Echoes from the Past.

THE ARMY SURGEON, AND THE CARE OF THE SICK AND WOUNDED DURING THE GREAT CIVIL WAR.

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Royal Army Medical Corps.

PART II.

Each of the Physician-Generals in the Parliamentary Army received 10s. a day pay, and each Apothecary-General 6s. 8d. The pay of the medical officers of the Parliamentary Army varied at different times during the war. Physicians were always better paid than surgeons, and the pay of the apothecary was sometimes greater than that of the physician, but usually less, and always more than that of the surgeon. According to a pay-list in “Barriffe’s Military Discipline” (quoted by Fortescue), there were on the staff of the Officers General of the Train:—

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And, on the staff of the Horse Officers of the Field:—

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In 1657, however, the apothecary to the headquarters of the Flanders Expedition received only 4s. 4s. a day. Until 1651 the surgeon’s pay was 4s. a day, and he had two mates at 2s. 6d. a day. His pay was now increased to 6s. a day, but an entry in the “Calendar of State Papers, Domestic,” dated February 10th, 1652, reads “For salaries of 7 surgeons at 4s. a day and 12 mates at 2s. 6d. a day, dressing the Scotch prisoners’ wounds and expense of medicaments £228”; thus showing that, on occasion, surgeons were still engaged at 4s. a day. These may, however, have been surgeons specially and temporarily engaged. In 1655 the surgeon’s pay fell to 5s. a day, and one of his mates was taken from him. In 1657 the army surgeon found his pay again reduced to 4s. a day. According to a list of the Army establishment on February 27th, 1659 (Harleian
Echoes from the Past

MSS. 6844, quoted by Grose in his "Military Antiquities"), the pay of the surgeon to the Commander-in-Chief and his mates was 8s. a day. The surgeon to a regiment of horse received 4s. a day, "and one horse to carry his chest, 2s." Each regiment of horse numbered 480 men. The surgeon to a regiment of foot ("1,200 soldiars") had, as pay, 4s. a day, and his one mate 2s. 6d. a day.

The rates of pay as received by surgeons in our Army in 1659, during the Protectorate of Cromwell, remained unaltered during the four following reigns; we find, in fact, little increase in the surgeon’s emoluments for over a hundred years. According to Gardiner, the value of money was at this period from three to four times as great as it is at the present day, so that the pay of a surgeon in Cromwell’s Army would in modern money be equivalent to something between 12s. and 16s. a day. The medical profession, however, was not at that date overstocked; most surgeons served an apprenticeship of seven years before they practised for themselves, and it is probable that the skilled surgeon was able to earn a great deal more in private practice than he could as an Army surgeon. The pay offered to the Army surgeon was too small to induce many skilled surgeons to join the Army, for records exist which show that the Army contained many very incompetent surgeons. There is, in the Thurloe Papers, a petition from a certain Edward Coke, Army Surgeon, who asks to be retained in the Army, and states that although "one Death, who does and will prevail," had carried off many of his patients, it was not due to the surgeon’s want of care, but the will of "the great God of heaven." He also forwards a statement from those of his patients who had survived in support of his petition. General Monk was always anxious to have well-qualified physicians and surgeons in his army. He considered the rate of pay too small, and therefore, in some cases, showed his surgeons also as private soldiers on his pay-sheets. In this way the surgeon obtained a private’s pay in addition to his own. Monk also strongly remonstrated against the appointment of inefficient medical officers to his army. Firth quoted a letter which Monk wrote protesting against the appointment of a Mr. Fish as surgeon to the artillery train. Fish had formerly been obliged to resign his appointment as surgeon’s mate in order to avoid a court-martial for misconduct. He had never served his apprenticeship to any surgeon, and, Monk says, "the Surgeon-General looks upon him as unfit to take such an employ upon him," and asks that "if possible I may have an able surgeon to the train, in regard I know not what occasion I may have to make use of him myself, and I
conceive this person not fit to undertake it, as well for his want of skill as former miscarriages."

When no army medical officer was available the soldier was treated by the local civil practitioners. The Record Office possesses several of the bills presented for payment by such civil surgeons. One contains items, sixpence for a powder, eighteenpence for a cordial, and two shillings for a purge. The bill of George Blagrave and his son, which the curious may read in full in Firth's "Cromwell's Army," was paid on September 18th, 1645, and contains, amongst other items, the following:

"John Bullock, of Capt. Barton's, a very sore cut in the fore part of his head, which caused a piece of his skull the breadth of half crown piece to (be) taken forth, also a very sore cut over his hand . . . £1 10s. 0d."

