United Services Medical Society.

THE MEDICAL SERVICE WITH LORD METHUEN'S FORCE DURING THE ADVANCE ON KIMBERLEY, 1899.

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Royal Army Medical Corps.

This paper is the outcome of an invitation to bring before a meeting of the United Services Medical Society some practical example of the work and tactical dispositions of field medical units. The operations of the force under Lord Methuen's command, during the advance on Kimberley, 1899—the First Division South African Field Force—were selected as suitable for the purpose because: (1) that period was the only phase of the South African War in which a division, and later an augmented division, fought a series of actions with its medical service complete in numbers and composition in accordance with the scale laid down in war establishments of the day; (2) a number of incidents in the medical narrative of those operations sufficiently well indicate principles which must always apply in the working of the medical service in war irrespective of the exact composition or nomenclature of its field units, or the general tactical situations in which those units may be employed; (3) as a matter of purely Corps interest it appeared to be worth while to endeavour to bring into one record the scattered information and references relating to the work accomplished by the officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the Corps who at that time formed part of the First Division, and whose services met with approbation in many diverse quarters; (4) a more or less detailed narrative of this period of the South African War may induce others to put together the history of the work of the Medical Service in other actions in which the Corps did equally useful work.

The official account submitted during the War by Colonel E. Townsend, P.M.O. First Division, of the manner in which the wounded were disposed of from the fight at Belmont up to the action of Magersfontein forms the basis of this narrative. That account has already been published in the "Report on the Medical Arrangements in the South African War," by Surgeon-General Sir W. D. Wilson, K.C.M.G. Maps showing the position of the
medical units during the various actions have not previously been produced, and moreover, the work of the Regimental Medical Service has not been recorded. In order to verify or locate the exact positions occupied by medical units, and to obtain notes of incidents in connection with the Medical Service, of historical or personal interest, a number of officers were written to recently with the result that thirty-three officers of the Royal Army Medical Corps and Royal Navy Medical Service, including fourteen out of the eighteen officers who served with regimental units in the firing line, have contributed to, or confirmed the incidents about to be recorded.

Before relating the events during the advance from Orange River it is desirable to refer to (1) the change which has taken place in the organization of the field medical units since the South African War and (2) the developments on the Cape Town-Kimberley line before the concentration of Lord Methuen's force.

### FIELD AMBULANCE

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<th>Rank and file</th>
<th>Bearer Company and Field Hospital</th>
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### Bearer Company and Field Hospital

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(1) **Changes which have taken place in the Organization of the Field Medical Units since the South African War.**

The above table gives the composition of the present field ambulance and of the old bearer company and field hospital. The
upper portion of the table shows the carrying capacity of the bearer division of a field ambulance and of a bearer company. It will be observed that the former has eighteen stretchers with six bearers each as compared to the eight stretchers with four bearers each of a bearer company. The number of ambulance wagons and personnel to accompany them is the same, but the carrying capacity of the ambulance wagon has been raised as regards lying-down cases from two to four. The bearer company had a definite personnel and equipment for the formation of a dressing-station and collecting-station. The bearer division of a field ambulance has, within itself, no such personnel, which when required has to be provided by a tent sub-division or portion of one. The lower part of the table shows the three tent sub-divisions of a field ambulance and the personnel of a field hospital divided into two. The division of a field hospital into two halves was recognized as a legitimate procedure when necessary. The point to note specially is, that a whole field hospital equals almost exactly two tent sub-divisions of a field ambulance, as it will then be easy to estimate how many tent sub-divisions would have been at work during the various actions to be described, if the present organization had been in existence. Taking the medical units as being in direct relation to the largest formations within a division, i.e., the infantry brigades, and leaving out for the moment the other organizations known collectively as divisional troops, we find that each of the two infantry brigades in the old division had attached to it a bearer company and a field hospital, and in addition to those four units there was one other field hospital available in the division which was known as the divisional troops field hospital.

The present division has three infantry brigades, and three field ambulances which are divisional troops and altogether independent of the brigades. When three brigades were brought together under the old system, as, for example, at the battle of Magersfontein, there were available three such organizations as that shown in the table under Bearer Company and Field Hospital and in addition the field hospital of the divisional troops. Consequently, if the bearer company personnel shown as the collecting station and dressing station be taken down to the blank space in the field hospital part of the table and the deficiency in the hospital (tent) portion of personnel be made up to the present standard from the divisional field hospital, it will be found that the personnel available in the field for hospital or "tent" purposes under the old and the new organizations is approximately the same. But
there has been a large increase in the strength of the divisional troops. So the present division, with the exception of the increase of bearers per stretcher, who are only partially trained men, is relatively weaker in field medical unit personnel than a division made up to a strength of three infantry brigades on the old system.

A collecting station under the old organization was a point to which wounded were carried by stretcher-bearers of the bearer company and from which they were carried by ambulance wagons to the dressing station. A dressing station, where splints, &c., were fixed and restoratives administered, was a half-way house between the collecting station and the field hospital, which, in turn, was supposed to be able to treat and feed the wounded and provide for all their requirements until they were evacuated to the line of communication hospitals. When the field ambulance organization was introduced, the collecting station, as a defined point in the scheme for the removal of wounded from the field, disappeared. It has recently reappeared in the shape of an advanced dressing station, not for theoretical reasons, but because in the medical manoeuvres of 1910, and in nearly all medical exercises in the field, the occasional necessity for some such post was obvious and the only difficulty was to find a suitable term for it.

