order, and as soon as I get what I ordered I shall call on you to exercise your prerogative".

The Contractor was one of the weeds of the Plymouth Meat Market. For several years he supplied the hospital at a fraction less than five pence per pound, usually the refuse of the market. I was directed by the Principal Medical Officer to assist the young medical officers in the inspection of supplies and in the general working of the hospital. This did not please the meat contractor. He never anticipated any friction on the change of stewards, cooks, or quartermasters. He was a strong believer in solidified palm oil as a wonderful lubricant, when secretly applied, and held the opinion that every man had his price. He found his mistake and appealed to the Senior Commissariat Officer for protection. He met with scant encouragement in that quarter.

Having failed there he applied to the War Office to interdict the Hospital Quartermaster from inspecting the hospital meat supplies. He accused the medical officers of subordinating their judgement to the Quartermaster's dictation, adding that he had repeatedly (in the absence of the quartermaster) tendered with success meat that he had been rejected the previous day. The War Office called for an explanation. The Principal Medical Officer justified his action in the matter, exonerated the quartermaster from the restrictions of the Contractor, and intensified the need for such supervision as the Quartermaster had carried out since joining the station.

The War Office blacklisted the Contractor, cancelling his Contract. My difficulty with hospital supplies and extras were not only with contractors. A sentimental nursing sister is not always the heaven-sent treasure that Newspaper Reporters and enthusiastic faddists represent her to be. Into certain wards, including infectious wards, they were not allowed to enter. Their presence in the ward did not reduce but rather augmented the male attendants. My objection to them was on the score of extravagance and ill-considered fads.

On one occasion I was ordered to supply half-a-pound of grapes daily for a patient under the care of Surgeon Nicholas. As it was winter I was bound down to Spanish grapes. I supplied the best procurable. This did not satisfy the nurse. She insisted on having English grown grapes. This I positively refused and pointed out that the Regulations restricted me to "fruits in season". The Contractor was in the passage during the controversy. Surgeon Nicholas sought to strengthen the Sister's appeal, and roared out as only a Cornishman can "I must have the grapes, blue grapes, even if they cost twenty shillings a pound".

I suggested that he should first obtain the sanction of the Principal Medical Officer to this extraordinary demand, after which I would procure a sample. This he declined, and I as emphatically, declined to order English grapes. He then instructed the fruiterer to procure English grapes. These he supplied at sixteen shillings a pound. At the end of the month a bill was presented for twenty-eight pounds fifteen shillings for the grapes supplied. After an angry remonstrance from the War Office the bill was paid.

This incidence did not enhance my estimate of the fitness of the average medical officer for any responsible charge outside his professional duties. I had reason to be

dissatisfied with the manner in which advancement to the higher rates of working pay in the ranks of the Army Hospital Corps was conducted, and had good reason for suspecting that the Principal Medical Officer's clerk reaped a rich harvest in consequence. I appraised him of my suspicions and was coolly told that to a certain extent I was correct, but that he would take good care that he would defy me to secure a conviction against him, if I attempted to do so. I was reluctantly compelled to admit that military law as administered under the Army Act of 1881 he would be sure to escape, an act framed not to vindicate outraged justice, but to shield the transgressor and made it almost impossible to obtain a conviction.

On my next visit to London he was transferred to Ward Duty at another station in the Western District. He has since been commissioned as a quartermaster, but for some reason or another disappeared from active service. Changes of Senior Medical Officers at Devonport under the "pot luck" system of the unification scheme were too frequent to allow of much interest to be taken in mastering the detail of the work. In five years we had six such in charge.

To master the elementary principles of military law, drill, Queen's Regulations, together with the varied Regulations which the nature of their multifarious duties imposed on them left little leisure for professional reading. As a rule they had all returned from India where everything was done for them, and where they would return again and forget all the military knowledge they had acquired at home.

One of the most unfortunate appointments made was the transfer of an officer from a Female Hospital by Deputy Surgeon General Meadows. Surgeon Major Murtagh, the senior officer of his rank was doing duty in the Plymouth Citadel and would have made an excellent Commanding Officer, but in addition to his professional attainments he had an independent judgement on all matters connected with his Department. This was considered by the Principal Medical Officer a sufficient reason for superseding him by a junior.

I was instructed to coach the newcomer in the duties of his office, especially in matters affecting military duties connected with the Corps. One morning on making my usual daily visit to the wards I found a patient in one of the isolation wards about to be discharged from the Service. He presented every appearance of entering on the early stages of acute mania, which, after former experiences at other stations justified my calling the attention of the Senior Medical Officer to the case. In a tone of offended dignity he replied "I am prepared to take your advice readily on administrative matters but in professional matters, please offer no opinion". I thanked him and returned to my office.

