

The Work of the Auxiliary Services

CHAPTER VI

THE CANADIAN ARMY MEDICAL CORPS — ITS ORGANIZATION AND WORK — A CANADIAN HOSPITAL AT SALONIKA — THE DENTAL CORPS — THE RAILWAY TROOPS — THE FORESTRY CORPS — THE SALVAGE CORPS — THE Y. M. C. A. — THE KHAKI UNIVERSITY — THE WAR RECORDS.

In every army there are a host of auxiliary services which contribute, in a great variety of ways, to the upkeep and welfare of the fighting troops. It has been estimated that, in modern warfare, four men are required behind the lines to keep one man in the firing line. No account of Canada's military effort, therefore, would be complete which ignored the work of these auxiliary troops, without which, indeed, the achievements of the fighting men would have been impossible.

Foremost among these subsidiary services is the Medical Corps. The work of the Medical Corps pervades the whole of army life. It meets the soldier on enlistment; it meets him again on discharge; and it watches over him during the interval. Its work is not only with the sick and the wounded; it lies even more with the well and strong. Sanitation, vaccination and inoculation, quarantine—such preventive measures as these fall within its scope just as much as war surgery and the sick parade.

Its detachments are to be found all the way from the front line back to Canada. At the front, with the infantry battalion or the artillery brigade, there is the medical officer, with his orderlies and stretcher-bearers. Just behind the line is the dressing-station and the field ambulance. At railhead there is generally found a casualty clearing station, where preliminary operations are as a rule performed. Behind that, on the coast of France or in England, are the great base hospitals and

general hospitals, where the patient receives final treatment. In England, the Canadian Army Medical Corps has also some excellent special hospitals, such as the Westcliffe Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital, the only military hospital of its kind in England. Finally, in Canada there are hospitals equipped for dealing with the soldier who is permanently unfit for active service, but who must be made fit, so far as is possible, to resume civilian life.

The Canadian Army Medical Corps did not, however, minister to Canadians alone. Many Imperial soldiers were looked after in Canadian hospitals; and a number of Canadian medical units, notably casualty clearing stations, were situated in areas where Canadian troops were rarely found. One Canadian general hospital, that furnished by the University of Toronto, was for two years at Salonika, on the shores of the Aegean Sea.

The story of the work of the Canadian Army Medical Corps is marked by incidents of heroism and devotion to duty no less splendid than those which have marked the work of any other branch of the service. One of the first Victoria Crosses won by a Canadian in the war was won by Captain Scrimger, the medical officer of the 14th Battalion at the Second Battle of Ypres. The work done by the doctors at the advanced-dressing stations, often under the heaviest shell-fire, and by the surgeons at the casualty clearing stations, where operations had to

be performed often under a joint bombardment from the land and the air, was work for which no tribute could be too great. And as for the heroism of the nursing sisters, no words are adequate to describe it. Under air-raids by brutal German flying men by night and by day they went about their duties in the wards with a tranquil courage which put to shame the trepidation of many a hardened soldier. In an air-raid on a Cana-

Beside the Canadian Army Medical Corps, there was another branch of the army which presided over the health of the soldiers—the Canadian Dental Corps. When the war broke out, little provision was made for the care of the teeth of the Canadian soldier; but as hostilities dragged on, it became apparent that, if the Canadian forces were to be kept in a state of efficiency, the teeth of the army must be better attended to. A large num-



Canadian and Imperial troops helping themselves to free coffee supplied by the Canadian Y. M. C. A. at a roadside stand made of biscuit boxes. The Helpful work of the "Y" was highly appreciated by the troops in France and Flanders. (Canadian official photograph.)

dian general hospital at Etaples in the spring of 1918, some of the nursing sisters made the supreme sacrifice, and others were maimed for life. Nor did the dastardly German torpedo spare Canadian nurses on the high seas. In the sinking of the Canadian hospital ship *Llan-doverly Castle* in the summer of 1918, a number of these devoted women went down to a watery, but glorious, grave.

ber of dental officers was therefore recruited; and before long each infantry and cavalry brigade, each large medical unit, and numerous other formations, had a dental laboratory, with a full working equipment. The number of patients who passed through these laboratories or clinics, literally hundreds at a time, amply demonstrated the need which the Canadian Dental Corps filled.

