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guests. Such offers as appear suitable are being considered, but we understand that the authorities in Pall Mall have misgivings as to the advisability of accepting them, unless it be in the homes of officers or others accustomed to the management of soldiers. Numerous small homes are not considered practicable on account of the impossibility of providing for proper discipline and military supervision. The distribution of the men among such homes as may be ultimately accepted will be arranged on the territorial system, the soldiers being sent to such establishments as are in proximity to their usual military depôts.

It is clear that ample accommodation can be secured by the authorities to supplement their own, which is utterly inadequate; and that private generosity, backed by the numerous public funds, will provide the necessary means. But so far no very decided action would seem to have been taken to secure the advantage of this humane and practical patriotism, and to ensure that the accommodation for convalescent soldiers shall be ready in good time. At the moment, it is true, the demand for such quarters for those invalided from the front is very small, and the War Office does not seem to anticipate the need of even extra hospital beds for two or three months to come. But the sick and wounded are already arriving, and the period of grace for preparation will be short. It is very greatly to be hoped that it will not be allowed to slip away, but that the War Office will lose no time in definitely accepting and organising such of the numerous privately offered convalescent homes as are most suitable. The suggestions which have been made of providing accommodation of the kind at Cape Town itself, and the offer by Messrs. Elder, Dempster and Co. of beds in their hotel at Las Palmas, are well worthy of careful consideration. There is not much time left, however, which can be legitimately devoted to mere consideration, and whatever is going to be done in the matter should be done promptly.

As regards officers, the Duke of Abercorn has initiated a "Sick and Wounded Officers' Surgical and Medical Aid Fund," which includes among its objects the provision of convalescent accommodation, and promises to afford much needful help in a quarter where it will be almost as much required as in the case of the rank and file. The Committee recognise that the task of dispensing this aid will require much tact and discretion. The work of this fund will be supplemented by the generous offers of accommodation not only at home but in the Riviera, Madeira, and elsewhere.

### ARMY MEDICAL REFORM.

THE long-continued and bitter opposition in past years to reform in the status of medical officers left a deep distrust which has delayed that rehabilitation which its friends believed would have speedily followed the granting of genuine army status and title in a Royal Medical Corps. Distrust, easily engendered, is difficult to remove; so that even if the concession of due status to medical officers has silenced, if not shamed, their more aggressive opponents, it has as yet not been entirely successful in inducing young medical men to select the army as a suitable professional career. But we cannot doubt that great and far-reaching reform will yet do so; provided certain much-needed reforms, consecutive to the creation of the Royal Corps, are now promptly taken in hand.

The coming wave of general army reform which must follow the Boer war will doubtless include the medical service; and it is fortunate for it that its old opponents may have little say in its new reorganisation. The time for formulating the reforms wanted is distinctly propitious, and to this end we welcome the able and temperate article which Major Cockerill has published recently.<sup>1</sup> He enumerates many obstacles to the attractiveness and popularity of the service which must be removed before it can become a truly efficient or contented body.

We take no objection to any of his strictures, but think his statement of them somewhat diffuse; and for the benefit of those who may have to handle practically the reforms it would be well to group them under a few inclusive heads,

such as the following: (1) Undermanned establishments; (2) questions of pay; (3) honours and rewards; (4) revision of regulations.

The increase of establishments is the first and most pressing. The medical service must be made at least numerically sufficient for all average duties. This it certainly is not at present. Further, from undermanning flow many of the worst disabilities from which it suffers.

An establishment of 1,000 medical officers has been suggested as a minimum. Whether sufficient or not they would still be much under the total strength of the department of thirty or forty years ago. Of course such an increase, like the increase of cavalry or artillery, means money; but we greatly misjudge the present temper of the country if it permits clamant Army reforms to be sacrificed to a false economy, or to mere budget balancing.

