THE TRAINING AND WORKING OF AN INDIAN SANITARY SECTION.

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Royal Army Medical Corps.

Having recently had an opportunity to train and work an Indian Sanitary Section in Burmah, the following article is an account of my experiences. The details may be of use to others under similar circumstances.

The unit known as an Indian Sanitary Section is of recent formation (I.A.O. No. 708 of 1910). Many of the details given hereafter were experimental, and the suggestions made are to some extent tentative, though perhaps worthy of note for improvement in the light of further experience. The composition of an Indian Sanitary Section is laid down in "War Establishments, India," p. 250, as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Detail</th>
<th>British Officer</th>
<th>N.C.Os. and men</th>
<th>Indian Officer</th>
<th>N.C.Os. and men</th>
<th>Public</th>
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Remarks.—(a) For work at a base as many more sweepers could be added as might be found necessary.

In the Burmah division, we have three Indian Sanitary Sections, namely, Nos. 42, 43 and 44.

It is convenient to consider the following experiences under the two periods of "after nomination" and "after mobilization."

AFTER NOMINATION.

The Lieutenant-General Commanding, through the P.M.O. (A.M.O.), ordered O.Cs. of selected units to nominate the required numbers of N.C.Os. and men (I.A.O. 708/10).

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When making up the personnel of sections there are a few precautions necessary. In the first place, see that none of the regimental sanitary detachment is included, as, if this is done, the detachment may have to be depleted at a moment when it is most required, namely, on mobilization. Secondly, see that the N.C.O.s., British and Indian, are men of intelligence. Thirdly, make up the sections so as to contain different castes, as for instance, two Brahmins or Kshattriyas, five Gurkhas or Punjabi Mahomedans or Madrasis, and five Hindus. The brahmin in the section should be the senior N.C.O. and be recommended by his O.C. as a reliable man. If good, he will be found invaluable. N.C.O.s. and men of Gurkha regiments are particularly useful. Fourthly, with the aid of the civil authorities, try to obtain a few sweepers locally, so as to tide over the time required to obtain them from India.

Training.—After nomination, the section attended a special training at Divisional Headquarters under the Divisional Sanitary Officer. The training consisted of a three weeks course for the British and the same for Indian N.C.O.s. and men. The following is a short synopsis of the course for the Indian portion:

| Monday       | Morning  | Presence of vegetable seeds in air, water, earth. Some cause disease (disease seeds). Passage of disease seeds to man. |
|              | Afternoon| Demonstrate: Latrines and urinals, receptacles and carts in barracks. |
|              | Morning  | Care of blankets. Disease seeds: how they leave the sick and how they enter the healthy in cholera, dysentery, enteric, plague. Importance of pure air. |
|              | Afternoon| Demonstrate: Barrack room cleanliness, ventilation, &c. |
| Wednesday    | Morning  | Water: Care and collection in barracks, water bottle. On Service—(a) Wells, (b) Springs. |
|              | Afternoon| Demonstrate: Morning's lecture. |
| Friday       | Morning  | Water (continued): (c) Streams, (d) Rivers. Purification: (a) clarification, (b) filtration. |
|              | Afternoon| Demonstrate: Morning's lecture. |
| Saturday     | Morning  | Water (continued): (e) Boiling; water boiling station; pumping station. Storage of water. |
|              | Afternoon| Demonstrate: Morning's lecture. |
|              | Afternoon| Demonstrate: Shallow trench latrine, (a) men, (b) officers. |
| Tuesday      | Morning  | Incinerators. |
|              | Afternoon| Demonstrate: Morning's lecture. |
| Wednesday    | Morning  | Urinals, day and night. |
|              | Afternoon| Demonstrate: Morning's lecture. |
A short pamphlet in Urdu was prepared, and appeared to be greatly appreciated.

The course for the British N.C.Os. and men was a combination of the foregoing with that suggested by Major R. J. Blackham, R.A.M.C. (Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps, January, 1910).

At the end of each course there was an examination. The successful candidates received the St. John Ambulance Association certificate and those who obtained 75 per cent received also a certificate on I.A.F. X. 1843.