An interesting auxiliary service of the Canadian army during the later stages of the war was the Canadian Railway Troops. Modern warfare has become to a remarkable degree a matter of railway strategy. The superiority of the German railway communications forced on the British authorities at an early date the necessity of improving the railway situation in the north of France, which was quite inadequate to cope with the problem of supplying and moving the vast masses of troops concentrated in that narrow triangle of territory. In addition to this there was need of trained technical troops to build the light railways which were found to be the best means of carrying supplies up to the front line. The assistance of the Canadian government was requested by the British in meeting this problem; and as a result the Canadian Railway Troops came into existence. Not only were a number of infantry battalions turned into railway construction units, but railway men were recruited in Canada specifically for railway operation, and rolling stock and rails were sent overseas as well. Nearly 500 miles of Canadian rails were torn up and shipped direct to France; and it was not an uncommon occurrence for Canadian soldiers coming back to railhead to go on leave to meet a C. P. R. locomotive, manned by a C. P. R. crew. The work of the railway troops, both those who built and those who operated the roads, was at times extremely hazardous. Especially during an advance, when they had to push the railways on after the troops as quickly as possible, they came often under the severest shell-fire, without any means of retaliating on the enemy. So successful was their work that they were in demand in other theatres of war besides the Western front; and Canadian railway troops actually played a part in the advance of the British in Palestine, and in the capture of the Holy Places at Jerusalem.

Another novel Canadian service which played a crucial part in the war was the

Canadian Forestry Corps. Before 1914 few people thought of lumbering as an essential feature of modern warfare; but the dawn of trench fighting soon brought home to the authorities the necessity of an extensive forestry program. Lumber was needed for the construction of dug-outs, for the making of the trench-mats without which life in the trenches became a slough of despond, and for the manufacture of railway ties. In addition, it was required for the building of the multitude of huts that sprang up behind the lines and in the reserve camps—hospitals, aerodromes, Y. M. C. A. canteens, offices, store-rooms, rest-huts, bath-houses. The problem of coping with this unprecedented demand for lumber was indeed a serious one. War conditions had cut off a large part of even the normal lumber supply of France and Great Britain; and it became necessary to make inroads on the wonderful timber resources of the ancient parks and forests of these countries.

It was known that there were in the Canadian army thousands of lumbermen; and Canada was asked to furnish troops to carry out lumbering and milling operations. A number of later battalions, recruited almost wholly in lumbering districts, were selected, and these were formed into the Canadian Forestry Corps. Detachments of the corps commenced operations in the south of France, in England, and in the north of Scotland. One detachment set to work in the royal park of Windsor; and age-old trees, beneath which the kings and queens of England had walked or hunted, resounded under the axes of Canadian lumberjacks. The work of the Forestry Corps did not perhaps lend itself to deeds of daring and renown; but there is no doubt that the steady stroke of its axes and the humdrum buzz of its saw-mills contributed in real measure to the winning of the war.

Another interesting unit was the Salvage Corps. This too was a development of the later stages of the war. In the earlier stages little attention was paid to the conservation of materials. Every battle-

field was a litter of discarded rifles, equipment, gun-carriages, and what not. As materials ran short, however, the Salvage Corps was formed. Its personnel was composed entirely of men who were unfit to carry on in the front line; but with a thoroughness which was an example to the fighting troops the Corps ranged over the whole battlefield, collecting every scrap of material which could be in any way turned to use. Their dumps would have been the envy of the rags-bones-and-bottles men of civilian life; and the amount of money they saved the people of Canada can only be reckoned in terms of millions of dollars.