One other point is worth mentioning. When the present field ambulances were made divisional units, under the direct command at all times of the officer commanding the R.A.M.C. in a division, many officers thought the arrangement a very bad one when compared with the old system of a bearer company and field hospital as brigade units under command of the brigade commander. But under the regulations relating to those units it was optional for a G.O.C. Division to detach them from their brigades and place them at the disposal of the P.M.O. should circumstances make that course desirable. As a matter of fact during all the actions to which this narrative refers the brigade bearer companies and field hospitals were controlled and directed altogether by the P.M.O. so long as fighting lasted and wounded had to be disposed of. This came about automatically in the ordinary course of the work to be done and not on account of the regulations mentioned above. When the wounded had been evacuated the units went back to their brigades. Generally speaking that arrangement had many advantages. It

1 In the Prussian organization during the Franco-Prussian war, this station was known as the Sammelplatz, or furthest point to which it was expedient to bring ambulance wagons.
will be noticed later on that in the first march from Orange River all the medical units marched together, and at the battle of Belmont and the later actions they were in no way tied up under brigade or localized control.

(2) Developments on the Cape Town-Kimberley line before the concentration of Lord Methuen’s force.

About the middle of September when it was decided to send detachments of troops to Kimberley, Orange River, and De Aar, the equipment of two field hospitals stored at Cape Town was drawn and divided into four sections afterwards known as Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 Sections Cape Field Hospital. The personnel was provided by reinforcements of Royal Army Medical Corps which arrived at the Cape during September and partly by the Cape Medical Staff Corps. These sections were not moved from Cape Town until after war broke out.

On September 19, the headquarters and four companies of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, detachments of R.G.A., R.E., A.S.C., and Lieutenant C. J. O’Gorman with two serjeants and three privates R.A.M.C. went to Kimberley. The other half battalion of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment and details and Captain D. D. Shanahan, one N.C.O. and one private R.A.M.C., went to Orange River. De Aar was occupied by a small force about the same time. The medical equipment for the Orange River force was as follows: One pair field medical panniers, one field medical companion, haversack and water-bottle, a box containing extra dressings, medicines and medical comforts, and one ambulance wagon with mules. No tents were provided, and no cooking arrangements were made for the sick. These if required were to be provided by the troops. There were practically no sick, and not a single case of illness was sent to the base prior to the concentration of Lord Methuen’s force.

October 11.—The time allowed by President Kruger’s ultimatum expired at 5 p.m.

October 14, Nos. 1, 2 and 3 Sections Cape Field Hospital, under Major H. P. Birch and Lieutenants G. B. Crisp and W. H. S. Nickerson, arrived at De Aar, where the garrison had been increased during the preceding few days.

October 14-15.—Railway and telegraph line destroyed North and South of Kimberley, and the garrison there cut off.

October 14-18.—The 9th Lancers arrived at Orange River from
India. As this regiment was equipped on the Indian scale,\(^1\) Captain J. V. Forrest who was in medical charge had with him an assistant surgeon and a native ward servant.

October 15.—1st Northumberland Fusiliers arrived at Orange River from De Aar.

October 17.—No. 1 Section Cape Field Hospital arrived at Orange River: personnel, Major H. P. Birch, 1 W.O., 1 Serjeant, 9 rank and file, R.A.M.C. This was the first hospital of any kind at Orange River. It was established in a few small houses at the back of the railway station, and partly in tents. Beds were improvised out of wooden railway sleepers. There was an ample supply of blankets and medical comforts. The sick were few and the arrangements met all requirements.

October 20.—The South African Field force commenced to embark at Southampton (the Army Reserve was called out on October 7).

November 3.—Colonel Hall's Brigade 18th, 62nd, 75th Batteries Royal Field Artillery arrived at Orange River between October 28, and November 3.

November 4.—No. 2 Section Cape Field Hospital which had been sent to Naauwpoort on October 27, returned to De Aar and there joined No. 4 Section, which arrived at De Aar from Cape Town on October 28. No. 3 Section went to Stormberg on October 27, and did not again return to the western line of rail.

November 6.—Reconnaissance from Orange River towards Belmont by 9th Lancers, 2 Companies M.I. (Northumberland Fusiliers and Loyal North Lancashire Regiment), 2 guns, R.F.A. Medical arrangements.—Captains J. V. Forrest and D. D. Shanahan, R.A.M.C.; four stretcher squads M.I.; two ambulance wagons with wagon orderlies; regimental medical equipment and medical comforts carried in ambulance wagon. The stretcher squads were the only dismounted troops. They were carried in the ambulance wagons, but as the pace was fast and the roads and tracks bad, the mules were completely done up from the heavy weight they had to drag. No casualties.

November 9.—A reconnaissance was made with the same force beyond Belmont to the vicinity of Enslin. Several railway culverts

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\(^1\) Several of the squadron stretcher-bearers had been employed on hospital duties in India and were very useful, especially during the later stages of the war when the subordinate medical personnel with mounted columns was very meagre. They were often left alone in charge of wounded at farms, &c., until the wounded could be removed.
were found destroyed. There was no opposition. The force bivouacked near Witteputs. The same medical arrangements were made, but on this occasion the stretcher-bearers were mounted, No. 4 carrying the stretcher in a rifle bucket. On the morning of the 10th the enemy, with guns, were met east of Belmont. One officer was killed; three officers (one fatally) and four men were wounded. When in touch with the Boers, the stretcher-bearers dismounted—No. 4 held the horses, and the three other bearers, with a stretcher, kept in touch with the troops. The wounded were carried in the ambulance wagons to the railway, and sent back to Orange River in a train which had brought out reinforcements. The floor of the truck in which the wounded were placed was covered with heather, which made a soft, springy mattress.

Concentration at Orange River.

On November 9 Lord Methuen, with the headquarters of the 1st Division, First Army Corps, disembarked at Cape Town, and the transports of the Army Corps began to arrive. Owing to the situation in Natal the 2nd Infantry Brigade and the artillery of the First Division were sent on to Durban, and the Guards Brigade, with its field hospital and bearer company, and the Field Hospital of the Divisional Troops, alone remained. Lord Methuen received instructions to organize a new brigade from the infantry battalions already at De Aar and Orange River, and, when ready, to advance rapidly on Kimberley. The 18th, 62nd, and 75th Batteries R.F.A. at De Aar and Orange River were to take the place of his original divisional artillery sent to Natal. This rearrangement of troops naturally caused a general upset in the mobilization allotment of medical units.