The examination for Indians consisted of (a) an oral of five minutes, and (b) a practical. The practical examination was conducted as follows: The class was divided into squads of about one N.C.O. and ten men. Necessary tools and equipment such as picks, shovels, bill hooks, coloured cloths, buckets, pakhals, I.G. tubs, empty barrels, &c., were brought down to the examination ground which was near a stream. The N.C.O. of each squad was given a paper on which the allotted task was written in English and Urdu. He was allowed to take the tools, &c., which he wanted from the store and was given from 9 a.m. on Tuesday to 4 p.m. on Wednesday in which to complete the task. A tent was taken down to the ground with the stores, and one N.C.O. and four men from a unit assisted as store-keepers and slept in the tent at night.

The following are two examples of the tasks:—

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(1) You are the N.C.O. in charge of a sanitary squad. The boundaries of the rest camp are given you. The only water is the stream. One Indian Regiment, 500 strong, and fifty Mounted Infantry will arrive to-morrow at 4 p.m. and will march out next morning. Make all the necessary arrangements for the water supply. (Note.—the water in the stream was bad and required boiling). Make the necessary latrines and incinerators.

(2) You are the N.C.O. in charge of a sanitary squad. The boundaries of a camp are given you. One Indian Regiment will arrive to-morrow at 4 p.m. and will stay for one week. The water in the stream is supposed to be good for drinking purposes. Make all the necessary sanitary arrangements.

The examination of the British portion of the section consisted of an oral for two minutes, a paper and a practical. The following is an example of a paper: Time, three hours. Only four questions may be answered. Two must be from Part I, and two must be from Part II.

PART I.

Question 1.—The immediate burial of excreta by the man from whom they pass is most important. Explain this and give your reasons.

Question 2.—A case of enteric fever has occurred in a tent. How would you disinfect the tent and the man's clothing?

Question 3.—What arrangements would you make for a camp bazaar?

PART II.

Question 1.—A camp is at X, between a large river and a road. You are the N.C.O. in charge of the sanitary squad. What arrangements will you make for the water supply?

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FIG. 1.
Question 2.—X is a temporary platform at a rail halt post. S is a stream of bad water. W is a good well. A British Infantry regiment and ten horses arrive to-morrow at 11. a.m. and stop one hour for food. You are the N.C.O. in charge of the sanitary squad. What arrangements will you make?

![Fig. 2](image)

Question 3.—XX are camping grounds for two British and two Indian Regiments. They will be occupied for at least one month. You are the N.C.O. in charge of the sanitary section. What arrangements would you make for latrines and incinerators?

![Fig. 3](image)

The practical work was conducted as follows: A Unit supplied the required number of untrained men so that each candidate had three to four men to assist him. Picks, shovels, &c., were available. Each candidate was given a task and allowed three hours to complete it. The following are two examples of tasks:—

1. Make a water-boiling station and provide drinking-water for ten men. (Note.—The water required alum clarification and boiling.)

2. Make a latrine and urinal for ten British Officers.

After the training the men returned to their respective units. It is suggested that their knowledge should be kept up by employment with the regimental sanitary detachment in the following manner. A unit ordinarily employs one N.C.O. and eight men in
its sanitary detachment. Say it has eight men on the roster as divisional sanitary section men. We could keep up the training of the latter by employing six men of the regimental sanitary detachment and two men of the sanitary section for two months, then change the latter for two other men of the sanitary section and two of the former for the two unemployed men, and so on every two months.

**After Mobilization.**

Manœuvres took place in March, and the Lieutenant-General Commanding ordered a Sanitary Section to be mobilized. The force consisted of about 2,500 men (without followers), but as only Indian units (except a few mounted infantry) were taking part, expense being a great consideration, and as an Indian infantry battalion had recently arrived in the division, the following personnel was detailed:—

2 N.C.O.s. British. These were the N.C.O.s. in charge of two of the divisional sanitary sections.

1 N.C.O. and 7 men from 1 Indian unit } From two of the divisional sanitary sections.

1 " 5 " " " (the new arrival) for training.

Total = 5 N.C.O.'s and 18 men.

The menial establishment was represented by two sweepers and one bhisti. One Army hospital corps ward servant accompanied the sanitary officer to assist in the field laboratory.

I accompanied the section as its Commanding Officer in order to note the difficulties for future guidance.

