MR. J. G. HAMILTON'S REPORT.

Hon. Civilian Director and Treasurer in South Africa.

On January 4th, 1900, I was invited to attend a meeting of the Committee of the Imperial Yeomanry Hospital Fund, and was offered, and accepted, the position of Honorary Civilian Director and Honorary Treasurer to the Committee in South Africa. In accordance with the Committee's instructions, I left Southampton on January 18th for Cape Town. On my arrival there, on January 29th, I immediately reported myself to Surgeon-General (now Sir William) Wilson, Principal Medical Officer, Army; and to General Sir W. F. Forestier-Walker, General Officer Commanding Lines of Communication. Subsequently I delivered the letter of introduction from the late Lord Wantage, with which your Committee had furnished me, to Sir John Furley, the Commissioner of the Central British Red Cross Society, who offered to place his great experience at my service. I also reported myself to General Brabazon, upon his taking over the command of the Yeomanry, and entered into communication with Colonel H. Graham, Commandant of the Imperial Yeomanry Base Depot.

I then commenced to prepare for the inauguration of the hospital, and placed myself in communication with the Directors of the Orangesicht Estate, who kindly intimated, through Messrs. C. C. Silverbauer and Harold Pauling, their willingness to permit us to utilise their property, situated on the lower slopes of Table Mountain, for the purposes of the proposed hospital. Mr. E. R. Syfret was also good enough to offer to place at our disposal a suitable site at Rondebosch, in the immediate neighbourhood of the Portland Hospital and No. 3 General Hospital.

The Principal Medical Officer, Army, however, strongly urged that we should reconsider the matter of the location of our hospital, at the same time assuring me that he in no way desired to oppose the plans of the Committee. He was of opinion that, for various reasons, it should be as far up-country as was then practicable, his main reasons being: (1) That the southern winter, which, as I knew from personal experience, meant dry, bracing weather up-country, and months of rain and general humidity at the coast, was close at hand; and (2) that he desired to avoid the long, tedious, and trying rail journey for the sick and wounded from the front to Cape Town, which would necessarily become
more and more lengthened with the advance of the troops. These arguments were so convincing that I felt justified in cabling the Committee the recommendation of the Surgeon-General that the hospital should be placed somewhere in the neighbourhood of De Aar, in the northern part of the Karroo country. To these alterations in our plans I received telegraphed approval.

Whilst the negotiations were proceeding, arrangements were being made for the construction of nine hospital huts, each 50 feet long by 17 feet wide, to be built in sections. This work was voluntarily taken in hand, with the sanction of Messrs. S. Neumann & Co., by Mr. L. B. Sutton, who was of the greatest service in all matters of construction and engineering work in connection with our hospitals at Deelfontein and at Mackenzie's Farm. The huts were to be built by contract in accordance with plans and specifications furnished by the Commander Royal Engineers, Cape Town, and tenders were invited in the local papers. The tenders sent in varied from 2222l. to 3824l.; and the period required for delivery on trucks at Cape Town from fifteen days to six weeks. We accepted a tender of 2862l., with delivery in fifteen days, and, taking into account the local conditions and urgency of the work, these terms were not unreasonable. A further order was placed a little later for kitchens and other necessary additional structures.

Meanwhile I had opened an office at No. 37 Mansion House Chambers, a central position in Adderley Street, Cape Town, and was in daily communication with the Army authorities on the subject of the definite location of the Base Hospital.

On February 8rd I informed the Committee by cable, at the request of the Principal Medical Officer, Army, that no provision had up to that date been made
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for the hospital requirements of the Yeomanry in the field; and on the 9th was in receipt of a reply to the effect that, after consultation with the Director-General, the Committee had arranged to send out a Field Hospital and Bearer Company under the command respectively of Mr. Charles Stonham, Senior Surgeon of the Westminster Hospital and Surgeon-Captain in the Middlesex Yeomanry, and of Major Hale, D.S.O., R.A.M.C.

On February 9th I received orders from the General Officer Commanding Lines of Communication to proceed to De Aar for the purpose of fixing the site of our hospital, and left the same night for that place, accompanied by Mr. B. P. G. Curtis, who was well acquainted with the neighbourhood. Dr. Robinson, of Woodstock, who had formerly acted as Railway Medical Officer in the De Aar district, had recommended me to inspect Deelfontein, a place situated twenty-nine miles south of De Aar, and 479 miles from Cape Town, and said to enjoy that blessing most unusual for the Karroo—a plentiful supply of good water. On arrival at De Aar, the Commandant placed at our disposal, for inspection purposes, the service of an officer of Royal Engineers and a Civil Surgeon. We spent the afternoon in visiting the military hospital and walking round the town, and, accompanied by the officers mentioned and Mr. Heatlie, the district railway engineer, proceeded to Deelfontein the following morning. The latter had meanwhile telegraphed to Mr. Hauptfleisch, the owner of the farm, asking him to meet us on arrival.