On November 12 Lord Methuen arrived at Orange River, and began to organize his force. The new 9th Brigade was formed by the 1st Northumberland Fusiliers, 2nd Northamptonshire, 2nd King’s Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, and half of the 1st Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. The Divisional Field Hospital, First Division (Major F. A. Harris) was allotted to this brigade, and a bearer company was provided by withdrawing No. 3 Bearer Company (Major R. G. Hanley) from the Highland Brigade, which was concentrating about De Aar and was not required immediately to take the field. The Divisional Field Hospital thus diverted to what was considered the more important position in the force was replaced by Nos. 2 and 4 Sections of the Cape Field Hospitals, under Major
Greenway, R.A.M.C., and Surgeon-Major J. H. Cox, C.M.S.C., which had been doing the work of a local temporary hospital at De Aar. This field hospital only accompanied the division on the advance as far as Fincham’s, where No. 10 Field Hospital (originally mobilized for the Highland Brigade) joined and became the Divisional Field Hospital, First Division. The sections of the Cape Field Hospital then returned (November 22) to Orange River. The medical units withdrawn from the Highland Brigade were replaced by a bearer company manned by the Cape Volunteer Medical Staff Corps under Lieutenant-Colonel E. B. Hartley, V.C., Cape Mounted Rifles, and by the field hospital originally allotted as the Divisional Field Hospital, Second Division. That division was then given the field hospital for Corps Troops, First Army Corps.

No. 3 Bearer Company, which became the 9th Brigade Bearer Company, arrived without its ambulance wagons, which were not embarked on the same transport as the personnel. It had to be fitted out at Orange River with buck wagons converted into ambulance wagons, and it started with only three fully equipped ambulance wagons which were with the regimental units at Orange River before the concentration.

To provide medical officers for the infantry of the 9th Brigade, Captain D. D. Shanahan was posted to the Northumberland Fusiliers; Lieutenant Crisp, from No. 2 Section Cape Field Hospital, to the Yorkshire Light Infantry; and Lieutenant W. Jagger was sent up from No. 1 General Hospital at Wynberg for the half battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. Lieutenant E. L. Munn came out from England with the 2nd Battalion Northamptonshire Regiment, which was one of the battalions mobilized for the line of communication of the Army Corps.

Lieutenant A. H. Benson, Militia Medical Staff Corps, arrived from Cape Town, and was posted to No. 1 Section, Cape Field Hospital, at Orange River.

During the concentration period all regimental stretcher-bearers were instructed daily in first aid.

Commanding officers were directed to ascertain that all officers and men were in possession of a first field dressing.

Officers in medical charge of regimental units were directed to report any deficiencies in stretcher-bearers, stretchers, or medical equipment, and that their units were in possession of field hospital supply cases, i.e., regimental medical comforts.

Divisional orders were published directing that all bright parts of swords (not blades), bayonets, scabbards, and buttons were to
be painted or coloured khaki, and that officers were to be equipped like the men—the equipment to be obtained from casualties. Some of the Royal Army Medical Corps officers with regimental units, who, under this order, wore the regulation equipment, found the pouches useful for carrying an extra supply of bandages.

On November 19, when the general preparations were almost complete, a medical inspection of all officers, N.C.O.s and men was held. Medical officers were directed to take this opportunity to see that everyone was in possession of a first field dressing.

On November 20, the Division was ready, and the troops which had not already done so moved into bivouac on the north side of the Orange River.

Transport was provided for two blankets and one waterproof sheet per officer, and one blanket and half a waterproof sheet per man. No other personal luggage was allowed.

Tents were not to be carried, but field hospitals were allowed half scale for sick, i.e., 13 C.T.D. 112 lb. and 3 C.T.S. 80 lb. tents. Bearer companies and field hospitals also took operating tents.

Arrangements were made to send by rail, when feasible, the full scale of baggage and tents.

ADVANCE FROM ORANGE RIVER.

On November 21, the Division marched at 4.30 a.m. in two lines to Fincham's Farm:

The Brigades and Divisional Troops were composed of the following units:

1st or Guards Brigade.
- 3rd Grenadier Guards.
- 1st Coldstream Guards.
- 2nd Coldstream Guards.
- 1st Scots Guards.
- Detachment A.S.C.
- Bearer Company.
- Field Hospital.

9th Brigade.
- 1st Northumberland Fusiliers.
- \( \frac{1}{2} \) 1st Loyal North Lancashire
- 2nd Northamptonshire.
- 2nd King's Own Yorkshire L.I.
- Detachment A.S.C.
- Bearer Company.
- Field Hospital.

DIVISIONAL TROOPS.

- 9th Lancers.
- 2\( \frac{1}{2} \) Companies, M.I.
- Detachment New South Wales Lancers.
- Detachment A.S.C.

FIELD HOSPITAL.

- 18th and 75th Batteries, R.F.A.
- 7th and 11th Companies, R.E.
- Rimington's Guides

* 1st Coldstream Guards did not join until the evening of the 22nd.
† 62nd Battery R.F.A. joined during the battle of Modder River.
(1) 9th Lancers, Guards Brigade, 9th Brigade, one company Royal Munster Fusiliers, along the railway line.

(2) The Royal Field Artillery and the S.A.A. carts of the brigades, 2 Bearer Companies, 3 Field Hospitals, Supply and Ammunition Columns, on the Hopetown-Witteputs Road. Distance about 9 miles.

The camping ground was a very good one, with an excellent water supply in a reservoir filled from a well. Owing to information which gave rise to a suspicion that the water supply on this line of advance might be poisoned with cyanide of potassium, the authorities at Cape Town supplied to certain units small tin cases containing the reagents and directions for the Prussian blue test. At Fincham's the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment received an alarming report that the water was poisoned, and Lieutenant Jagger was aroused from sleep and asked to test it. He had not heard of the box of reagents, so, with only visions of Prussian blue but with a definite knowledge of a possible sudden death, he realized the psychological moment of his career had come and that a physiological test was the only thing to save the battalion. He drank the water and retired to sleep.