"For curing 10 Caveliers taken at the fight at Ashe, whereof one was shot into the arm in the elbow joint and the bullet taken forth in the wrist near the hand. The rest were sore cut in their heads and thrust in the back . . . £5."

It has already been shown that London was the base to which the Parliamentary wounded ultimately found their way, and that, in 1644, a hospital had been fitted up for their reception at the Savoy. This accommodation was found to be insufficient, and in 1648, Parliament converted Ely House into a military hospital. The two hospitals, the Savoy and Ely House, were able to accommodate 350 patients, and were administered by commissioners appointed by Parliament. Nurses, chiefly the widows of soldiers, were engaged to look after the sick and wounded in the proportion of one nurse to each twelve patients.

Parliament had now, for a time, subdued the Royalists in England, and was at last able to make a thorough attempt at the conquest of Ireland. Ireland was largely in Royalist hands, and the rebellion which had broken out in 1641, in which year there had been a terrible massacre of the Protestants in that country, had never been suppressed. The rebels had joined hands with the Royalists in their opposition to the Parliamentary troops, and held nearly the whole country, except Dublin and a few other towns. In 1649 Cromwell landed in Ireland with 16,000 horse and foot, and, in September, laid siege to Tredah (Drogheda), which place was strongly held by the Royalist troops. Cromwell quickly realised that Parliament could not afford to lock up a large army in Ireland for any length of time, and determined to strike quickly and strongly. His methods against the Irish have been condemned;
is not "the curse of Cromwell" remembered in the speech of the
Irish to this day? There is, however, much to be said in Crom­
well's favour. England had been horror-struck by the atrocities
perpetrated by the Irish in the massacre of 1641. No doubt the
accounts of these had been exaggerated, but the English people
had not forgotten, and Cromwell and his men were the instruments
of vengeance. Cromwell, however, does not appear to have been
actuated by feelings of this kind, but wished, by striking terror
into the hearts of his opponents at the first, to bring the war in
Ireland rapidly to a close, and prevent it degenerating into a guerilla
warfare, expensive, inconclusive, and long drawn out. Three
thousand Royalist horse and foot held Drogheda. The weather
was wet and cold, and although the Parliamentary forces were
provided with tents, there was much sickness. Cromwell wrote :
"Yet the country-sickness overtakes many." As soon as the breach
was practicable Cromwell called upon the garrison to surrender,
telling them that unless they surrendered all would be put to the
sword. The garrison refused. On September 11th, 1649, Drogheda
was taken by storm, and practically the whole garrison slaughtered.
In his letter to the Speaker of the House of Commons describing
the affair, Cromwell gives a list of the Royalists killed, and this list
ends, "2,500 Foot-soldiers, besides Staff Officers, Surgeons, &c."
His own loss was about one hundred. He now marched against
Wexford, and "divers sick men, both horse and foot" were left
behind at Dublin (about 350 horse and 800 foot), who afterwards
recovered and rejoined the Army. Wexford was taken a month
after the fall of Drogheda, and the army moved to Ross and
Waterford. In letters from these places Cromwell wrote: "I
scarcely know one officer of forty amongst us that hath not been
sick." "I tell you a considerable part of your army is fitter for
an hospital than the field." After the fall of Wexford plague and
dysentery ("the country-disease") broke out amongst the Parlia-
mentary forces, and large numbers fell victims to these diseases.
Owing to the severe winter the great amount of sickness amongst
his troops, and the stubborn resistance of the Irish, Cromwell
was obliged to raise the siege of Waterford. Cromwell's second in
command, Michael Jones, died, and Cromwell himself fell ill.
Youghal, Cork and Kinsale were soon taken. When the army
advanced to the siege of Clonmel the sick and wounded were left
at Fethard. From before Clonmel, Cromwell wrote to Lord Bray-
hill that "he was in a miserable condition; his army suffering from
the bloody flux." After the capture of Clonmel, Cromwell returned
Echoes from the Past

to England, where his services were required, Scotland having declared in favour of Charles II. The war in Ireland continued until 1653, where it was conducted by Monk, Ludlow, Ireton and Fleetwood. Limerick was besieged and plague broke out in the town, where pest-houses were provided for those sick of the disease. Ireton, Cromwell’s son-in-law, died here. Galway surrendered to Ludlow in 1652, and all the Irish were ordered to leave the town except the “sick and bed-rid.”