As Major Cockerill demonstrates, it may be easier to vote an increased establishment than to fill it, unless the War Office faces, squarely and fairly, the question of medical supply and demand. It is believed by many that the available supply of medical men will be lessened in the future by the extension of an expensive curriculum to five years.

It is urged further that the prohibition of unqualified assistantships has so increased the salaries of assistants in civil practice, that they now equal or surpass in value the pay of a lieutenant, Royal Army Medical Corps; due allowance being of course made for unavoidable outlay in the service. The Army has also to compete with the Indian Medical Service, which, despite drawbacks, offers a more varied career, more fixed appointments and higher pensions, with scarcely greater tropical service. From all these considerations it is clear that considerable amelioration in the terms of Army service will have to be effected, especially in the junior ranks, before it can successfully compete in the open market.

Undermanning of the medical service is the fruitful source of drawbacks and hardships, and is thus the indirect cause of much of its unpopularity. To it may be traced the grievous inequality between home and foreign tours; the worry and expense attendant on incessant movements; the drudgery, irksome, and irritating, of perpetually recurring orderly duty; the difficulty in getting private, and the impossibility of obtaining "study" leave.

In short, through undermanning the medical service is overstrained at home and abroad; overworked everywhere, and hustled and worried to an intolerable degree.

It is at present at least 30 short of an arbitrary nominal strength of 800; and that number is about 20 per cent. under the strength deemed necessary thirty or forty years ago, when our empire and our army were much smaller than now. It has thus been allowed to dwindle down, while its duties increased, until it is now numerically unequal to the work, whether in peace or in war.

Questions of pay must obviously be considered in relation to those of supply and demand in the medical profession at large, to which we have already alluded; but they can be viewed on their merits; in which sense we assert without hesitation that an increase is necessary both in the home and Indian rates in the ranks of lieutenants and captains.

Neither scales of pay are sufficiently above those now given to civil assistants, and are indeed insufficient to meet the necessary expenses of the officer. The junior ranks spend a large proportion of their total service under the Government of India, which benefits much by such a facile arrangement; yet it has treated the financial parts of several Royal Warrants affecting medical officers with a neglect which absolutely amounts to a scandal.

Army medical officers are still paid in India according to the provisions of warrants which have been cancelled and obsolete for more than twenty years. Successive Secretaries of War and for India have been often entreated to put an end to such an injustice, but have failed to do so. It remains for Parliament to insist that the Indian Executive must and shall respect the financial provisions of Royal Warrants.

Not only does the Government of India pay the officers of the R.A.M.C. less than their own medical officers, but also less than those of any scientific or kindred branch—the Veterinary for instance. While we by no means consider that branch overpaid, yet a veterinary lieutenant receives many more rupees a month than a medical lieutenant; showing that

<sup>1</sup> Reorganisation of the Royal Army Medical Corps. By Major J. W. Cockerill, R.A.M.C., *Journal of the United Service Institution*, vol. xlii. December 15th, 1899.

greater store is apparently set on the horse than on the man who rides him.

The distribution of honours and rewards to medical officers has long been in most scanty proportions compared with other officers, as the present war again demonstrates, although medical officers share in all the hardships, and many of the risks, of their combatant brethren, their allotment of the mystic letters G.B., K.C.B., C.M.G., etc., is merely nominal compared with other branches. Nor, as far as known, has the Indian Government, which makes so great an economy out of the services of the army medical officers, ever recommended one of them even for the lowest class of the Star of India.

The attitude of the dispensers of honours is clearly exemplified in the omission of the name of the principal medical officer of the last Sudan expedition (notwithstanding that he was absolutely the senior officer present) from the big list of those to whom the thanks of Parliament were tendered; and worse still, when the omission was challenged, a Minister was put up, not to apologise, but to defend in the lamest way such a grossly indefensible thing.

As to tangible rewards, they are non-existent to the vast bulk of the medical service. The few good service pensions (on the principle of the confided talents) are carefully reserved for the senior rank only, chiefly we suppose because it is senior.

