

## EDITORIAL

### THE MOTIVATION OF MEDICAL OFFICERS

FOR over 300 years the Army has granted regular commissions to Doctors.

A most interesting study would be to examine the reasons which led doctors to apply for Commissions as Medical Officers and to see if their motivation changed over the Centuries. Such a study is still to be made and it is in the hope of stimulating one of our readers to undertake it that we make the brief sketch which follows.

In the 17th and 18th Centuries virtually the only form of Government Service open to a doctor was in the Army and the Navy. Wretched though the pay was it did spell security and there was also a pension in old age (in the shape of half-pay). This financial security was, we think, the main motivation for doctors joining the Army.

With the high risks associated with a service life in these centuries the doctors embracing it tended to come from the more adventure seeking part of our profession. Love of adventure was undoubtedly an attraction.

The Nineteenth Century saw our Empire reach its zenith and medicine changed from the empirical to the scientific approach. Both had their effect on the recruitment of doctors.

The expansion of our Empire meant large garrisons overseas and innumerable petty campaigns in its defence; thus opportunities for adventure and sport were limitless and these added markedly to the attractions of a service life. On the other hand the more scientific approach to medicine and the role which Netley played in hygiene and tropical medicine attracted the more serious doctor into the Service.

The Victorian age saw Middle Class snobbery reach its apogee and as a regular commission conferred on the Army doctor a status denied his civilian counterpart this materially assisted recruitment.

By and large all these factors—financial security, adventure and sport, professional opportunities—especially in the tropics, and status operated down to the beginning of World War II.

We joined in 1934 with no thought of a career but with the simple desire to have fun and adventures (in those remote days red blood and not diluted vinegar ran in our veins). We were lucky as we had a very happy service life with plenty of fun and on occasion more adventure than we had bargained for.

Several of our acquaintances joined because they were pathological snobs. One in particular we recall who was M.O. to a Guards Regiment. When we asked one of the regimental officers what he was like we received the immortal reply "O our doctor is a splendid chap but he takes a hell of a lot of living up to"!

Although we have been retired for almost seven years and are out of touch it appears to us that the almost 100 per cent married state of young doctors rules out the attractions of fun and adventure (because of cost and risk to the wage earner) and in consequence pay and professional opportunities are now the most powerful magnets.