About midnight the patient in question, a Sergeant of the 18th Royal Irish, broke out of hospital and on the alarm being given a dozen orderlies started in pursuit. He however outdistanced them and reaching the Citadel Guard Room clamoured for the protection of the Guard maintaining that the orderlies wanted to kill him. He was brought back and placed under restraint. In the morning I reported the matter to the Senior Medical Officer and suggested that, instead of sending him to his sister-in-law in Bristol, he should be sent to his Parish in Northern Ireland. I was again reminded that I was not to offer an opinion on professional matters. I rejoined that this was administrative rather than professional, adding that if this man was sent to his sister-in-law he would probably murder her six children, or take his own life. To this he angrily

replied "I shall not write another case which your suggestion would necessitate, then apply to the War Office for permission to send him to Ireland".

Two days later, he was sent under escort to Bristol. On the third day of his residence there, he took his life by jumping off the Clifton Suspension Bridge. This would never have occurred under the Regimental Hospital System, as the medical officer was so much in touch with his men as to interest himself in their welfare. Today the soldiers medically are nobody's bairns, except when a kind-hearted nurse interests herself in them.

When the sub-accountant, Army Hospital Corps took his annual leave his duties fell to my lot. To my intense disgust I found his clerk was a non-commissioned officer whom I had had on the Curragh some years before. I found the man had not improved either in ability or moral character. I had repeatedly to rouse him up to a more intelligent appreciation of his duties, but all to no purpose. On the sub-accountant's return I suggested to him to rid himself with all speed of his clerk. I was told that I expected too much of the non-commissioned officers. He had not long to wait. His clothing ledger should have been dispatched to Pimlico not later than the first of June, and was entered in the postage account as having been sent off.

As it had not reached its destination before the first of November, the Department called repeatedly for the ledger but every application was suppressed by the Principal Medical Officer's clerk, as no other had access to them. Weary by non-compliance the Director of Clothing wired to the Principal Medical Officer for the ledger and the reason why it was being withheld so long. The fat was in the fire. The receipt of previous applications was denied. While the controversy was raging in the office, the man's wife hastened to the post office to dispatch the ledger. It was kept back for five months hoping that he might have left the station before his misdeameanours were found out. The result was that the good-natured dupe who trusted him had to pay out over thirty pounds sterling for his misplaced confidence. The subordinate was allowed to escape with a simple reprimand. Each year on the embodiment of the Militia I had to requisition the Commissariat Staff for extra bedding and clothing in consequence of the inadequate provision made for the Equipment of Station Hospitals. A grandiose scale of Equipment was laid down in the Army Medical Regulations, but no hospital in the Kingdom had a quarter of the mount of that scale.

This is a glaring absurdity in leaving the control of Hospital Stores and Equipment to be vested in the Army Service Corps, the most effete service in the Army from 1871 to the time I left the Service in 1895 made up as it then was from the Civil Service candidates and nonentities from Combatant services. Here and there a batch of particularly smart officers would crop up now and again out of the Civil Service batches, but the general run were usually more feeble. One practical officer of the Purveyor's Department was worth half-a-dozen of these semi-aristocrats.

All stores are in the first instance drawn from the Ordnance Department and why the Army Service Corps should be a buffer between that Department and other Corps can only be to provide situations for the surplus issue of the middle class community.

I requested the Officer in Charge of Barracks to equip the hospital to the standard scale. He blandly informed me that there were not in the whole western Command as much as would complete the Devonport Hospital to that scale. Such scales exist but to gull the Public, and Whig and Tory Governments alike must plead guilty to the

sacrifice of efficiency at the shrine of economy. Even blatant Socialism will raise its leonine main erect, when economy is hinted at in connection with our spending departments where the trade unionist flag floats alongside of the Union Jack. Estimates may be reduced over the Army and Navy but they must be *personnel* of the Services, it were heresy to reduce the output of Government Manufacturing Departments while socialists clamour for work.

Before leaving Devonport I had an unusual demand made on my services. I had an application from an officer serving in Aldershot to represent him in the Stannaries Court in Truro. Before proceeding on foreign service some years ago, he unfortunately invested some money in a Cornish tin mine. The concern collapsed and the unfortunate shareholders were called on to contribute £10 per share towards its reconstruction, acceptance to be sent to the Registrar within ten days. My friend being in Ceylon at the time could not possibly comply with this absurd condition, and naturally supposed that his case would be dealt with on the equity of his standing. On his return home he was penalised £50 for non-compliance. He repudiated the claim and was directed to give his reasons for his refusal before the Judge of the Stannaries Court.