November 22.—Lord Methuen, accompanied by his Staff, Infantry Brigade Commanders, the C.R.A., C.R.E., the P.M.O. and his secretary, started from Fincham's at 4 a.m. and reconnoitred the enemy's position at Belmont from the top of a kopje close to Thomas's Farm. The General having decided on his plan of attack, Thomas's Farm was noted as a suitable site for field hospitals. Leaving the mounted infantry to hold the ground in the vicinity of the farm, the Staff returned, and arrived at Fincham's at 8 a.m. It was during this reconnaissance that Lord Methuen named the prominent features of the Belmont kopjes, Table Mountain, Mount Blanc, and Sugar Loaf.

About 9 a.m. the enemy opened fire on the mounted infantry round Belmont, and early in the afternoon brought two guns into action. These guns were withdrawn on coming under fire from the 18th Battery R.F.A., which had moved up rapidly from Fincham's. Two men were slightly wounded. They returned to duty after their wounds had been dressed by Major H. L. Battersby, in medical charge R.F.A.

Orders for the attack on the 23rd were issued during the day. The Division moved at 4.30 p.m. to Thomas's Farm, where the head of the column arrived at dusk, but the rear guard with two ambulance wagons, under Lieutenant Fell, did not get in till 9 p.m.
The Medical Service with Lord Methuen's Force

The area available for the bivouac was small, and the medical units, in common with others, had difficulty in finding their places in the dark.

The Naval Brigade, consisting of 18 officers, 384 other ranks with 4 naval 12-pounder guns, joined the Division in the afternoon. Its medical establishment was 3 medical officers, 3 sick berth attendants, 10 stretchers with 40 stokers as bearers. These stokers were picked men from various ships who had been instructed at the Cape in stretcher drill and first aid by Fleet Surgeon J. Porter. The stretcher squads were equipped with field surgical haversacks and a Naval field chest.

Battle of Belmont, November 23, 1899.

At 2 a.m. the troops were preparing to move from their bivouacs. The Guards Brigade passed the Ganger's Hut about 3.20 a.m., the advance of the 3rd Grenadier Guards and Scots Guards being directed towards Gun Hill. The 9th Brigade crossed the railway line near the station, a little later, the leading battalions, the Northumberland Fusiliers and Northamptons being directed towards Table Mountain. Just as day was breaking and when the firing lines of the Scots Guards and Grenadier Guards were close to the points of attack, as shown on the map, the enemy opened fire all along the line. Many casualties occurred in the first few minutes, some bullets passing over the leading companies and catching those in rear.

Within 25 minutes the Guards had captured Grenadier Hill and very shortly afterwards the 9th Brigade were in possession of the western crest of Table Mountain. The enemy held on to the far side of that hill for some time and also kept up a fire from Mount Blanc. The Naval guns and R.F.A. shelled that point. Eventually both brigades crossed the valley to the east of Table Mountain. The 1st Coldstream Guards, supported by half the 2nd Coldstream Guards, captured the Razor Back. By 6.10 a.m. the last height was cleared and the enemy's laager was seen trekking away in a north-easterly direction. By 10.30 a.m. the fighting troops were back in the camp at the farm.

The total casualties were:

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<tr>
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<th>Killed</th>
<th>Wounded</th>
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<td>Officers</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other ranks</td>
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The strength of the troops engaged was about 8,693.
Twenty-two wounded Boers were picked up on the kopjes.
The Grenadier Guards suffered the heaviest loss: 1 officer and 21 men killed, 8 officers and 106 men wounded. The Scots Guards lost 10 killed and 33 wounded, and the Northumberland Fusiliers 12 (2 officers) killed, and 40 wounded.

*Regimental Medical Service.*—The following description by Captain Profeit, in medical charge of the Grenadier Guards, is more or less typical of what occurred in the other battalions that came under severe fire:

“When orders were received on the 22nd that an attack was to be made on the Belmont position at dawn on the 23rd, I saw that all the medical equipment was packed in the Scotch cart, and the driver placed under my orders. The stretcher-bearers were served out with S.B. armlets and told that as soon as the battalion crossed the railway line they were to remove the stretchers from the cart and fall in. The field companion was to be carried by the corporal, the surgical haversack by another orderly, and the water-bottles by the men in charge of particular stretchers.

“About 3.30 a.m. on the 23rd we moved towards the position, the Scotch cart keeping in close touch with the battalion. When the railway line was crossed the bearers took the stretchers from the cart and fell in under me. Very soon we were over a slight rise in the ground and the Boers at once opened fire, the whole range of kopjes to the left front and right flank seemed alive with fire. Many bullets were flying about, so the stretcher squads were extended and moved up behind the battalion. As the attack developed they further extended to search for wounded and to render first aid. There were many casualties about a thousand yards from Grenadier Hill, which kept me busy till the firing slackened. The orderly corporal remained with me, and I attended to the most severely wounded men, attaching tallies and noting the position and severity of the wounds. Soon, however, I had news that there were a large number of wounded lying under Grenadier Hill. When I got there men seemed to be lying about in scores, and it looked as if there was work for half a dozen medical officers. However, I set to work and rendered what aid I could, applying tourniquets and using up all the dressings in the field companion, and as many first field dressings as could be found. As I tied up the wounds the corporal jotted down on the tallies the kind of wound, and if a tourniquet had been applied. This went on until we had done about twenty cases, then the work
and hurry to get the men off the field necessitated this regulation being given up, and the corporal was sent to render first aid himself, and give many who were shouting for it a drink of water. Writing notes about cases on the field is a waste of time where large numbers of men have to be dealt with, and even attaching different coloured tallies to signify the severity of the wound had much better be done in the dressing stations.

"The two essentials most vividly impressed on my mind were the relief of pain and thirst. Luckily we had plenty of water in the water-bottles to give a sip to those who most needed it. A 2-oz. bottle of morphia solution and a good hypodermic syringe are invaluable.