Revision of the Regulations is necessary in two directions: first, all obsolete or unnecessary paragraphs and articles which assert or imply the bad old supposed inferiority of medical officers should be expunged; secondly, new regulations which shall define the position of medical officers on parade and ceremonial occasions, and their position on Courts, Boards, etc., should be inserted. Even commissions in the R.A.M.C. are still not worded in corps or regimental form, but in that of an extinct department.

The Regulations Branch of the War Office want waking up to such anomalies.

We have not in this review been able to go into details; but we trust we have sufficiently indicated, broadly, the reforms which demand speedy attention by those who may desire to take effective action towards the rehabilitation of the Army Medical Service.

### THE ST. JOHN AMBULANCE ASSOCIATION: STOCKPORT CENTRE.

AN account of the difficulty which had arisen at Stockport with regard to the administration of the St. John Ambulance Association centre there, and of the action which the Stockport Medical Society had felt itself compelled to take, was published in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of April 22nd, 1899. We then observed that the honorary secretary of the local centre appeared to have mistaken the relation in which the St. John Ambulance Association stands to the medical profession, and observed that it was intolerable that members of the medical profession should be treated with the discourtesy shown to them by the representatives of the St. John Ambulance Association at Stockport. As we were able to announce last October the matter was finally referred to arbitration, and a brief report of the proceedings before the arbitrators was published in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of November 4th, 1899. We have now received the following award of the arbitrators.

St. John Ambulance Association,  
St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell, London, E.C.  
AWARD OF THE ARBITRATORS.

SIR JAMES N. DICK, K.C.B., Colonel C. Bowdler, and Inspector-General Belgrave Ninnis, M.D., R.N., were the arbitrators appointed by the Central Executive Committee to inquire into certain differences of opinion at the Stockport Centre.

In the summer and autumn of last year the Committee of the St. John Ambulance Association, being the Ambulance Department of the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England, were asked by both the Stockport and District Medical Society and by the Executive of the Local Centre of the St. John Ambulance Association at Stockport to entertain and arbitrate upon a question which had arisen between these two bodies out of the management by Mr. Ferns, the Honorary Secretary and Treasurer of the Local Centre.

Neither the Order itself nor the Ambulance Department of the Order have any function to arbitrate upon such a question, but the two parties having agreed in writing to refer the matter to three gentlemen appointed by the Committee of the St. John Ambulance Association as arbitrators, and we, having been appointed by the Committee in that behalf, and our appointment having been assented to by both sides, proceeded to Stock-

port with a view to hearing what was to be adduced by each side, and to make such an award, determination, or decision in the premises as, after hearing the evidence and arguments, we should think fit.

Two prolonged meetings were held at the Stockport Courthouse at Stockport on October 30th and 31st last. At these the following parties were represented, and in the following manner:

The Earl Egerton of Tatton, Chancellor of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in England, and President of the Stockport Centre, by Mr. Boydell Houghton, Barrister.

Mr. A. E. Ferns, Honorary Secretary and Treasurer of the Stockport Centre, also by Mr. Houghton.

Mr. A. H. Sykes, J.P., Chairman of the Stockport Centre, by Mr. William Cobbett, Solicitor; and

The Stockport and District Medical Society, by Mr. C. H. M. Wharton, Barrister.

After a patient hearing of all that was to be said, and an expression of opinion on both sides that nothing further remained, we have taken into consideration the whole circumstances of the case, with a view to arriving at an award, determination, or decision.

At the very commencement of the hearing it appeared that there was no question between the Stockport Medical Society and the Stockport Centre of the St. John Ambulance Association, and Mr. Wharton so stated. It became apparent then that the question was going to resolve itself into a personal one between Mr. Ferns and the Stockport Medical Society, and the only manner in which the Centre was interested in the proceeding was that Mr. Ferns was the Honorary Secretary and Treasurer of the Centre, and the Medical Society had resolved to abstain from lecturing in connection with the Local Centre, and threatened to form an independent ambulance association.