As regards the above composition. The number of N.C.Os. and men were ample for all the work required, but the menial establishment was insufficient, even though there were no extra road or rail posts to be maintained and the camp was not vacated and reoccupied by various units. Although in a camp on the Lines of Communication most of the actual menial work is performed by the followers of the units, unless there is some large sanitary scheme such as a central incinerator or a refuse removal system, there still remains some work for the men of the menial establishment of a Sanitary Section or Squad. In a fairly large camp (Sanitary Post) as this was, it was found that one bhisti and five sweepers were required.

**Scheme of Work.**—A preliminary scheme of work was prepared by the divisional sanitary officer and passed to the P.M.O. for his approval and subsequent submission to the Director, General Staff. The scheme read as follows:—
The object of the sanitary section will be to perform duties which would be required under active service conditions.

There will be no road or rail posts such as would exist under service conditions, and therefore the section will proceed with the advance party and will not leave squads behind to open up sanitary posts.

It is proposed to divide the mobilization training into three stages:—

1. Preliminary to the march.
2. On the march to the camp.
3. In camp.

(1) Preliminary to the March.—The sanitary section will mobilize a week before the march and undergo a short revisionary course.

Special attention will be paid to:—

(a) Laying out arrangements for a camp.
(b) Selection of water supplies for various purposes.
(c) Purification of water.

(2) On the March.—Probably very little can be done in the way of construction, and therefore the training will be mostly with a view to accustoming N.C.Os. to decide quickly as to the sanitary measures which they would adopt if they were left in charge of a squad at a sanitary post.

It is proposed to work on the following lines:—

(a) At the end of the first half hour's march, each day, suitable ground for latrine trenches will be selected and several small sets (three) of trenches dug 500 paces apart. These will be marked by yellow flags and directing posts.

Commanding officers of units in the main column will be requested to make their men abstain as much as possible from falling out until the column reaches this place. When on the march, some of the sweepers will accompany each unit and carry spades. On arrival at the halting place one of the regimental sanitary detachments and the sweepers will go to the nearest trenches. The detachment will supervise the sweepers and the trenches will be filled in on resuming the march.

It is hoped that the above method, which is experimental, will to some extent solve the great difficulty of preventing the usual fouling along a line of march.

(Note.—This was found to be of little practical use as the main column fought its way up. It might have been useful if they had marched up in the ordinary way.)
(b) At the end of a march the bivouac will be pitched, the available water supplies will be searched for and the general position of latrines selected. The regimental sanitary detachment of the advance party will be assisted by the sanitary section if required.

Non-commissioned officers will write such orders as they consider necessary, and as they would give to their squad on opening up the place as a sanitary post.

Directing posts will be made and erected, so that the main column will have no difficulty in locating water supplies, &c.

Any necessary orders, as, for instance, that certain waters are unfit for drinking purposes, that latrines must be dug in certain situations, &c., will be communicated to the main column.

(3) In Camp.—The camp will be treated as far as possible as a sanitary post on the lines of communication. As the menial establishment will be practically nil the service conditions will be modified.

As far as possible the sanitary arrangements will be prepared for the arrival of the main column. On arrival the regimental sanitary detachment will take over the sanitation of their areas.

Any general or large sanitary measure, such for instance as incineration of excreta at a central station, or boiling water centrally, which the regimental sanitary detachment find difficult to carry out will be done by the sanitary section.

The bazaar and milk supply will be under the supervision of the sanitary section.

A certain number of the sanitary section will act as sanitary police and the whole camp will be inspected daily.

The sanitary section will be exercised in the formation of sanitary posts, the sanitation of routes, the formation of large water boiling stations, incinerating stations, &c.

The above programme was carefully carried out. During the preliminary training lectures and demonstrations were given, stores and equipment were taken over, and loading and unloading the carts practised, flags were made, millboard cut up to form directing posts, a N.C.O. was taught the use of the stencils, latrine marking ropes were made, and rapid making of bivouacs was practised.

Transport and Equipment.—The transport and equipment was obtained under “Mobilization Regulations, India,” para. 22.

The following list was found sufficient (the original has been slightly modified according to subsequently noted requirements):—
One of the British N.C.O.'s was a lance-corporal, and on application to Director, General Staff, was given acting rank of serjeant whilst on manoeuvres.