"Later the bearer company, under Captain Beach, came up with some wagons and began to clear the field near Grenadier Hill. As I was not required he asked me to get on my pony and see if the Coldstream Guards had many wounded, and to tell the medical officers with those battalions that wagons were on their way to remove their wounded. As soon as I had done this, I went back to the bivouac, and then on to the field hospital at Thomas’s Farm, where I worked for some hours among the cases there."

When the 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards was extended to attack the Razor Back, a staff officer rode up to Captain Hooper, R.A.M.C., and requested him to send all the regimental bearers to Grenadier Hill. They were sent, and Captain Hooper, with the regimental medical corporal, alone dealt with the casualties in the battalion (nine killed and nineteen wounded), which were later taken over by the Guards Brigade Bearer Company. Three wounded Boers were found near Kaffir’s Kop Farm, one a compound fracture of the thigh; two had been dressed by their own side.

Colonel Gough’s force, consisting of two squadrons 9th Lancers and some mounted infantry, moved out at 4 a.m., crossed the railway line north of Belmont Station, and advanced at a gallop in an easterly direction. They were soon checked by a strong party of Boers and suffered three or four casualties. These were carried by the regimental bearers to cover under the railway embankment, and Captain J. V. Forrest, R.A.M.C., in medical charge 9th Lancers, sent a mounted orderly to the station for an ambulance wagon. Moving north this force overtook two Boer ox ambulance wagons with two doctors\(^1\) and some sick attendants, but no patients. They were

\(^1\) One of these doctors was an Edinburgh graduate who had served in the Volunteers and was a contemporary of Captain Forrest.
brought back to Belmont but allowed to go soon afterwards. Some wounded mounted infantry were brought in on these Boer ambulance wagons.

The Assistant Surgeon of the 9th Lancers accompanied the mounted troops which went round to the south of the position. There were no casualties.

**Medical Units.**—All the medical units received verbal instructions from the P.M.O. on the evening of the 22nd as to the general dispositions to be adopted during the fight. The bearer companies were to follow their brigades. The Guards and 9th Brigade Field Hospitals were to open at Thomas's Farm, and the Divisional Field Hospital to stand fast in reserve in the vicinity of the farm.

The 9th Brigade Field Hospital bivouacked at the farm on the night of the 22nd, but the Guards Field Hospital, unable to reach it that evening, owing to darkness and the congested state of the tracks leading to it, did not arrive there until early morning on the 23rd. Both units made all preparations to receive wounded, while the troops were moving out to the attack.

**Bearer Companies.**—The Guards Brigade Bearer Company followed the brigade to the junction of the road between Thomas's Farm and the Ganger's Hut, and there halted. Directly firing began the whole unit moved to the railway line. The ambulance wagons were unable to cross until a party from the railway construction train came up and filled in some ditches on each side of the line, but the stretcher squads, under Captain Beach and Lieutenant Hodgson, followed the troops. A dressing station was opened at the Ganger's Hut and a collecting station established near the southern point of Grenadier Hill. A good many wounded walked back to the dressing station. The ambulance wagons were at first used between the collecting station, and other positions on the field, and the dressing station. When about thirty wounded were collected at the latter, half of the ambulance wagons were used for conveying them to the field hospitals. Cases which were satisfactorily dressed and did not require further attention at the dressing station were sent straight on to Thomas's Farm.

The 9th Brigade Bearer Company moved off behind the rear battalion of the brigade and halted on the road leading from the farm to the railway station. When Grenadier Hill was captured the enemy were still holding on to some points on the left of their

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1 On the 22nd the Brigade Major 9th Brigade by means of a rough sketch explained to the officers of the bearer company of that brigade the general plan of attack.
position, which made any movement of medical units on that flank unsafe. Colonel Townsend, therefore, ordered (by mounted officer) two ambulance wagons and two stretcher squads to move on to the field via the Ganger's Hut. This party set up a collecting station west of Gun Hill. Shortly afterwards, when the road was safe, the remainder of the bearer company moved up to Belmont railway station, and there opened a dressing station which received wounded from that collecting station and direct from the field. At first wounded were sent from the railway station to the field hospitals at the farm, but, about 8 a.m., when it was evident that there was no danger of a counter attack from the north, the Divisional Field Hospital was ordered to open at the station and take over the wounded already there and those coming in from the field. There was a track fit for wagons from the station to Gun Hill.

Field Hospitals.—At the station, the goods shed, which held about 20 cases on stretchers, and the verandah on the platform were used to accommodate wounded.

At the farm several small rooms were available, and also an adjoining school-house; some of the rooms were used for wounded officers, and one was arranged as an operating room. The first casualties to reach the farm were slightly wounded men, who walked back from the fight and arrived there about 7 a.m. Subsequently, ambulance wagons arrived in rapid succession from the Ganger's Hut and from the railway station. All the field hospital store wagons were off-loaded and sent out to assist in carrying wounded. By 1 p.m. 253 wounded were in the field hospitals, 172 at the farm, and 81 at the station (59 British and 22 Boers). Amongst these there were 14 officers, including Major-General R. S. R. Fetherstonhaugh, commanding the 9th Brigade, at the farm, and one officer and Mr. E. F. Knight, the war correspondent of the Morning Post, at the station. Fifteen slightly wounded remained with their units and were not admitted to hospital. The officers of the bearer companies and some of the medical officers of regimental units assisted at the field hospitals which were at work throughout the afternoon and evening. The number of cases of fracture of the thigh was larger than in later actions. At the request of Surgeon-Lieutenant-Colonel Magill the Royal Engineers made a dozen long wooden thigh splints for the Guards Brigade Field Hospital. These splints were specially made thicker and broader than the usual thigh splint, and some of them not used at the time, proved very useful in subsequent engagements.

Several major operations were necessary, including two amputations of the thigh and one through the shoulder-joint.
Medical supplies to replace dressings expended during the day were wired for.