We found Deelfontein to be a small wayside station some 4460 feet above sea-level, utilised almost exclusively for watering locomotives, and as a crossing on the single line to the north. The new telegraph and postal requirements were attended to by the railway officials. At the station itself were a large water-tank and pumping plant, pumpman's cottage and garden, and a small store, whilst in the surrounding country were large farms held by well-to-do Boers. We ascertained that the water supply had never been known in the driest seasons to
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fall below a certain level in the railway well; and we were all much impressed by the apparent healthiness of the site, a forecast fully borne out by subsequent experience. Inquiries led us to believe that we should be able to obtain from the surrounding farms a good supply of such hospital necessaries as milk, butter, vegetables, poultry, and eggs. Mr. Hauptfleisch assented to our proposal to establish a hospital on his farm, and agreed to let us have, at a reasonable rent, as large an area as might be required, together with ground for a native location. Well satisfied with the inspection, our party returned to De Aar, Mr. Curtis and I leaving the same night for Cape Town. There I applied to the authorities for their approval of the site chosen, and received the confirmation of the Commander-in-Chief on February 17th, which I communicated to the Committee by cable.

Immediately after the official approval was received, I approached the General Officer Commanding with the request that instructions might be given to construct a railway siding into the Hospital, to lay down water connections, and to carry out other necessary work at Deelfontein. The requisite authority was given to the Cape Government Railway officials, although some little delay occurred in carrying them out, owing to the illness of the District Engineer. I also interviewed Mr. John Brown, the Engineer-in-Chief of the Cape Government Railway, to whose co-operation, and that of the members of his staff, at a time of great pressure, we were much indebted. Truckloads of our hospital buildings were now being forwarded up-country, and goods began to arrive from England, and were similarly dealt with. Mr. H. T. Petersen, a well-known Johannesburg mine manager, with his brother, and Mr. Sutherland, of Messrs. S. Neumann & Co.'s staff, proceeded to Deelfontein, took over gratuitously the work of preparing to unload goods to lay out the camp, and to erect the first buildings.

Owing to the congested state of traffic on the railway, and to military exigencies necessitating at times the detention of our goods, work was much impeded; but I must nevertheless bear testimony to the willing assistance given to us at all times by the railway officials, headed by Mr. (now Sir Charles) Elliott, the then General Manager, and Mr. T. R. Price, Assistant General Manager (now General Manager) of the Cape Government Railways, with the latter of whom we were throughout in constant communication.

Meanwhile the military authorities had confirmed the arrangement under which our hospital goods were, so far as the fund was concerned, to enjoy free entry and free railway carriage; and I had appointed agents to attend to the receipt and dispatch of consignments. This business, which entailed heavy labour and practically monopolised the services of a considerable staff for several months, was carried out with energy and success, under considerable difficulties, by Messrs. J. T. Hutton & Co., of Cape Town.
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The next matter demanding attention was the appointment of a general secretary for the Cape Town office, and of a local secretary to reside at Deel­fontein. For the former position I was fortunate enough to secure the services of Mr. Alex. Aiken, Incorporated Accountant; and for the latter Mr. John de Fenton, formerly assistant to the Secretary of the Johannesburg Hospital. Later, when Mr. Aiken accepted a temporary Government appointment in the new Colonies, Mr. E. Broom acted for some time in his place, the latter being in turn succeeded, on his resignation for the purpose of returning to Johannesburg, by Mr. M. G. Williams, who continued in the post in Cape Town and Johannesburg to the end of our work in South Africa. To Messrs. Aiken, Broom, and Williams, all of whom undertook onerous duties for merely nominal remuneration, and more particularly to Mr. Williams, who has borne the brunt of the secretarial work, I have throughout been indebted for able and indefatigable assistance.

In accordance with telegraphic instructions from the Committee, I purchased about this time six ambulance wagons from the Portland Hospital, and their acquisition furthered the preliminary arrangements for our Field Hospital and Bearer Company.

On February 28th, Colonel Sloggett, Mr. Fripp, and the orderlies reached Cape Town, and on March 3rd we all left by troop train for Deelfontein, accompanied by Dr. Washbourn and the medical staff, the members of which had just arrived. We reached Deelfontein on the 5th, and found a pile of goods
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already stacked, with further consignments coming in daily, and Mr. Petersen busily engaged in the work of erecting buildings. The following morning Mr. Fripp accompanied me on the return journey to Cape Town, where other duties claimed my attention, and Colonel Sloggett remained on the spot to proceed with laying out the camp and with the other work necessary to be done prior to the reception of patients.

At Cape Town, where the receipt and dispatch of equipment and stores and the forwarding of the remainder of the huts were briskly proceeding, I now placed an order for further buildings which Colonel Sloggett found necessary.

The nursing sisters landed at Cape Town on March 15th, and the arrangements for train accommodation and provisions en route having already been made, they were enabled to entrain for Deelfontein the same night, Mr. Fripp and I travelling with them. On the morning of the 17th we reached our destination, where such good progress had been made by Colonel Sloggett and the staff that the hospital was officially declared open the same day.