He appealed to me to represent him in the Court. I applied for the letter bearing on the claim sent to him in Ceylon, or the envelope that bore it. He had thrown them away and with them I clearly saw his £50 go. Without these his claim was hopeless. He was however anxious that I should appear, hoping that the impossibility of replying from Ceylon in ten days might influence the Judge in his favour. I accordingly appeared in Court and was kindly received by Judge Fisher. My friend's case was the first called. Feeling that I had no case legally I pleaded for equity, and pointed out that it was impossible for residents outside Europe to comply with the circular. The judge called for the production of the letter. I suggested that he should appeal to the Registrar's letter book. I was told that I was not to ask the prosecution to supply me with the evidence, that I must produce the evidence or lose my case. This I could not do and had to submit to an adverse verdict. A solicitor representing a Royal Engineer officer stationed in Madras produced his circular intact and carried his case.

The Western Division Army Hospital Corps was at last fortunate in securing a permanent Commanding Officer. In Brigade Surgeon Atkins we found one who had the interests of the men at heart and encouraged the promotion of his subordinates when qualified for advancement. To contrast the pleasure I had working under him and Surgeon Major A. H. Stokes, with the misery I endured, while striving to maintain my position against the Commandant who bossed the show at Netley, and Surgeon Major Veale and Tobin who had nominal command of the Companies, Army Hospital Corps there, was an experience in which the English language fails to furnish me with adequate words to bring out the contrast. After five years, five happy years at Devonport, I was transferred for duty to the Station Hospital, Colchester.

At Colchester I found a good class of non-commissioned officers more experienced in nursing than I had met in the Corps for some years, while the orderlies were generally men of five years service and upwards, who took a real interest in their work. This was due to the fact that as the Hospital was a collection of semi-delapidated huts no provision had been made for nursing sisters, so that the whole responsibility for nursing the sick developed on the Wardmaster and his orderlies, and after close on three years experience there, I can say that no mother could exceed in tenderness the intelligent orderly of

five or more years service. While much can be said in favour of female nursing in General Hospitals, my experience of thirty-two years hospital work where it was wholly entrusted to the Wardmaster, and in hospitals where a staff of nursing sisters superintended the work, the most painstaking and efficient nursing was in hospitals where the Wardmaster felt his responsibility and where the orderlies were the patient's own regimental companions. Medicines were issued with more regularity where the Nursing Sisters were, but this could scarcely justify the enormous expenditure involved in their employment, together with the influence their presence had on the orderlies, in creating an indifference to their duties seldom seen in a hospital wholly worked by Corps orderlies.

While serving in Colchester I was grievously shocked to find that lucrative positions in the Corps were apparently given to favourites at out-stations from 18 Victoria Street, notwithstanding the removal of the "ranker" Staff Officer. One morning a lance-sergeant employed as Assistant Wardmaster came to me for an advance of ten shillings, for the purpose of going to see a friend of his at the War Office. I declined to make an advance except for very special reasons and that I must see that reason in writing. He produced a pencil note, bearing to me well known initials, informing him that a certain cookhouse in Aldershot would soon be vacant, and he could have it if he first came to the office to test his teeth. I offered him the advance after the Sergeant Major had read the note. He was the most useless non-commissioned officer at the Station, and I was anxious to get rid of him.

On his return from London, he informed me that the conditions were too exacting and he and his friend could not come to terms. I instructed him to write and tell him that I had seen the note, and if the appointment was not given him that I should bring the matter before the Director-General. I reported to the Deputy Surgeon General C. H. Giraud, that the note had come into my possession and pointed out that subordinates in authority were not immaculate tho' overshadowed by the glory of a medical Staff Officer. He suggested that I should take no action in the matter as it was never intended to have come into my possession. Had the office been in the hands of a 'ranker' the decision would probably have been otherwise. On hearing that the note had come into my hands the appointment was given to the applicant and I got rid of a useless non-commissioned officer, but a good cook.

Finding that the dispenser of medicines was constantly on duty, and as I would never approve of a haphazard arrangement that would allow the dispensers duties to be performed by the wardmaster on duty, while the responsibility rested on the hapless dispenser. I submitted an application to the Senior Medical Officer for a second dispenser. He informed me that he had previously applied and was refused. A few days after I went to the Director-General's office and stated my grievance. I was requested to apply for a second dispenser, who would take his turn with the other qualified dispensers at the Station and thus enable them to keep up their practice as directed in previous Departmental Minutes. The application was forwarded to the Principal Medical Officer, who refused to take action on it and railed at my presumption for daring to use my friendship with the Director-General as the medium for increasing the staff at the hospital. I took the rebuke in silence and insisted on the urgency of a second dispenser to save the other from collapse. Next morning he sent for me and expressed his regret at his hastiness on the previous day, forwarded the application and acknowledged the benefits of the arrangements.