*Geneva Convention.*—Soon after the troops withdrew from the kopjes, a Boer wearing a Red Cross badge on his arm rode into the dressing station at Belmont Station. He said he had come to inquire how his wounded were getting on, and proceeded to go round the twenty odd cases (Boers) there. A signaller at the station, thinking the visitor was rather casual, signalled the incident to his chief. A reply came back directing the Boer to be brought to divisional headquarters. He was there interrogated and, although at first suspected of being a spy, he was eventually allowed to go. The circumstances are worth noting because the officer in charge of a dressing station or hospital should detain an unknown visitor from the enemy and communicate with the intelligence or other officer competent to deal with the matter.

November 24.—The wounded awaiting evacuation numbered 212 British and 20 Boers, total 232. Of the 253 admitted to the field hospitals 9 were discharged to duty, and 12, including 2 Boers, died.

No. 2 Ambulance Train (Captain C. C. Fleming, R.A.M.C.), which had been wired for and despatched from Cape Town at 2 p.m. on the 22nd, arrived at Belmont at 5.30 a.m. It was loaded during the morning with 5 officers and 107 others—British and Boers—all slight or less severe cases, and some sick. About 1 p.m. it started for Orange River. A wire was despatched notifying its departure and asking for stretcher-bearers to be in readiness to unload it. There was little unnecessary delay at Orange River and the train returned at once to Belmont, where it arrived at 8 p.m. The remaining wounded, nearly all serious cases, were waiting at the station laid out in rows on the platform and in the goods shed. The work of loading was slow and difficult owing to the darkness and the number of bad cases, such as fracture of the thigh, &c.; however, the train got away successfully soon after 10 p.m.—‘line clear’ for Wynberg. It took 14 officers and 106 others, total 120. There was only lying-down accommodation for 96, so there was serious overcrowding up to Orange River, where 18 of the least serious cases were dropped, and the train proceeded to Cape Town with 102 dangerously and severely wounded. One officer and 2 men (wounds of head, abdomen, and spine) died on board next day.

The Division, with the exception of the Scots Guards, two companies Royal Munster Fusiliers, the naval guns, and the
medical units, had moved on at 3 p.m. to Swinkpan, north­
east of Belmont, and about 8 miles from Thomas's Farm.

Two ambulance (buck) wagons and two stretcher squads of the
9th Brigade Bearer Company, under Lieutenant Fell, R.A.M.C.,
accompanied the division, and the 9th Brigade Field Hospital,
after handing over its wounded to the Divisional Field Hospital at
Belmont Station for entraining, followed the division and reached
Swinkpan two hours after dusk.

When the last of the wounded were disposed of, the Guards
Brigade Field Hospital and Bearer Company bivouacked at the
station with the Divisional Field Hospital and 9th Brigade Bearer
Company, and Colonel Townsend decided to march with these units
at 2 a.m., when the moon rose, to catch up the division. An earlier
start he considered inadvisable as the night was very dark, there
was no guide, and the mules, working all day carrying wounded
to the station, were not outspanned until 9 p.m. and were already
done up. It was after 11 p.m. when the personnel got to rest in
their bivouacs after a hard day's work.

The enemy were located during the march of the division to
Swinkpan, and about 9 p.m. the Chief Staff Officer told Lieutenant
Fell that there would be a fight the next day, and gave him an
order directing the officer commanding the 2nd Battalion North­
amptonshire Regiment to provide blankets and men to act as
stretcher-bearers in case the bearer companies did not arrive in
time. Lord Methuen sent a note to Colonel Townsend, by a
mounted messenger, asking him to send on blankets and stretchers
as soon as possible. Colonel Townsend received this note about
midnight. He detained the messenger, and at once issued orders
for all the medical units to march from Belmont at 1 a.m.

At this stage of the campaign inspanning at night was a tedious
proceeding, and on this occasion it took longer than was anticipated;
however, the column was on the move at 1.30 a.m. It consisted
of 17 officers, 182 other ranks, 40 vehicles, 20 horses, 310 mules,
and a number of native drivers. The N.C.O.s and men were
carried in the ambulance wagons. The night was very dark, the
road was bad, and the guide, as usual, but slightly acquainted
with it, led the convoy on to a wrong track with the result that an
ambulance wagon full of men was upset when crossing some rough
ground to regain the road.

The bivouac of the division was reached about 4 a.m. The
advanced guard had already moved off. The water supply at
Swinkpan consisted of two small dams, which contained more
mud than water, and an attempt to water the mules met with but little success, as what water there was many of the animals refused to drink. The result of this, and the difficulty of obtaining water for the water-carts, will be seen later on.

**Action at Graspan, November 25, 1899.**

The Lieutenant-General was greatly pleased at the prompt return of the medical units. He explained the situation and plan of action to the P.M.O. The Naval Brigade, supported by the 9th Brigade, was to attack the south-eastern end of the enemy’s position on the Graspan-Rooilaagte kopjes. The Guards Brigade with all the baggage was to move towards the railway line at Enslin.

The advanced guard—Naval Brigade—moved off from Swinkpan at 3.30 a.m., followed by the 9th Brigade, with which went Lieutenant Fell’s detachment of the bearer company and the 9th Brigade Field Hospital. The Guards Brigade Bearer Company and Field Hospital rejoined their brigade on arrival at Swinkpan, and the Divisional Field Hospital was ordered to follow the Guards Brigade to Enslin. The 9th Brigade Bearer Company moved on at once to catch up its brigade, which it did shortly before the assault on the kopjes.