During the twelve years of war in Ireland, 1641 to 1653, the ravages of war, famine and plague were so great that one-third of the whole population disappeared. In 1652 Parliament confiscated the greater part of the landed property of those Catholics who had taken part in the rebellion. These estates were parcelled out amongst Cromwell’s soldiers, in accordance with a resolution of the House of Commons in 1647, which decided that the back pay of the troops in Ireland, or as it was put, “pay which was respited on public faith,” “shall be made good to them out of the rebel lands by English measure, according to the rates and proportions settled by Act of Parliament upon the finishing of the war.” A large amount of back pay must have been due to many Parliamentary officers at this time, for the arrears went back in some cases to 1643, when Parliament had kept back half the pay of all officers whose pay exceeded 10s. a day, and one-third of the pay of those in receipt of less than 10s. a day. A preliminary survey of the country was made by an army physician, Benjamin Worsley, but this, being incorrect, was followed by a better survey made by another army physician, William Petty. Two-thirds of the Irish lands thus changed owners. The Catholics were transplanted to Connaught. This transplantation was not, however, general. Artificers and labourers were not transplanted, and many others obtained exemption. Apothecaries escaped on condition that they gave their services to the soldiers. It is on record that, owing to a lack of medical men in many parts of the country, several medical practitioners were exempted. Thus, Sir William Fenton, Major-General Jephson, and many other persons of quality, petitioned the Commissioners for the Affairs of Ireland in 1656, desiring that Dr. Anthony Mulshanoke might be permitted to continue to reside among them, the locality being “destitute of physicians of ability.” A similar exemption was granted to Dr. Richard Madden, of Waterford, in 1654, on the certificate of Colonel Leigh and his officers.

There are many references in the “Calendars of State Papers,
Domestic,” to the want of surgeons and physicians in Ireland. For instance, on January 20th, 1652, the Council of State wrote to Drs. Clerke and Wright, saying, “Several very considerable military officers are sick in Ireland, and there is a great want of physicians. Think of some fitly qualified, who will be willing and presently ready to be despatched thither, and send their names to the Irish and Scotch Committee, by whom care will be taken to furnish them out, and order will be taken for their established maintenance. In regard of the necessity of the service, return the names of two or more with all speed.” Two days later the Council of State directed “the Irish and Scotch Committee to make an agreement with Sir Maurice Williams, Dr. Denham, and Dr. Goldsmith, M.D.s, for going over to Ireland, and to take care that they are forthwith despatched.” On February 4th the Council informs the Parliamentary Commissioners and the Commander-in-Chief in Ireland that an agreement has been made with Drs. Denham and Goldsmith to go over on these conditions: pay, £1 a day, payable monthly, £15 for a horse, and advances of pay of £100 and £60, respectively. An entry on June 17th, 1652, reads: “To Dr. Adam Stryall and Dr. Curtis for travelling expenses of themselves and families to Ireland, to reside as physicians—each £30.” On August 28th of the same year, Petty received £100 for his expenses on going to Ireland as Physician to Lieutenant-General Fleetwood. Nurses were also sent to Ireland. In February, 1652, Susannah Holbrooke was paid £10, “for defraying her and her husband’s expenses to Ireland to attend to sick soldiers.”

During the war in Ireland, Dublin was the base to which most of the chronic cases of illness or of injury were sent. Parliament established in 1649 two hospitals for their reception in Dublin. One of these was in the Archbishop’s house, the other in a Roman Catholic chapel or “Mass-house” in Back Lane. According to the “Calendar of State Papers, Domestic,” these hospitals provided accommodation for 200 sick and wounded men. There was a plentiful supply of nurses to attend on these patients, the scale allowed being one nurse to every ten. These nurses received pay at the rate of £10 a year.

Soon after the execution of Charles I., Scotland declared for Charles II. Charles II. went to Scotland and was crowned at Scone. He was accompanied by Richard Wiseman, the most distinguished surgeon of his time. Wiseman was surgeon to the King’s person; the King’s apothecary was Mr. Chace, and the King’s physician, Sir Alexander Frazer (or Frazer). Frazer was
an M.D. of Montpelier in 1635, incorporated at Cambridge in 1637, and became F.R.C.P. London, in 1641. From many references in Clarendon’s “History and Papers,” he appears to have enjoyed considerable influence over the King, and was a man of some political importance. Pepys, in his “Diary,” notes: “Dr. Frazier could do what he pleased with the King and with the Prince, they all having more or less occasion to make use of him.” Frazier served on the Royalist side throughout the war. He was with Charles II. when Prince of Wales, commanding the King’s forces in the West of England, for Wiseman tells us he met him in consultation during this campaign; and he accompanied the Prince to Scilly, and afterwards to Jersey. He was King’s Physician in the Scotch Expedition of 1650, marched with the King into England, and was present at the Battle of Worcester. After that battle he contrived to escape to Flanders, and soon rejoined the King at Paris. After the Restoration his influence over the King became very great. He appears to have had considerable skill in his profession, for at times of truce he was consulted by Parliamentary officers, amongst whom was Colonel Hutchinson. Clarendon wrote of him “no doubt he is good at his business, otherwise the maddest fool alive.” Frazier died in 1681.