Not long after this incident I again came under his displeasure. His chief clerk applied to me for permission to have *his* three months turn in the Surgery to keep up his efficiency as a dispenser. I referred him to the Principal Medical Officer under whom he was directly employed, and then when he had his Chief's sanction I would make the necessary arrangements for his employment in the Dispensary. On the following morning he referred his claim, but incautiously added that I had approved of the arrangement. This was too much for the Chief who thundered his anathemas at the head of the offending subordinate, railing at the insubordination of the Detachment from the sergeant major to the bugler in seeking the advice of the quartermaster rather than the Commanding Officer whenever they had a grievance or a supposed grievance to rectify. The clerk audaciously replied "He understands us and our affairs better than the medical officers, we trust him and appeal to him for guidance". This was regarded as gross impertinence.

I happened to come into his office to have some papers signed when this colloquy was going on. Immediately the clerk was ordered out and he stormed at me, at hurricane velocity, for my presumption in acting as guide and counsellor to the Detachment, encouraging them to ignore their Commanding Officer. I repudiated the charge with some vehemence claiming the right to give advice when sought. He then informed me that when making his half-yearly inspections at outstations several staff sergeants informed him that they always applied to the quartermaster for information regarding matters affecting their interests in the Service.

Having exhausted his choicest expletives he awaited my reply. I informed him that when his clerk came to me, I directed him to make his application in the proper quarter and when he had done so I would arrange to meet his views. As to his complaint that I stood between the men and their Commanding Officer, I repudiated the impeachment and bluntly informed him that the post of arbitrator was not of my seeking and that whatever orders he might issue the men would come to me with all their grievances. I told him that I was consulted by officers and men of my own and of other branches of the Service. My papers were signed and I took my departure.

Having had the occasion to call at the Adjutant-General's office on my way home I met my Chief at the General's office and saluted him and passed on. Under ordinary circumstances I would have stood and chatted for some time but on this occasion I was not in a mood for conversation. I felt I had a grievance. He called me back and remarked "I suppose you are angry with me for the way I spoke to you this morning." I replied that I had reason to be. He apologised on the spot. This confirmed my previously formed estimate of him, that, as a gentleman he had no superior in the Army Medical Department.

My transfer to Colchester had brought me into a red hot combatant community. It was regarded as rank heresy to call a medical officer "doctor". They were Generals, Colonels, Majors, and so on. That it was an infringement of medical etiquette to call some of them "doctors" I readily admitted they were mostly surgeons, and one or more having but one qualification that of L.S.A. In conversation with the Director-General Sir W. A. Mackinnon I was called to task for calling one of them by his relative rank, which was that of 'Major'. Turning sharply he remarked "I am surprised to hear you calling them 'Majors'. I would as soon call myself a Bishop as a General". He felt keenly the demand for combatant rank. In this we could not agree. My contention

being that if there is a virtue social or otherwise in combatant rank, no one has a more righteous claim to it than the Army Medical Officer.

On active service he is more exposed to danger and fatigue than any other officer and liable to be struck down by overwork and infectious diseases, while others are enjoying their rest. By night and day he is at everyone's beck and call and at isolated stations is never off duty. When combatant rank was conceded to the Army Service Corps and to the Army Pay Department, it was a gross insult to have withheld it from a body of educated professional men more in touch with the soldier than any other auxiliary Departments. I strongly resented their assumption of store, pay and drill duties. These could be more efficiently discharged by the intelligent quartermaster than by the medical officer.

This transfer of the Pay and Stores duties from the quartermasters branded them as unworthy of trust and succeeded in removing the nominal responsibility of the pay duties from the Quartermaster to the Medical Officer, who took over the duties of a sub-accountant and felt the responsibility of his new duties of so little importance as to sign a five-shilling book of blank cheques for the quartermaster to fill them in as he found necessary. I was shown this book exultantly as an indication of the trust imposed in him. It is presumed that the fidelity with which he executed this trust was the sole reason for the bestowment on this officer of the "Good Service Pension".

I am not aware that he had any other claim. I was less enamoured of the females of the Department—as a whole—than their lords—they revelled in reflected glory, and denied to a "ranker" a right to any social status. They were ready to patronise in return for a large measure of obsequiousness, but in this commodity I was singularly deficient. It has always been an exotic in the Highlands and peculiarly obnoxious to the race.

There was a feeling of resentment in this coterie when they realised that the Quartermaster's wife was in demand locally as a Lecturer of Social and Political economy. They expected that a quartermaster's wife could be nothing more than a common wash-house hack, and were not prepared to find her equal in birth and education and not infrequently their superior in intelligence. I was made conscious of this at the first annual meeting of the Corps after our arrival, when the Principal Medical Officer's wife volunteered, on our arrival, to introduce my wife to the Sergeant-Major's wife, but to none of the other ladies of the Garrison, about fifteen in number who formed her entourage. She was informed that there was no need, as the sergeant-major's wife had already introduced herself.