The attacking troops were in touch with the enemy about 7 a.m. They had then been marching over three hours across rough ground, there was a scorching sun and the men were parched with thirst. The main attack was carried out and the position captured by the Naval Brigade, the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment and some companies of the Yorkshire Light Infantry. They were exposed to a very hot fire and cross fire from within 700 yards, and the frontal fire continued until 25 yards from the crest of the kopje. The Naval Brigade, which consisted of 10 officers, 190 Royal Marines, and 55 Bluejackets, lost 3 officers killed and 3 wounded (one mortally), 7 men killed and 86 wounded (four mortally). Nearly all the petty officers and N.C.O.s were either killed or wounded. Some who were wounded during the approach were struck again where they fell; some were able to crawl towards an ant-heap or tuft of grass; others when wounded struggled on. Lieutenant Jones, Royal Marine Light Infantry, hit in the thigh, continued to lead his men on to the top of the kopje. The Yorkshire Light Infantry lost 6 killed and 39 wounded, and the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment one killed and 20 wounded. The total casualties were:
The Medical Service with Lord Methuen's Force

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Officers</th>
<th>Killed</th>
<th>Wounded</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ranks</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the above wounded, 5 were not admitted to hospital, 6 died in the field hospital, and 1 returned to duty in the field. The strength of the troops engaged was about 4,594.

The stretcher squads of the 9th Brigade Bearer Company, under Captain C. W. R. Healy, followed the attacking troops and established a collecting station 1,000 yards east of the point attacked by the Naval Brigade. The rest of that unit opened a dressing station one mile south of the collecting station. When the attack developed the 9th Brigade Field Hospital received orders from Colonel Townsend to proceed to Graspan Siding, and there get ready to receive the wounded and make preparations for entraining them so soon as an opportunity occurred. The wounded unable to walk were brought to the dressing station and sent on in ambulance wagons and off-loaded buck wagons to the field hospital throughout the day. The ambulance mules, after the previous day's work, the night march, the journey on to the field, the work in collecting the wounded and the want of water, were done to a turn, and by the afternoon many of them could hardly keep on their feet.

Consequently, when darkness came on there were still forty-four bad cases at the dressing station which could not be sent to the field hospital. These patients were made as comfortable as possible on stretchers and under cover of the operating tent. Owing to miscarriage of a message and the state of the mules, there was no water and very few rations available at the dressing station. Major Hanley, who was in charge of it, said that for many hours, not having a drop of clean water to dissolve the morphia tabloids for hypodermic injections, he had to place the tabloids under the men's tongues. All he had to supplement the bovril, milk and brandy were three tins of lunch biscuits, which he distributed among the wounded who were crying out for food during the night.

The enemy's guns were brought into action against the armoured train on the railway, and they also fired some shells at the Guards Brigade. This brigade was diverted towards the attack at one period of the day, but did not come into action. A party from the bearer company under Captain Beach helped at the collecting station. The enemy retreated after the capture of their main position, and the troops went into bivouac just north of the pan at Rooilaagte and to the west of Enslin Station—the
Divisional Field Hospital and Guards Brigade Bearer Company at the former, the Guards Brigade Field Hospital at the latter. There was a windlass and bucket well at Enslin with a very limited supply of good water.

A Boer hospital, established at a small house south of the high kopje south-east of Enslin Station, was captured. In it were thirty wounded Boers and a man of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment who was wounded on the 23rd. There were also several Boer medical officers, some hospital attendants, a wagon filled with medical materials and a limber containing surgical and veterinary instruments.

The following accounts of the Regimental Medical Service during the fight and the work of the Field Hospital at Graspan Siding are interesting:

Fleet-Surgeon Porter and the stoker bearers followed close in rear of the firing line and did their work under the hottest fire. From the top of the kopje (i.e., the point captured by the Naval Brigade) we could see the surgeons and their orderlies already moving amongst the wounded. Already the collecting place for wounded had been formed, and backwards and forwards toiled the stretcher-men in the terrible heat with their human burdens. Coming down, the men lent a hand in getting their messmates to the ambulance. Each man’s cry was for water. One man mortally wounded and with one arm smashed, unable to pull out the stopper, had bitten off the metal neck of his water-bottle in the agony of thirst and pain.

Lieutenant Walter Jagger, R.A.M.C., Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, described his experiences thus:

“Having been detained behind when the companies were deploying I had to gallop along the line to get to the battalion. The firing at the moment became exceedingly furious, and my pony was shot. The stretcher-bearers were widely separated, and we had to leave the stretchers, and to apply the first field dressing as hard as we could go. There was absolutely no cover, and the stretcher-bearers were warned to exercise great caution when moving about to render first aid. We had to dress the casualties while lying down ourselves—the fire was very heavy. Immediately we moved we drew fire, and it was impossible for more than one man to go to their aid at a time; consequently we got scattered amongst the K.O.Y.L.I., Northumberland Fusiliers and Loyal North Lan-

1 "The Naval Brigades in the South African War, 1899-1900," by Lieutenant W. T. C. Jones, Royal Marines.
cashires, dressing all we could. While splinting and dressing a compound fracture of thigh, I was hit through the haversack. An officer shot in the lung and thigh was unaware of the wound in the lung. I dressed many casualties on the kopje, then returned to help in loading the ambulance wagons of 9th Brigade Bearer Company until all were cleared. There were a few left when an officer with some mounted troops returned from the right flank. He warned us we were not safe as the enemy were near, and offered me an escort. This, of course, I refused (a practical point of great importance), as I knew I was safer without one. He had hardly gone before the enemy fired on us. Later I reported the incident to Lord Methuen. We were fired on from a Cape cart with a Red Cross flag which was going East from Rooilaagte. The Adjutant Loyal North Lancashire had lent me his pony to come in on. I started the last ambulance wagon and mounted to go, when the pony was shot through the shoulder just in front of my knee; I got off and led him back to bivouac dead lame."

Captain J. V. Forrest, R.A.M.C., gave the following narrative:—

“One squadron 9th Lancers and 2 companies M.I., went off north-west and I accompanied this party. My assistant surgeon went with the other party to the north-east. By a circuitous route we got on to the north side of the Boer position and took up a post in some hills about 3 miles south-west of Honey Nest Kloof Station overlooking the vast expanse of veldt which runs almost without a break down to the Modder River. From here we saw the Boer wagons inspan and trek off. We got into helio communication with the other squadrons which had gone north-east. Later, when a serious attempt was being made to cut off our line of retreat, we retired on our line of advance towards a small post formed earlier in the day to provide for this very contingency.