On the March.—On the march the section accompanied the advance party and assisted them in repairing the road for the main column.

The Officer Commanding the section made notes as to the condition of the road, water supplies, halting places, cultivation, villages, stores procurable, &c., for the information of the senior medical officer of the main column, and for passing to the administrative medical officer. Example:—
Omathe to Nawngkio, February 12. Gently undulating ground. Cross railway between mile 62\(\frac{1}{4}\) and 62\(\frac{3}{4}\), line keeps along east of road till 61\(\frac{1}{2}\) where it crosses again. Between 62\(\frac{1}{4}\) and 62\(\frac{3}{4}\) is a good halting and entraining place, but no water could be seen. No water along route till 57\(\frac{1}{2}\) where there is a small stream of good water. Between 56\(\frac{1}{2}\) and 57 there is a good stream coming from marshy ground E of road.

Country is low jungle till about mile 57\(\frac{1}{2}\) when it gets more open, and there are large patches of open country covered with long grass.

Cultivation, practically nil.

Road.—Generally good, but with one or two badly rutted pieces up to mile 60; between 60 and 67\(\frac{1}{4}\) the road is rocky and bad in places. Available for wheeled transport.

Nawngkio.—Population about 500. Bazaar every fifth day, rice and vegetables (including potatoes) available. Only about 40 pints of milk could be obtained. Civil dispensary. Diseases: very little venereal, no cholera, enteric or plague. During rains, malaria and dysentery. In winter, bronchitis and chest complaints and a little diarrhoea. Soda-water factory in good order. Station \(\frac{1}{4}\) mile from village and dák bungalow. Water, good stream south-south-west of dák bungalow. Stream only fit for bathing west of dák bungalow. Impounded spring of doubtful quality north-north-east of bungalow and north of main road.

The advance party was kept hard at work all along the line of march preparing the road, so that at the end of a march there was very little time in which to select good camping sites, but as these had not previously been demarcated by a General Staff Officer and by a Sanitary Officer, the Officer Commanding the section selected the best, made arrangements for water supplies, &c., and drew a rough sketch for the Officer Commanding the main column, of which the following is an example:—

Wetwun, February 10. Camping-ground.—(1) Under trees north-east of dák bungalow; (2) mules and ponies on dry rice fields north-east of (1); (3) available ground in low jungle south and south-east of (1).

Drinking-water.—(A) Good at A from spring near bridge over large stream. Two bamboos giving together 190 gall. per hour. Sentry required to prevent drawing from the stream, which is not fit for drinking purposes.

(B) Excellent at B from small pipe in hillside, spring supply, pipe to be plugged when not in use, only 68 gall. per hour, about 400 yd. north-west of bungalow.
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(C) Fit, from two bamboos about 400 yd. west of dak bungalow; large supply, not measured (about 500 gall. per hour).

(D) Fair, three bamboos (surface water) about 200 yd. southwest of bungalow, plentiful supply, over 800 gall. per hour.

Mules Drinking.—Good pool, hard bottom, 30 yd. down-stream from bridge at A. E is a road to pool from rice-fields across a streamlet a few yards north of path. This will allow mules not to interfere with traffic along path. Sentry required to direct.

Bathing.—(1) Best at pool by bridge at A. If used, bathing should be suspended for say one hour while mules water below. Stream is strong and will soon clear. Stream below mule’s pool is difficult to approach and pools are deep.

(2) Some washing can be done at D.

(3) A little washing can be done at C.

Latrine Trenches.—Trenches in vicinity of above camps cannot pollute any of the above drinking-water supplies.

(Note.—Here followed a lettered plan which has been omitted from this paper.)

In Camp.—On arrival at the camp, which we treated as a sanitary post, the sites of the camps and sanitary areas were marked out and the drinking-water supply was policed.

Latrines and urinaries were prepared for the main column, but there was not sufficient time to make washing-up places, incinerators, &c.

Directing boards, in English, Urdu and Nagri, were put up to show the way to the various water supplies.

A latrine was made at the railway station and directing boards to it, as well as to a drinking-water well, were erected.