The small talk of this representative gathering of Garrison intelligence could rise no higher than cards, wine, horse racing and flirtations. One of them being questioned as to her luck at cards at the house of a retired General replied "I cannot go there much, as it costs me seventeen shillings a night". On enquiry as to who this notorious card player was, the Principal Medical Officer's wife made the testy rejoinder "She is my intimate friend". This intimate friend, an officer's wife, eloped a few days after with a married officer serving on the Garrison staff (*W.K.M. It is not irrelevant to enter here a few lines from the obituary notice about my Mother in the Methodist Recorder of August 21 1930 "From her earliest days she was a keen and eager Church worker . . . a great worker for temperance amongst women . . . leaves a record of stalwart service and a fine inheritance of character and memory to her children" (Reverend Alfred Seaton). My*

mother had a fine sense of humour. She used to relate what an awkward situation she was in as a Chairwoman at a large Women's Meeting at the Central Hall, Edinburgh and all was going well until a young man came in to sing a solo, and began to sing "Where are the boys of the Old Brigade").

I had occasion to reprimand my clerk for neglect of duty. Next morning his chair was vacant. On enquiring at the Senior Medical Officer's office as to his whereabouts, I was informed that he was admitted to hospital. I was told that he would be discharged in a few days. I explained to the Senior Medical Officer the circumstances that induced his ailment and requested that he should be kept in three weeks by which time he would repent of his rashness. On his return he expressed surprise that he had no arrears of work to pull up, and as he felt that he could be done without, he took care not to repeat the experiment. Such is the general responsibility of the men who have no intention of making a long stay in the Service.

The edict that deposed the Quartermaster from his position as sub-accountant reached Colchester and I was ordered to hand over my duties to a medical officer. Such was the aptitude of the officer selected for this duty that his first enquiry was why I drew two lines across my cheques sent to out-stations and what was my reason for adding & Co. I demurred to accept the position of tutor to such a novice or to accept without a protest the undeserved humiliation.

I immediately went to the War Office to arrange for my transfer to the Guards Hospital in succession to the Quartermaster, who was leaving under the senile decay clause of the Royal Warrant. The Staff Officer, Army Hospital Corps refused to submit my application, but finding that I had access to Sir William MacKinnon any day I chose to present myself, he found that his arrangement for the relief of the Quartermaster at Rochester Row must be set aside if I persisted. Sir William instructed him to take steps to relieve me at Colchester and notify my appointment to the Brigade Surgeon in charge of the Guards Hospital.

I left Colchester with feelings of regret, more so because of the part my wife took in the social and political life of the town, but also knowing that I would be compelled soon to leave the Service and at an age ten years earlier than the Civil Service employees of the War Office, and I would have to find employment elsewhere to enable me to live.

A legislation that turns out hundreds of young officers to pension every year could only have been conceived in the interests of the unemployed and feckless progeny of the governing classes. Secretary Childers, after he went to the War Office, decreed that, as senile decay attacked military officers by graduated stages according to their rank in the Service, they should be retired on attaining those ages;

<i>Combatant officer</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Combatant officer</i>	<i>Age</i>
Lieutenant or Captain	42	Lieutenant-General	67
Major	48	General	70
Lieutenant-Colonel	55	Field Marshal—When the heart	
Major-General	62	ceased to beat and artificial	
		respiration pronounced a dead	
		failure.	

A Quartermaster, when he is not a *persona grata* can be turned out at any time, but even if he is on the high road to angelic perfection he must go at 55. On what basis

this inhuman enactment has been fixed is difficult to understand, but in the case of Riding Masters and Quartermaster alone it costs the country half a million pounds every fourteen years by their retirement at 55 instead of 65.

Early in March 1894 I joined for duty at Rochester Row. In the process of taking over the stores, the officer whom I was relieving kindly cautioned me against introducing the usual routine of Hospital discipline into the Guards Hospital, adding as a reason for his caution that I would be opposed by all the medical officers. I reminded him that he knew me sufficiently well to know that I carried out the Departmental Regulations issued for my guidance and took care that others did the same. To this he replied that it was that knowledge that prompted the admonition.

I began taking over the stores in a cautious manner. I was afraid that slackness in supervision manifested itself in more than in the medical officers. I took care to see every article in the Inventory. My friend was sure everything was correct. The storekeeper was such a reliable man that I could take his word. I had never yet taken any man's word but one, Sergeant Jackson, formerly of the 78th Highlanders, a paragon storekeeper, while the sample I had had of Cardwell's men would not warrant such confidence. I went on as was my wont to see every article. I had not gone far when I found so many articles deficient that I declined to go on with the transfer until every article was in its proper place. I deferred any further stocktaking until the following morning.

