

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH—1914-1920

THE CALL TO SERVICE—ACCOMMODATION FOR SAILORS AND SOLDIERS  
—GIFTS IN KIND FROM HOME AND OVERSEAS—THE FINANCIAL  
POSITION OF THE HOSPITAL—AN APPEAL AND THE RESPONSE.

THE abnormal conditions suddenly created by the national crisis at the beginning of August 1914 threatened to dislocate the uniform routine of the Infirmary as members of the various departments responded to the call of military service. Although a considerable strain was thus thrown upon those who remained to carry on the work, the general efficiency of the hospital was not impaired nor was the comfort of the patients neglected either during the four anxious years of the war or in those that immediately followed its conclusion. The responsibilities falling upon the shoulders of the managers were enormously increased when faced with the task of rearrangement and of filling the temporary vacancies ; but in this they were assisted by the willing cooperation and readiness of all to undertake such additional duties as were necessary.

The Superintendent, Lieut.-Colonel Sir Joseph Fayrer, Bt., at once took over the command of the 2nd Scottish General Hospital at Craigleith, the Territorial Army Hospital serving the area. His post at the Infirmary was temporarily filled by Robert McKenzie Johnston, a former member of the honorary staff and of the Board of Management ; but in October 1915, William S. Caw, the Treasurer and Clerk, while continuing as such, was appointed Acting Superintendent till Sir Joseph Fayrer should be relieved of his military duties.<sup>1</sup> With his intimate knowledge of the affairs of the hospital Mr Caw's services in this office proved of the utmost value. An unexpected number of vacancies occurred amongst the nursing staff, but Miss Gill the Lady Superintendent, previously

<sup>1</sup> Sir Joseph Fayrer returned to duty at the Infirmary in February 1919.

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appointed Principal Matron of the Hospital at Craigleith, was able to remain on duty in the Infirmary and to reorganise the nursing department. Two of the assistant superintendents of nurses and ten sisters were called up for military service. By arrangement with the War Office thirty trained nurses had been placed at its disposal in the event of hostilities but, in 1914-15, as many as sixty-one were enlisted. In the ensuing years large numbers, after completing their training, left the Infirmary to join the Army Nursing Service and therefore were not available to fill the vacancies normally occurring in the staff. Moreover, during the first year of the war arrangements required to be made to give more than one hundred members of the Voluntary Aid Detachments short courses of training preparatory to their entering the military hospitals. Evidence of the desire of many young women to assist their country as nurses was furnished in 1915-16 when more than one thousand applied for entry to the Preliminary Training School, a number unprecedented in any one year in the history of the Infirmary. A serious drain was also made upon the several administrative departments when officials and employes to the number of seventy-nine—dispensers, clerks, tradesmen and porters—were transferred to military duties.

The medical and surgical staff of the Infirmary were depleted at the outbreak of war, as those holding commissions in the Naval Reserve and in the Territorial Army left the hospital for national service elsewhere ; while a large number holding commissions in the Royal Army Medical Corps, Territorial Force, formed the Staff of the 2nd Scottish General Hospital to which they had been appointed some years previously as *à la suite* officers. For them, military duties were superadded to their routine civil occupations : the civilian population still required attention, and clinical teaching in the Infirmary made even greater demands than formerly with the growing need of meeting the call of the Navy and Army for medical, surgical and specialist officers. In 1915-16 as many as fourteen members of the honorary staff were absent overseas. Before the end of August 1914, twelve of the twenty

house physicians and house surgeons had resigned their appointments and volunteered, and very soon the whole of the work in this department of the hospital was being undertaken by students in their final year of study. But the work of the hospital was carried on without interruption in spite of many difficulties. With the exception of Denis Cotterill, appointed junior assistant surgeon in 1913, all the members of the honorary staff who had been on national service eventually returned to duty at the Infirmary. At the outbreak of war he offered his services and, in November 1914, was attached to the Red Cross Hospital at Rouen. In January 1918 he was transferred to the 50th Casualty Clearing Station at Bohain where he died after the Armistice, falling a victim to the severe influenzal epidemic which was then raging. His early death removed from the staff a young surgeon of great promise.