The following arrangements were made for a camp bazaar: In consultation with the Assistant Provost Marshal, who was a Native magistrate from the capital of the State, and the head man of the village, a plan of a stall was decided upon and a contractor found who would erect stalls at a small cost. The following were the Bazaar orders:

Site.—Stalls in one single line, 25 ft. from road at nearest point, and 25 ft. from fence behind.

Stalls.—(1) Must be in line: (2) must be separated by 6 ft. between each double stall or single stall; (3) must be 1½ ft. off the ground, lower part not enclosed and nothing beneath it; (4) may be erected at holder’s expense; (5) can be erected by contract at 12 rupees per double stall, or 8 rupees per single stall, according to plan.
Prices.—Rates to be fixed by the provost-marshal, a board with the rates in three languages to be placed above each stall. Rates not to exceed those of the village bazaar.

Latrines.—One for males and one for females.

Sweeper.—One at 15 rupees per month, to be kept by bazaar stall-holders, and every stall-holder to contribute. The sweeper will be responsible for the cleanliness of the bazaar and its latrine, and for the working of the incinerator.

Refuse Receptacles.—One large basket to be kept 20 ft. in front of every third double stall, and off the ground.

Milk.—Sample to be brought for inspection by the sanitary officer daily. All milk must be boiled. The milk man must have a separate stall.

Butchers.—Slaughter places will be allocated. Slaughtering will be done over a trench and the soiled trench will be covered with earth. The beef stall will be well away from the bazaar and well fenced in so that no meat can be seen from outside. The mutton stall may be in the bazaar. A bucket of water will be ready every morning at each shop on the visit of the sanitary police, who will bring cresol. All woodwork which can be soiled and all utensils will be washed with cresol solution. Cattle pens will be defined, they must be away from the bazaar and must be kept clean by butchers.

Vegetables and Fruit.—Badly bruised or over-ripe fruit to be destroyed in the incinerator. Unripe fruit not to be sold.

Mineral Water Factory.—Only water from the camp drinking supply to be used. Holder is responsible for condition of the absorption pit.

Sanitary Police (S.P.).—One to parade the bazaar from reveille to tattoo and supervise cleanliness, &c.

Badges.—Every person wishing to hold a stall will report in person, and bring any assistants, to the sanitary officer. His name and class of goods will be entered in a register and badges will be given. No person except a soldier or a follower will be allowed in the bazaar unless wearing the badge stamped with his number.

The arrangements for the drinking water supply were complicated and need not be further referred to here. A N.C.O. of the section (Brahmin) was placed permanently in charge.

The site for an “infectious disease camp” was demarcated, and the health of the neighbouring villages ascertained.

On arrival of the main column, the work of the section became mostly supervisory, except a small working party that visited
isolated places and held themselves ready for work at a moment's notice.

Standing orders were issued by the Officer Commanding the section.

A daily order book was kept and orders for the next day were given to the serjeant for the day in the evening after the camp orders had been issued.

Standing Orders: The Orderly Serjeant for the day will only leave camp when inspecting, and must see that the Orderly Corporal is in camp during his absence. He will visit the camp bazaar every morning to supervise the sanitary police and see that cresol is used by butchers, he will satisfy himself that stalls are clean and the food is good, that the latrines are in good order and the incinerator working. He will inspect the whole of the camp north or south of main road once during his tour of duty. He will be responsible that the daily orders are issued. He will report himself with the orderly corporal at 7 p.m. daily at the tent of the Officer Commanding the section.

The Orderly Corporal for the day will only leave camp when inspecting and must see that the Orderly Serjeant is present before he leaves. He will inspect the bazaar and the whole camp north or south of main road once during his tour of duty. (Note: It was so arranged that every N.C.O. and most of the men in the section performed the above duties.)

The N.C.O. in charge of the water supply will visit the drinking water supply at reveillé and tattoo, and be present there from 6 to 9 a.m. and from 4 to 6 p.m. He will supervise the picket and regulate the traffic. He will immediately report to the Orderly Serjeant any shortage in the flow of water.

The Water Picket. A man to be on duty from reveillé to tattoo; the tanks to be filled between 12 and 2 p.m. whilst the reservoir is filling, when only the tanks are to be used. He will regulate the traffic and prevent people entering the enclosure.