Wiseman tells us that the Scottish Army under Leslie had a surgeon-general, one named Penycuke, “an eminent chirurgeon of that nation,” and that he was assisted in his operations by Penycuke and Chace.

In July, 1650, Cromwell entered Scotland with an army of 10,500 foot and 5,500 horse. His communications with England by land were soon cut off, and his army would have been unable to exist had it not been for the support of the English fleet, from which he drew supplies. In August victuals became scarce and disease rife. Cromwell wrote from Dunbar, in September: “Our lying here daily consumeth our men, who fall sick beyond imagination”; and later, in a letter to Ireton, “A heavy flux fell upon our army; brought it very low—from 14,000 to 11,000.” Before the battle of Dunbar, 500 sick and wounded men were sent on board ship at Musselburgh. Dunbar was selected as the base because it possessed “accommodation for sick men.” At length relief came. On September 3rd, 1650, Leslie came down from the hills and gave battle. The Scottish army numbered 23,000 men, Cromwell’s army only 11,000. Leslie’s loss in the battle amounted to 3,000 killed and 10,000 prisoners. The English loss was only 30. The day after the battle at Dunbar, Cromwell issued a proclamation permitting the
Echoes from the Past

Scots to remove their wounded, provided no arms were taken away. He also dismissed four or five thousand prisoners who were starved, sick, and wounded, and sent a like number of prisoners to England. In England these prisoners suffered greatly from sickness, largely due to overcrowding and want of food. Parliament afterwards engaged a number of surgeons, at 4s. a day, to attend upon them.

Parliament was so rejoiced at the result of the battle of Dunbar that it ordered medals to be prepared and issued to all, officers and soldiers, "that were in this service in Scotland." The medal was designed by Thomas Simon, and bore Cromwell's effigy. It was issued in gold and silver, and was the first war medal given the soldier. Cromwell next marched against and took Edinburgh and Perth. In February, 1651, he fell ill with malaria, and Parliament, in its alarm, sent Drs. Bates and Wright from London to attend him. Monk carried on the war in Scotland and took Stirling and Dundee. At Dundee the garrison was given no quarter.

In 1654, Heriot's Hospital in Edinburgh became the base hospital for the Parliamentary Army in Scotland, the revenues of the hospital being diverted for the support of the sick and wounded soldiers treated there. The patients were divided into two classes, sick and convalescent. The cost of feeding a sick man came to 4s. a head per week. The dietary was liberal. Each man received 2 lbs. of bread and a Scot's pint of beer daily, 5 ozs. of butter and 5 ozs. of cheese on four days of the week, and 1½ lbs. of meat, and a pint of milk or gruel on the other three days. Convalescents found their own food, and were allowed 3s. 6d. a week for this purpose. Nurses were provided on the scale of one nurse to every five sick men, and one nurse to each convalescent ward. These nurses received from 4s. to 4s. 6d. a week as pay.

Reference has already been made to other military hospitals established by Parliament. The maintenance of order in these hospitals was rigidly enforced, a code of regulations having been drawn up by order of the Committee for sick and maimed soldiers ("Calendar of State Papers, Domestic.") If a sick soldier misbehaved himself when in hospital he was fined. A third offence was punished by expulsion. If a nurse neglected her duties or created a disturbance in hospital by brawling or scolding, she could also be expelled. Marriage between a patient and his nurse was forbidden on pain of expulsion.

A further instance of the solicitude of the Government under Cromwell for the care of the sick and wounded soldier is shown by an entry in the "Calendar of State Papers, Domestic," 1652, which
states that the Council of State sent 220 sick soldiers, in charge of two officers, from the hospital at Ely House to Bath, "for the recovery of their limbs and perfecting their cure," by means of the medicinal waters there.

The Battle of Worcester, in September, 1651, may be regarded as the closing scene of the Civil War. Charles II. was utterly defeated, and fled the country. The battle is of little interest to the medical reader, but we may note that Wiseman, the King's Surgeon, was here taken prisoner; Frazer, the King's Physician, was present, but escaped after the battle; and it is probable that Worcester was the battle where Thomas Sydenham, the great physician, who fought on the Parliamentary side, was "left in the field among the dead."