“A party of sharp-shooters who had crawled down under cover of the railway embankment accelerated matters, and I soon found myself helping a man with a fractured thigh off his horse. To avoid drawing fire, I sent my pony along with the stretcher-bearers and the squadron, and told the stretcher-bearers to come back when they could. Having extracted the Martini-Henry bullet from the inner side of the man’s thigh, I fixed him up with the means at my disposal, using his lance as a long splint (the carbine being on the saddle and the horse gone). On looking up, I found that I was no longer alone, but in the direct line of retirement of a Boer commando. The advanced party was preparing to do a little snap-shooting, when an older warrior shouted out, ‘Nit
schiessen' and in a few minutes I was surrounded by a large crowd examining a 'khaki' at close quarters for the first time. As I explained who I was, &c., to the field-cornet, I found the younger bloods were rapidly helping themselves to my spurs and leggings. They were however dropped like hot iron on my appealing to the field-cornet.

Their curiosity being satisfied, the retirement was continued in driblets. They told me that they had shot somebody else, and pointed over the vast plain, and said, "Somewhere about there." Leaving my friend lying, I picked up the monkey-box, and proceeded to search. Eventually I found my stretcher-bearers coming back to look for me. (They still carried their carbines and had had a little scrap on their own on the way.) We opened out to look for the other case, but had to give it up to find the first man again before it got dark. Some kind Boer, knowing how easy it is to miss a certain point on the vast veldt, had taken the lance off the man's thigh, and stuck it in the ground end up as a landmark; and had it not been for that, I should probably have lost him, too, for I noticed the lance well away on the flank of the direction in which we were moving. I had the thigh case carried to the railway line, and sent my orderly along the line into Graspan with a note to the nearest bearer company for an ambulance wagon. This man was not brought in till the following morning. The casualties with the other party were brought in by ambulance wagon sent on verbal requisition. We failed to find the other man next day.'

Field Hospital at Graspan Siding.—The 9th Brigade Field Hospital arrived at Graspan about 9 a.m., and opened close alongside the railway siding: Operation tent pitched and equipped; staff told off; kitchen got ready; latrines and refuse trenches dug; water-carts refilled from water-tanks, brought up the railway line on trucks. There was no water obtainable locally. The field hospital kitchen was improvised with two iron rails from the railway siding, and answered well, as coal was obtainable at the siding and from the locomotives; hot water was now and then obtainable from a locomotive.

At first only a few, but eventually all, hospital tents were pitched and equipped. There was a certain amount of overcrowding as only half scale of tents was carried.

The wounded were brought in by the bearer company ambulance

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1 The body was found by a patrol about three months later with wounds in the head and abdomen.
wagons and by off-loaded buck wagons of the field hospital which were sent out to the collecting station when it was seen that the ambulance wagons were not sufficient and that their mules were done up. Some empty supply wagons were also sent out by the A.S.C.

By nightfall, when darkness and the state of the mules prevented any further transport of wounded, there were 129 wounded British in the hospital and a few Boers.

There was no difficulty about rations for the wounded, as the field hospital carried two days' supply for its own personnel, and the supply column was within reach.

The disposal of the dead—brought in and died in hospital—was arranged for by the quartermaster (Captain J. W. H. Beach), who had graves dug by a working party, sent on application by one of the battalions. The field hospital picks and shovels were used. Boers were buried apart from British. The names of the dead and the position of the graves were noted. Captain Beach obtained a brief written form of burial service from a passing chaplain.

Sunday, November 26.—The division remained in bivouac at Enslin.

At 7 a.m. wagons sent to assist in removing the wounded still out on the field arrived at the dressing station. The last of the wounded were clear of the site by 9 a.m., and the 9th Brigade Bearer Company moved to Graspan Siding, where it remained until the afternoon, when, after assisting to load a train, it rejoined its brigade at Enslin.

A train composed of some specially arranged trucks, some open trucks and a few passenger coaches was brought to Graspan Siding early in the afternoon. About 10 sick and 30 wounded Boers found at Rooilaagte were loaded on trucks at Enslin and sent down to join the train, which was eventually loaded with a total of 107 patients—97 wounded, 62 British, 35 Boers—and 10 sick. The wounded were provided with blankets and rations and all water-bottles were filled. Captain J. C. Jameson and two privates, 9th Brigade Field Hospital, were placed in charge of the train, which started for Orange River at 8 p.m. Camp kettles, milk and beef-tea already prepared, a field medical companion and some dressings were put on board.

Owing to the composition of the train, Captain Jameson noted that it would be quite impossible for him to be of any assistance, except to those in his own carriage, without stopping the train.

Monday, November 27th.—At 4 a.m. the division moved from Enslin and marched about twelve miles to Witkoplagaagte, seven
Map shewing LORD METHUEN'S LINE OF ADVANCE
Nov. 20th to Dec. 12th, 1899.

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miles south of the Modder River railway bridge. The Cavalry and Mounted Infantry reconnoitred in the direction of the Riet and Modder Rivers. Two men of Rimington’s guides were wounded.

No. 3 ambulance train, Major M. W. Russell, R.A.M.C., was dispatched from Cape Town at 3 p.m. on November 25, and arrived at Graspan Siding about noon. This train was loaded up with the remaining wounded, five officers and eighty-nine others, and started for Cape Town at 3 p.m., but was detained on a Siding South of Graspan for two and a-half hours, while trains conveying the 1st Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders from Orange River to reinforce the division at Witkoplaagte were moving north. Two men died on board the ambulance train between Graspan and Orange River. The ambulance train brought up some medical supplies that had been telegraphed for after the Battle of Belmont. It also brought back from Orange River Captain Jameson and the men sent down in charge of wounded the previous day.

The 9th Brigade Field Hospital moved off from Graspan at 3.30 p.m., and went into bivouac for the night at Enslin Station, under cover of a post that had been established there when the division marched out.

(To be continued.)