As your Committee are aware, Deelfontein Hospital was continually increasing in size, and on June 28th there was accommodation for 786 inmates, 864 beds being in the huts, 254 in tents and marquees, and 168 in the convalescent camp, these also being in tents. Further additions to the hospital were made later, as the necessity arose. About this time it became desirable to relieve the pressure on the railway pumping plant occasioned by our heavy water requirements, and a pump and boiler were sent up from Cape Town for the purpose.

Constant communication by letter and wire was maintained between Deelfontein and the office in Cape Town, and a system was organized at once on business lines, under which all requisitions for stores or materials certified by Colonel Sloggett, as Commander and Principal Medical Officer, were sent direct to my office, to be carried out by the purchase and dispatch of the goods. The accounts in respect of these transactions were then certified by the Commandant and local Secretary, and monthly payments made in connection therewith from the head office. It was the duty of the Deelfontein Secretary to forward to the Cape Town office monthly statements, with vouchers, of all local disbursements, including the pay-sheets of the staff, and by this means not only was a check maintained and the books and accounts of the head office kept up to date and audited at regular intervals, but we were in a position to render your Committee monthly returns showing under what heads expenditure was being incurred. After the first few months it was found advisable to furnish all home-going members of our staff with printed forms of pay certificates, showing what money, if any, was due to them on leaving South Africa, and a counterfoil was dispatched at the same time by mail direct to the Treasurer in London. This plan was found
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to operate well, and to enable many little misconceptions to be satisfactorily cleared up. The nearest bank to Deelfontein was the Standard Bank at De Aar, where I maintained a fund which could be drawn upon by the Commandant and Secretary. From the first the Cape Town office acted as a base, receiving on arrival and sending up-country the additions to the staff, making arrangements with the authorities for the passages of those returning, and in all other ways administering to the general wants of the hospital, besides keeping in constant communication with the military authorities.

A couple of months after our work had begun, the military authorities granted us the right to telegraph 'on service;' and, later on, the Eastern and South African Telegraph Company conceded us the privilege of cabling at one half of their usual rates.

The work at Deelfontein speedily met with sympathetic recognition and assistance in Cape Colony, and more especially from the people of Cape Town. The Committee's scheme to allow contributions of 50L to name or endow beds soon attracted favourable attention in South Africa, and fourteen were subscribed for, and became eventually a 'South African' ward. Gifts of useful articles and of luxuries, in addition to parcels of periodicals and illustrated papers to augment
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those supplied from our Cape Town office and those received from friends at home, were freely contributed by the public, and more particularly by ladies and children. It would be impossible in this report to mention the names of all those who so assisted, many of whom were 'refugees' from the Transvaal and my personal acquaintances; but I cannot omit a special word of acknowledgment to those 'friends indeed' who continued in this good work throughout the whole of our administration of Deelfontein.

I must now resume the recital of events in chronological order. At the beginning of April, 1900, Colonel H. Graham, Commandant of the Imperial Yeomanry Base Depot, Mackenzie's Farm, Maitland, informed me that he had more sickness amongst the recently arrived Yeomanry battalions than he could cope with effectually under his hospital arrangements as they then existed. The Committee sanctioned my proposal to render assistance, and an order was at once placed for the construction of a twenty-six bedded hut, for which we also furnished the requisite bedding and other equipment, the military authorities in the first instance finding the bedsteads. I was also enabled to help the Medical Officer in charge in other ways. The control of this small hospital was at that time vested entirely in the military authorities, a proposal of mine to maintain it as a branch of Deelfontein not being then considered feasible.

On April 6th the personnel of our Field Hospital and Bearer Company, under Major C. Stonham and Major G. E. Hale, arrived at the Cape. Their equipment was expected shortly after, and meanwhile the staff went into camp on Green Point Common. Some considerable delay occurred in getting the vessel carrying the equipment into dock, owing to military exigencies. Eventually we managed to entrain with our equipment on April 29th, and, after spending a few hours at Deelfontein en route, reached Bloemfontein on the night of May 2nd. Here a still greater delay was experienced, owing to the difficulties of transport, which detained these sections at Bloemfontein until the 27th. I was fortunate enough to obtain the help of Mr. Emrys Evans, the Financial Adviser to the Military Governor, as Honorary Treasurer to the Field Hospital and Bearer Company, drawing upon the banking account which I opened in Bloemfontein. We owe much to Mr. Evans for his timely services, both at Bloemfontein and, later on, at Pretoria. Meanwhile other work recalled me to Cape Town. The Field Hospital and Bearer Company left Kroonstad on June 5th, and reached Pretoria at the end of the month. From their being so much on trek, my opportunities of meeting Majors Stonham and Hale were few, and I was able to render but little assistance to them or their units. I had the pleasure, however, of getting up twenty cases of provisions, presented by the Duke of Marlborough, which they received in Pretoria on returning from a long and trying march east-