On reaching the hospital the next morning I was informed by the Sergeant Major that he had placed the Lance-Sergeant, who acted as assistant wardmaster in arrest, and also the Corporal in charge of the Linen and Pack Store. Both belonged to the Army Hospital Corps. On investigating the matter, I found that the assistant wardmaster had appropriated money received from the patients admitted to hospital, while the other had pawned watches belonging to patients, and had disposed of sheets, shirts, towels and other items belonging to the Public. On the previous day, after I had left the hospital, they had had a consultation and decided to make a clean breast of how matters stood, seeing I took nothing for granted. Both non-commissioned officers were tried by Court Martial and sentenced one to six months and the other to four months imprisonment with hard labour.

I felt keenly the little sympathy I had from the Brigade Surgeon in this my first exercise of the disciplinary wand. It was regarded as a reflection on the laxity reigning in the Establishment. I found it hard to carry out my duties. Both officers and men resented being moved out of the old rut.

Each of the three Guards Hospitals were independent of the other in matters of professional work, only a nominal appearance of control being exercised by the Brigade Surgeon. Number one was too gentle to attempt any measure of discipline that would make itself felt, sauvity to a fault being his chief characteristic. Number 2 was the most cynical man I have met with in the Service, his nationality contribution materially to the leading traits in his character. An apostate from the faith of his fathers, he was a vigorous upholder of his adopted country and tenets. Number 3 was a veritable porcupine whose quills shot out at any advance made towards him. To steer clear of those characteristics required more skill and tact than I possessed. I soon found that the Guards must be pampered.

Hospital discipline must be overlooked if I was to live in amity with my superiors. Neatness of ward arrangement was out of the question. Each bedside table was a picture gallery on a small scale and adorned with music hall celebrities, Hyde Park nursemaids; demimondes of questionable notoriety; with an occasional West End kitchen Superintendent of extraordinary growth thrown in to adjust the balance. I was adjured by my chief not to bring ordinary discipline of common military hospitals into this Elysium of luxury and contentment.

I noticed where the War Office red tape limited the powers of the medical officer in food or medicines, the Brigade Surgeon always supplied from his own bounty whatever was required in the treatment of a case. In no hospital in the United Kingdom was so much professional interest taken in the soldier as in the Guards Hospital, Westminster. My old leaning towards the superiority of the Regimental Hospital system over the happy-go-lucky methods in vogue in Station Hospitals received ample confirmation after a year in Rochester Row.

I had not been long in the Guards Hospital when I noticed that pilfering was going on at a rapid rate in the cook-houses. I found the scouts too much on the alert to allow me to catch the transgressors in one form or another. I accordingly suggested to the Brigade Surgeon to accompany me to the two outside hospitals, the Coldstreams and Scots Guards, and weigh the diets before they left the kitchen. I informed him that from practical experience I was sure that a varied diet should weigh ten and a half ounces, allowing thirty-three per cent for loss in cooking, while a half diet should weigh not less than six and a half ounces.

After weighing the diets in both hospitals we found the average weight of the varied diets to be under eight ounces and the half diets under four ounces. The Brigade Surgeon then suggested that we should visit the "Grenadiers" Hospital at Rochester Row and ascertain how matters stood there. This would not suit my purpose as had we gone there we might have found it as the others and my testimony discounted. I preferred postponing our visit there until the next day. The result of the inspection flew like fire. Next day we visited Rochester Row cook house and found the diets considerably over my estimates. This was convincing proof of what was going on, but to avoid scandal no official notice was taken of it. Cooks in large Military Hospitals invariably have rich uncles in America who supply them with funds when one or two houses come into their possession, but too often being made out of kitchen dripping melt away by degrees providing that the way of transgressors is hard. I have found some times that other Departments of the Army could boast of rich friends in our Colonial Possessions, whose liberality increased in proportion to the distance they went from home.

Prior to the unification scheme the Guards each had their own regimental hospital under regimental management. The War Office apparently had no control over the Buildings, nor over the interior economy. The Hospital Steward was responsible for its upkeep under the direction of the Senior Medical Officer of the Brigade. This accounted for the insanitary and deplorable condition of the buildings when taken over by the Army Medical Department. It was vain to attempt to bring these hospitals into line with the ordinary station hospitals. The Royal Engineers complained of the numerous requisitions sent to them for incidental repairs to the hospitals. I suggested to the Division Officer, Captain Gordon, that he should accompany me into the wards. Entering a ward on the first landing in Rochester Row Hospital I struck my knife into a window frame

and asked him if he thought I had been premature in asking for its renewal. To this he laughingly remarked that it should have been renewed ten years ago.