A branch of the army which should not be forgotten is the military department of the Canadian Y. M. C. A. In the British and American armies, the Y. M. C. A. is merely a civilian adjunct to the military forces; but with the Canadians the Y. M. C. A. is part of the army itself. The Y. M. C. A. officers hold honorary commissions, and are under army discipline; consequently the cooperation between the Y. M. C. A. and the combatant forces is closer than would perhaps otherwise be the case. For the work of the Canadian Y. M. C. A. in the war no praise can be too high. Its huts were to be found in every training camp, in every base camp, and in every forward area where Canadian troops were quartered; and these huts, with their warm fires, their tables and writing materials, their papers and magazines, their canteens and their indoor games, were often the one bright spot in the life of the men. In every advance the Y. M. C. A. officers were well forward, handing out hot coffee and milk chocolate to the walking wounded; and not infrequently they were found in the front line on their errands of kindness. When the men were in rest in the back areas, they were indefatigable in organizing games of sport for them—games which proved so beneficial in their results that the idea was taken up by the General Staff, and became part of the recognized system of training in the

Canadian army. Concert parties, composed often of famous artists, were brought out to the front; and Canadian soldiers just out of the line were often able to enjoy entertainments in the Y. M. C. A. huts no worse, and sometimes better, than they could have seen in the music-halls of London. And wherever they were, the Y. M. C. A. officers admirably seconded the work of the Chaplains' Service in looking after the spiritual welfare of the men. Taken all in all, there were few branches of the army that stood the test of the Great War better than the Canadian Y. M. C. A.

Connected with the Y. M. C. A., and yet distinct from it, was the Khaki University of Canada—or, to give it its full official designation, the Educational Service of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada. The Canadians were pioneers in several different lines during the war, but in nothing more pronouncedly than in their attempt, during the actual progress of hostilities, to give to the citizen soldier a training, if he desired it, in the arts and sciences of peace. The Khaki University came into existence in the camp where the ill-fated Fifth Canadian Division was waiting for orders to go to France—orders which never came. The idea became immediately popular; and soon teaching centres had been established in practically all the Canadian centres in England, and the "University of Vimy Ridge" had been organized in France. In the Khaki University everything was taught for which a class and a teacher could be found, from Greek prose to commercial arithmetic. In France the difficulties to be overcome were great. The task of teaching, let us say, the Spanish verb to a class of weary soldiers in a leaky tent within sound of the German guns, was one to try the patience of a more patient man than Job. But the Khaki University filled a much-felt need. Especially when demobilization began, it offered to the Canadian soldier a chance to refit himself for picking up again the threads of civilian life on his return to Canada.

Last of all, a word should be said about the work of the Canadian War Records Office. This office sprang out of the appointment of Sir Max Aitken (now Lord Beaverbrook) as the Canadian official eye-witness at the front. It was organized by him for the purpose of collecting and preserving all possible information regarding the part played by Canada's troops in the Great War. Officers were

Canada has to-day a collection of original materials relating to the part played by her troops in the war that is not inferior to that of any other country on either side. The first-fruits of this collection are to be seen in the first three volumes of the official record known as *Canada in Flanders*—a record that is unique at least in this, that no other country but Canada has attempted, while the fighting was still



Wounded Canadians being carried to the rear by German prisoners taken in the pursuit of the retreating Boche army in the fall of 1918. (Canadian official photograph.)

sent to the front to take down from the lips of survivors the story of every engagement in which Canadian troops took part; war diaries, operation orders, aeroplane photographs, trench maps, were collected; and artists of international fame were sent out to make sketches and paintings. Movie films were even taken of the troops in action. The result is that

in progress, to issue an authorized narrative of the battles in which its troops have been engaged. The importance of propaganda in the war is something which can hardly be overestimated; and there was no form of propaganda which could have been more effective than the plain unvarnished story of what Canada's soldiers did and suffered.