A man to wear an arnlet and police the boundaries of the enclosure, also to see that the wire and fences are in repair and mend them if necessary. He must also see that the notice boards are in position, must not allow cattle or men to enter the enclosure.

Camp Police.—All camp policemen will wear badges. A man will be on duty for allotted areas and their surroundings. He will bring any defect to notice of the N.C.O. of the regimental sanitary department concerned or to the working squad of the section for
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the day. The man at the bazaar is responsible for the cleanliness and work of the bazaar sweeper.

Working Squad.—A N.C.O., four men and one sweeper will be told off daily. They will remain in camp, except when visiting allotted places, and will be prepared with picks and shovels for duty in any part of the camp.

Sweeper.—One sweeper to report himself daily to the R.A. sanitary N.C.O. at 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. to work for one hour at the incinerator.

The following is an example of daily orders.

Daily Orders.—March 6.
Orderly Sergeant for the day, Sergeant A.
Orderly Corporal for the day, Naik J. S.
Naik S. B. D. is in charge of water supply.
Two men of the sanitary section will act as picket.
One man of the sanitary section will assist the picket at the pump.
Sergeant A. inspects north of road, Naik J. S. inspects south of road.
Sergeant T. and Naik A. to go to small village one mile north of camp on east of railway. Select a site and make sanitary arrangements as follows: Sergeant T., 50 M.I. (British) and 1 Batt. B.I.; Naik A. 50 M.I. (Indian) and 1 Batt. Indian Infantry.
Sanitary Police, 1 Infantry camp and bazaar; 1 M.I., R.A., S. and T., Police.
Lance Naik R.B.S. and the working squad will visit the camp of L.G.C., Commandant and Director, and the station.
One bhisti to get water for L.G.C.'s. camp.
One sweeper to R.A. incinerator.
Whilst in camp the N.C.O.'s. and some of the men were frequently given tasks similar to the example above.

The force went out 7 to 10 miles one day to fight and bivouac for the night. Advantage was taken of this to train the section in the preparation of drinking water supplies. The section (except a few left behind for necessary work), with their equipment and rations, marched out two days before the force. At the site selected for the khaki camp there was abundance of water which was unfit for drinking purposes. On careful search the sites of three springs were found; these were opened out, cleared, and arrangements were made to facilitate the drawing of water; an ample supply was obtained. At the Red camp there was a good spring flowing
out of a rock, a dam was made and bamboo spouts put in so that the water could easily be drawn. The section made its own camp and that of the L.G.C. on his arrival. Flags were placed at the various water supplies. Directing notices were put up from the road to the supplies, and sentries were posted by the section at the drinking springs.

A practical point was noticed. When opening, enlarging or clearing a spring-head, it is important to allow a free overflow. The sides can be built up until no overflow takes place, and can then be cut down at one point till there is a good outflow. If the depth is not then sufficient, this can be obtained by digging and enlarging the pool downwards. If no overflow is permitted, the spring will often fail to give its former output, and may even stop altogether. It is thought that this may be due to increasing the pressure so much that the water in the spring finds another outlet, which gradually increases in size until the latter channel becomes an easier outlet than the former.

Whilst in camp the section had its little camp area in the lines of one of the units. It consisted of one tent for the Officer Commanding section, three tents for the section and stores, and a laboratory tent, which also formed the office. The followers lived with those of the unit, and the section was placed on the unit’s ration indent.

On breaking up the camp the section saw that it had been properly cleared and all the pits filled in. They then marched back to headquarters with the column and handed in the stores and equipment, and returned to their respective units.

This year the special sanitation class at headquarters will be mainly for the regimental sanitary detachments, but will be attended by men of the sanitary sections who have replaced casualties since last year, and who have not been through a class. Next year the class will be mainly for sanitary sections and similarly will be attended by regimental sanitary detachments.

In conclusion, I must say a word in praise of the section. We could not have a British personnel with the exception of the two serjeants. The men were of four or five different castes, but the way they worked together, the keenness which they displayed and the excellent work they did was worthy of the highest praise. They showed an intelligence and reliability which was unexpected, and with a little encouragement they should form a most valuable asset to our sanitary organization for active service.