Notwithstanding the arrangements made by the Admiralty and War Office for the provision of hospital accommodation in the area for sick and wounded sailors and soldiers in the event of war, it was inevitable, especially with the proximity of Rosyth as a naval base, that additional means would require to be found to meet any sudden emergency that might arise either at sea or on land. Consequently, when the managers of the Infirmary were approached in August 1914 by the naval and military authorities, they at once responded to the appeal to place at their disposal two wards in the Infirmary, afterwards increased to three, or approximately one hundred beds, the majority being surgical. True to its traditions the hospital once again opened its doors to those who were serving their country, as it had done in the early days of its history. In common with the decision reached by the Boards of Management of the larger hospitals in London and elsewhere, the managers, in view of the national emergency, at first suspended the practice of exacting payment for the maintenance of sailors and soldiers; but after October 1915, and following the example of the other hospitals, they reversed their previous decision and accepted the Government's allowances. With the prolongation of the war and the large number of men admitted for treatment, it was hardly justifiable to meet from

the voluntary subscriptions of the public the extra cost thus entailed. Payment was therefore made at the rate of four shillings per head per day: in 1756, fourpence per day or twenty-eight pence per week had been offered, with the fourpence deducted by the military authorities from the soldier's pay, and, in 1915-16, four shillings per day or twenty-eight shillings per week! In the spring of 1918 the rate of payment was increased to four shillings and ninepence, and an allowance of sixpence per day was granted for each unoccupied bed placed at the disposal of the military authorities, both of these concessions taking effect as from 1st October 1917.<sup>1</sup>

During the year 1915-16, 270 men from the Navy and 633 from the Expeditionary Force received treatment in the wards: of the former, 68 sailors were admitted after the naval engagement off Jutland on 31st May 1916, and on 17th June the Infirmary had the honour of a visit from H.M. the King, accompanied by Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty. In the same year the sum of £6915 from the Government was credited to the receipts of the Infirmary and, in 1917-18, the amount received from the same source was £10,128: as arrangements had then been made for the treatment of disabled ex-sailors and soldiers, as pensioners under the Ministry of Pensions Scheme, the above sum included £2700 for their maintenance. After the establishment of the various Women's Auxiliary Corps members who were sick or injured were treated in the ordinary civilian wards.<sup>2</sup>

Although during the war years additional beds were made available in the Infirmary, the reserve surgical ward being requisitioned for wounded sailors and soldiers, yet the returns of the total number of patients, civilian and military, during the period of hostilities showed that fewer patients were treated in the hospital than in the immediate pre- and post-war years. The explanation is probably to be found in the more prolonged stay in hospital of the military casualties, the nature of the injuries received by men of the Expeditionary Force and by

<sup>1</sup> Minute, Royal Infirmary, 11th March 1918.

<sup>2</sup> Minute, 23rd September 1918, states that women members of the Royal Air Force if requiring hospital treatment will be received in the Infirmary at a maintenance charge of 4s. 9d. per head, per day.



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those in naval action, being such as to require a longer course of treatment. A further number of beds remained unoccupied, reserved on behalf of the War Office in case of some sudden emergency. Therefore the "turn over" of patients was not so rapid as in time of peace. The accompanying table, to which has been added the number of patients treated in the several out-patient departments, illustrates the position :—

Year to 30th September.	Indoor Patients.	Average Duration of Days in Hospital.		Outdoor Patients.
		Medical.	Surgical.	
1914-15	13,102	32·5	20·1	36,639
1915-16	12,399	35·2	22·2	37,649
1916-17	12,022	34·1	23·5	33,924
1917-18	12,481	26·7	29·1	38,064
1918-19	12,550	29·5	22·1	43,478
1919-20	13,320	30·2	16·6	48,117

A remarkable feature in the daily life of the Infirmary during the years of conflict was the many acceptable gifts in kind received not only from generous donors in the home country but from friends of the hospital in distant parts of the Empire ; and so numerous were these donations that they materially lessened the annual expenditure on maintenance. In the early part of the eighteenth century Scotsmen resident in the Colonial possessions had come to the assistance of the Royal Infirmary with gifts of money to swell the building fund of the old hospital ; and in the twentieth century new generations in the British Dominions beyond the seas, not forgetful of the needs of the old country, sought to help with gifts in kind. The Canadian Red Cross Society supplied hospital clothing and surgical dressings ; from the West Indies the Jamaica Agricultural Society and the planters of Trinidad sent oranges and grape fruit, and from Montserrat came guava jelly. Through the Agent General in London, Queensland gifted thousands of pounds weight of beef and mutton along with fruits, flour, bacon, honey and butter, and with the aid of the Patriotic Fund of the Brisbane *Courier*, sugar and cornflour