Within six months I had sent in one hundred and sixty-two requisitions, of these thirty had been carried out in that period. They were accordingly re-inserted time after time giving the contractor power to charge every item on his requisition whether executed or not. This was due to the fact that the certificate given by the Commanding Officers on completion of the work was for some reason abolished or was never on the form used by the Guards. This gave scope for unlimited speculation. I pushed this matter into prominence resulting in the removal of the Foreman of Works to another station.

The frequency of sporadic cases of enteric fever in an upper ward of Rochester Row Block led me to seek the cause and found a possible source in fissures in the cement floor and also the fittings of an old water closet and pipes left in position. Both wards in the block were closed and the under-floor pipes removed and the place cleaned up. There were no more cases of enteric fever in the upper ward. I found similar defects in the Hospital Block in Vincent Square and also in the Vauxhall Bridge Road Hospital of the Scots Guards.

I reported the defects to the Brigade Surgeon, who having satisfied himself as to the accuracy of my reports brought the matter to the notice of the Principal Medical Officer, Deputy Surgeon-General Churchill, who in company with the Officer Commanding the Royal Engineers inspected the various items complained of and were satisfied with the need for rectifying the complaint. The Commanding Royal Engineer seemed pleased to have had the defects brought to light and complimented me on the result of my investigation, but the Principal Medical Officer was in an ill temper because it was the Quartermaster, and not the Medical Officers who had brought these defects to notice.

On leaving the Scots Guards Hospital he turned to me and in a rasping voice asked "How did you find this out.?" To this I could only give the answer "By looking for it". This did not please him and I saw no more of him, as he was soon after appointed to a District in India.

To the other duties imposed on the Quartermaster doing duty with the Guards, for which no provision was made in his Regulations and for which no remuneration was allowed him, was that of Recruiting Officer. I appealed to the Horse Guards for remuneration and official recognition, but was told that my appeal could not be entertained, as I was not a Recruiting Officer for General Services. It was useless to persist in my appeal in the face of there being no Paragraph in the Royal Warrant for recognition of an Army Medical Staff Quartermaster doing recruiting duties or for whatever extra work might be imposed on him.

Had I been a Regimental Quartermaster I would have been paid two shillings and sixpence a day regardless of whether or not I attested recruits provided I was a Recruiting Officer. I had attested over eleven hundred recruits in fourteen months, while some General Service Recruiting Officers attested in the same period less than thirty recruits. This is one of the many class-made and administered injustices of the War Office.

On the 5th of May 1895 I came under the ejecting clause of the Royal Warrant having completed within two months a service of thirty-five years, and was awarded the same pension as granted to a Combatant Lieutenant of twenty years service.

Quartermasters of the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers, who had attained the age for retirement were provided with posts in the War Office, so long as they had friends in power, but the Army Medical Staff Quartermasters could expect no mercy from those who should have befriended them, when it was in their power to do so. I had completed thirty-two years uninterrupted charge of Hospital Stores and discipline, and during that period never paid a penny for lost stores, rather a unique experience in the Service.

I left the Service with regret, as sound in mind and in body as when I entered it as a country lad of twenty summers and never regretted having taken the Queen's shilling on the 4th June 1860.

EPILOGUE

Since leaving the Service I have been repeatedly asked for an expression of opinion concerning the changes in Army Administration since 1860. My candid conviction is that it would require a "Times Book Library" Editor to deal with such a large and unstable subject.

I candidly believe that every attempt at improvement has been a retrogressive step in the results. The first attempt was made when they found a briefless barrister in office to carry out their views when the short service enlistment Act was forced through the House of Commons. It has been a success in the manufacture of tramps and loafers, but a positive failure in popularizing the Army. It has increased instead of reducing the Army Estimates. The attempt to abolish the married Establishment by the provision of soiled doves in India was one of the means by which the Estimates were to be reduced by christian legislators.

The Peace Estimates have risen from seventeen millions in 1860 to twenty millions in 1907 without any increase in efficiency except so far as the training of the volunteers is concerned. The attempt to form an Army Reserve from the Regular Army has been a most unfortunate experiment, both for the country and for the unfortunate creatures drawn from civil employment for six or seven years to be thrown into the street without a trade or prospect of employment, and in too many instances unfitted by depraved habits for service in civil life. They have invariably to find shelter in a doss-house and beg for the funds to support them. This is an invasion, a miserable invasion on the traditions of the British Army.