With the last of these two suggestions the arbitrators do not intend to interfere. If it was intended as a threat it should not have been made, as it can have no influence. The former of these suggestions does affect the Order, and it was upon that ground that the arbitrators thought it within their province to continue the inquiry.

They wish, however, at the outset to express their great regret that having regard to the position occupied by the Medical Society and Mr. Ferns, some way had not been found to compose this personal question without having to resort to the extraordinary method of referring it to a public hearing.

As the case proceeded, the official aspect of the question between the Executive Committee of the Stockport Centre and the Medical Society still further disappeared, and the personal one only remained. If this could have been anticipated we are not sure that the Ambulance Department would have undertaken the reference at all; but having done so, and the parties having undergone the expense of the proceeding, we think it would not be fair to them not to record our decision and determination.

Mr. Ferns's own account of himself is that the Committee was formed and he was appointed Local Secretary so far back as the year 1883, and certain instructions were given him by Sir (then Mr.) John Furley. In a short time meetings of the Committee were held, but difficulties arose in this out of the non-attendance of members, and Mr. Ferns considered that the authority given to him by Sir John Furley justified his future proceedings, which were practically to carry on the Centre without the attendance of a Committee. We think that Mr. Ferns has, at all events since 1888, been acting under a misapprehension. We do not think Mr. Ferns understood the change that had taken place in the constitution of the St. John Ambulance Association in the year 1888.

At that time the Association became a department of the Order, subject to the rules and regulations of the Order, and although considerable latitude in carrying on a voluntary institution must always be allowed, still there are certain definite duties which Mr. Ferns seems entirely to have lost sight of. We wish to put on record that we think in this matter Mr. Ferns is to be blamed, because he himself is an esquire of the Order, a member of the body, and therefore has a special duty to the Order, and to see that as far as in him lies everything is done for its glory and utility, and that he will never act contrary to its dignity.

We think if Mr. Ferns had found that he could not maintain the Centre he should have so reported, and not have left the Centre to be practically himself, particularly in the light of subsequent events.

It seems to us to have been alleged and hardly disputed by Mr. Ferns that he discharged the duties of secretary and afterwards treasurer of the Stockport Centre in a somewhat arbitrary manner, and that accounts were not rendered by him, nor were subscriptions collected by him in the district. It seems also admitted that the Stockport Centre was more or less in a state of paralysis, Mr. Ferns calls it quiescence, and we cannot help feeling that Mr. Ferns was to some extent responsible for this.

It further appeared that there was a rumour—although the rumour was a floating one and could not definitely be traced—that some ill-defined charge had been made against Mr. Ferns of having acted improperly with regard to the funds of the Centre. The existence of such a rumour was, particularly with regard to a charge of £5 5s. for classes, admitted by both sides. If the Committee had met such a rumour would have been impossible. We wish here to state that the charge of £5 5s. to the classes, referred to in the course of the inquiry, was a proper charge.

It seems clear to us that Mr. Ferns was under the impression, erroneous as we believe it to be, that this rumour originated from some medical gentlemen of position in the town. We are satisfied that Mr. Ferns has in all his dealings with regard to the funds of the Centre acted with the utmost integrity, and this cannot be questioned. We also feel assured that the impression in Mr. Ferns's mind as to the origin of the rumours we have mentioned was unfounded.

It appeared to us that Mr. Ferns did, in his dealings with various medical men in the town in connection with his secretaryship, comport himself in a manner which cannot be said to have been courteous or conciliatory, or to have been for the dignity or utility of the Order, and for this we consider that Mr. Ferns is to blame. In whatever way Mr. Ferns might have considered himself in his private capacity justified in treating the medical men in respect of whose conduct he had this suspicion, Mr. Ferns should have remembered that he was a member of the Order, and holding an important and responsible official position in connection with the ambulance department of the Order, and what he