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were supplied in large quantities ; Sydney sent similar consignments of beef and mutton, along with 1489 rabbits. From the home country the King presented game and fruit to his sailors and soldiers. The National Egg Collecting Scheme was responsible for the supply of 3875 dozen of fresh eggs and great quantities of game, fruit and flowers, a similar service being rendered by the various branches of the British Red Cross Society in Scotland and by the Edinburgh and District Ladies' Egg Collecting Committee. Last but not least were the vegetables and potatoes produced by the labours of the many allotment holders in the district, a voluntary offering to the sick and injured.

In spite of the relief from Government assistance and the many gifts in kind, the financial position of the Infirmary was still a cause of anxiety as the prices of provisions and coals continued to rise. In 1914-15 the annual ordinary expenditure was £60,944, while the average cost of occupied bed was £67 : in 1918-19 the corresponding items totalled £102,549 and £115. For the first time in the history of the Infirmary ordinary annual expenditure had reached six, and the cost of occupied bed, three figures. But in spite of the many claims upon the sympathy and liberality of the people during the years of war, it is remarkable that the ordinary annual income did not diminish but actually showed year by year an increase. The voluntary contributions which in 1914-15 amounted to £31,260 had in 1918-19 risen to £41,984 ;<sup>1</sup> and yet, notwithstanding every effort to maintain a strict economy, the adverse balance became larger each year increasing from £24,470 in the first to £31,927 in the last year of the war. A striking feature of the special effort to give the Infirmary the maximum of assistance was the encouraging response from the employés in the various public works and business establishments in the city and from the miners in the coal and shale areas, all the more gratifying in view of the difficult financial position.

The economic strain was prolonged into the post-war period. The aftermath of heavy taxation, high prices and

<sup>1</sup> In 1914-15 the total ordinary income was £46,474 ; in 1918-19 it was £70,622.

unemployment, with the consequent shrinkage in resources, brought increasing diminution in the margin of surplus which the public had available for charity. Some more active step required to be taken to restore the finances of the hospital and to make provision for long over-due improvements. It was obvious from the report prepared by the Superintendent in November 1919, that cleaning, painting and repairs, of necessity postponed during the war, could not be indefinitely delayed. But more than cleaning and painting were necessary; once again the kitchen, the laundry and the boiler-house proved insufficient for the greater demands made upon them, while additional accommodation for nurses and a new medical electrical department were imperative. Accordingly, at the annual meeting of the Court of Contributors in January 1920, the managers announced their intention of issuing a special appeal.

On 27th March a public meeting, over which Lord Provost Chesser presided, was held in the City Chambers, when an appeal was launched to raise a capital sum of £250,000, with the object of improving the condition of the existing fabric and of providing the necessary extensions; and an additional sum of £50,000 was asked for in support of the annual income. The appeal letters were signed by the Lord Provost and Sheriff Gerard L. Crole, the convener of the finance committee of the Board, and a further personal letter from the Lord Provost was addressed to the numerous Sports Clubs, by whom a widespread response was made. Public interest was aroused in all classes of the community, and eight months later a sum of £60,383 had been raised by subscriptions. Although falling very short of what was desired, the funds of the Infirmary benefited still further from other sources. The City of Edinburgh Branch of the British Red Cross Society made the valuable contribution of £15,000, specially earmarked for the new radiological department; the St Andrew's Society of Hong Kong sent £11,000; the 10th Service Battalion of the Black Watch, 42nd Royal Highlanders, gave £1600 towards the endowment of a bed, and as many as thirteen beds were endowed as war memorials by friends and relatives of those

who fell in the war. In the distribution of the National Relief Fund in 1921, £16,097 were received by the Royal Infirmary. Altogether a sum approaching £125,000 was contributed to the maintenance and extension funds of the Infirmary through the post-war appeal. Thus a situation which seemed to threaten for a time the very existence of the voluntary system was relieved by the generous response of those whose belief in the future of the Royal Infirmary remained unaltered.