Of the millions spent since 1870 on deferred pay, eighty per cent of it has passed into the publican's till, when our Army administrators expected that their munificence would be making flesh and muscle for the first conflict of arms. The first encounter with the white man—I shall not say white troops (colonial farmers) gave ample testimony that the Cardwell Reserves were but poor substitutes for the seasoned soldiers, who without the help of Colonials or Volunteers upheld our national honour in the Crimea and in the Indian Mutiny.

Our natural reserves should be the Militia into which all the Reserve men should be entered immediately on leaving the colours for training purposes. The strength of the Militia and Reserves should never be under 300,000. In Ireland we maintain a Garrison of 30,000 exclusive of Militia, yet we think 75,000 white men sufficient to garrison India! What a farce! It is not surprising that the agitator, taking advantage

of the youth of our short service men, and their inability to cope with the climate because of their short stay in the country, should endeavour to raise the popular feeling against the retention of our blood bought Indian Empire. They know that in Britain they have the sympathy of sentimental humanitarians who fatten on the credulity of their species.

The linking of battalions has been an unhappy expedient. The forming of double battalions was never popular. In the latter phase of the movement, it has destroyed the old *esprit do corps* both for officers and men, while it has not justified the expectation of those who saw in it the harmonious dawn of a millennial peace. It has been a source of greivous injustice to officers in the expense incurred in moving from one battalion to another, in addition to the breaking up of cherished associations formed in their first service.

The abolition of purchase which was to have opened a corridor from the Barrack Room to the Officers Mess was hailed with delight by those who only saw the glamour of the audacious leap into the dark that proclaimed to the House of Lords "Few are thy days, and full of woe: Oh man of woman born". To have made this measure a success, the civil element should have been cleared out of the War Office from cellar to ceiling, before purchase was abolished. Since the addition of purchase the real "rankers" commissioned to combatant commissions in the Army have been few and far between.

A young man from middle-class life sojourned in the Barrack Room for a few months and through War Office influence was commissioned in order to boom the new departure and to publish a book "From the ranks to a commission". On the assumption of office the Tory Government neutralized the good that might have resulted from the honest labours of the previous administration (*W.K.M. Father Morrison was a staunch Liberal. When I was fifteen he took me to the King's Theatre to hear Lloyd George and Winston Churchill in the 1906 election*).

The four years retention of Regimental Command by the Lieutenant-Colonel is an injustice to the Service as it is to the officer and the tax-payer. He has scarcely got in touch with his men when he has to leave them. Seven years at least should be the tenure of Command. Fixity of tenure is the panacea for all grievances. Why is it not applied to the Army?

The Law, the Church, several officers of State and Field-Marschals have immunity from compulsory retirement. Why not extend the Army age for retirement for all classes to the limit of their capability to give effective service at home or abroad? There is little compunction in ousting officers from the Army however illustrious their service may be.

With them it is as the Highland bard of 1746 prophesied for his countrymen who supported the Hanoverian cause. A prophecy which has unfortunately been sorrowfully fulfilled:—

"Bitheadh bhur duais marna ghobhair
Theidh a bhleodhain gu tarblach
Salvith a fuadach sau fhoghair
'S nuaig na gaothar r a-h-ear ball "

Translated

Your reward will be that of the goat.
Profusely milked in the harvest,
To be chased from the steading,
With roaring luchers behind her "

During the last fifty years the changes in the Auxiliary Services have grown fast and furious. The Royal Artillery has been reorganised almost out of recognition. Their only

assurance is that they must remain Gunners and that when the German Army are landing at North Berwick, the Scottish Artillery must proceed with all haste to Portsmouth, while the Cork Artillery should be hurried over to Edinburgh.

The Royal Engineers—the elite of the Service—still require drastic changes to free the highly educated officers of that branch of their Service from State duties that have no bearing on their military training. The Army Service Corps is suffering from some fad of centralization.

The Army Medical Department has been repeatedly in the crucible since 1873, hoping to improve its status and efficiency. A decidedly high class of professional men have entered the Medical Service since 1879. A weed called “the ten pounders” almost strangled its existence in the mid-seventies but it fortunately was dug out in time to save a crisis. The absurdity of withholding combatant rank for medical officers when conceded to storekeepers.

The Horse Guards ultimately acknowledged their claim and transformed them into Drill Instructors, Storekeepers and Paymasters duties for which they were wholly unfitted and which must withdraw them from following their legitimate studies. The medical man who neglects to keep up his professional studies will soon find himself a straggler left behind in the race of life, for which the mastery of the drill book will not atone. Some of the best surgeons in the Army have abandoned their profession for the drill craze, notably the first of the Stretcher Drill Instructors at Aldershot (the late Surgeon Major T. Faris) a more promising young surgeon had not for years entered the Department, but lost to the *Profession* by the adoption of an unprofessional fad that a Lance-Corporal could as efficiently discharge.

FINIS