The first great military expedition of the English to the Tropics took place in 1654-56. It was directed against the Spanish possessions in the West Indies. The force numbered 9,000 men, of whom only 1,000 were old soldiers, and was under the command of Admiral Penn and General Venables. In April, 1655, the troops landed in Cuba. Marching through tropical jungle, poisoned by water from a disused copper mine, soaked by tropical rain, without shelter or proper equipment, it is not surprising that hundreds fell victims to dysentery. Then, to crown all, they were twice ambushed by the Spaniards; many fell, General Heane was killed, but, rallying, they beat off the Spaniards and returned to the ships. Gardiner says, in the second ambush the Adjutant-General, Jackson, was the first to bolt. He was afterwards tried and cashiered, and "sent to the hospital ship to swab decks for the wounded." This is, I believe, the first instance of a hospital ship being attached to an English military expedition. The force had already lost eight colours and 400 men. In May, Jamaica was taken, and here our army had its first experience of yellow fever. Twenty men died daily, and yet the weakened battalions contrived to beat off, with brilliant success, a Spanish attempt to recapture the island. General Venables, in his account of the expedition, wrote: "Whoever comes into these parts must bring leathern bottles, which are more needful here than knapsacks in Ireland." Water-bottles were not issued to the soldier until the reign of William III.

The English soldier, under the Commonwealth, also saw service in Flanders. After the capture of Dunkirk, the English General, Sir William Lockhart, found that he had to provide for the care of 700 sick and wounded men. A hospital was therefore established, and the nuns of a nunnery in the vicinity contracted to provide
Echoes from the Past

nurses and subsistence for the sick at the rate of one “styver” per day for each sick soldier. One nun was in charge of each eight patients. The arrangement proved to be unsatisfactory; eight small hospitals were therefore established, one for each regiment. This is one of the earliest instances (if not the first) of the provision of regimental hospitals in our army. The provision of food for the patients (and of a “convenient number of women to wait upon them”) was intrusted to the care of a sutler. A great deal of sickness and suffering among the troops during this expedition was caused by the want of shelter. The soldiers had no tents, and no huts could be built for them owing to the lack of wood. Letters written by officers who were present refer to the great discomfort and sickness caused by the want of tents and huts.

One Engineer officer wrote: “We send every day no less than ten, twelve, or more to the grave, for we have here about two thousand men, and have not accommodation for six hundred of them.”

Tents were not provided for soldiers during the war in England. Cromwell had them issued to his troops in Ireland in order to keep his men in good health (“Cromwell’s Letters,” cv, cvii.). Cromwell’s Scottish Army was, at first, without tents; but one tent to each six men was afterwards provided. Firth thinks these tents were small, and divisible into parts, so that each soldier could carry his share. Monk, while in Scotland, was careful to see that his men had tents, and further, that they kept them in proper repair. No tents were taken on the expedition to the West Indies.

The measures taken by Parliament to provide for the care of the sick and wounded soldier when on service have been described, but to the Long Parliament the soldier also owes the first declaration that it is the duty of the Government to provide for the disabled soldier, and for the soldier’s widow and orphans. In 1642 Parliament published a declaration promising to provide for disabled soldiers, their wives and families, and for soldiers’ widows and orphans. Collections were also made in the London churches for this purpose, and old clothes, linen, and woollen stuffs collected for the use of the wounded. In 1643 the parishes were called upon to support wounded and disabled soldiers and the widows and orphans of soldiers. In November, 1643, Parliament levied a tax of £4,000 a month, for six months, on all the counties in its power for this purpose. “Treasurers for maimed soldiers” were appointed to control the expenditure. Four shillings a week was the maximum allowance to a soldier’s family. In 1644, over £10,000 a year was charged against the Excise for the same purpose. When the Long Parlia-
ment ceased to exist the Council of State appointed a committee to administer the military hospitals and funds, amounting to £45,000 a year, for the provision of pensions for disabled soldiers and soldiers' widows and orphans. About 6,000 persons were thus provided for. The payments fell into arrears, and, when the Restoration came, the remaining pensioners—1,840 disabled soldiers and 1,500 widows and orphans—were given twelve weeks' pay a piece and thrown on the care of their parishes, in accordance with the provisions of Statute 48 of Queen Elizabeth. Soldiers unfitted for duty in the field but fit for garrison duties were sent to garrisons, the germ from which sprang the invalid battalions of later times.