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Special Articles

THE SANITARY OFFICER, HIS DUTIES, QUALIFICATIONS AND SCOPE OF WORK ON ACTIVE SERVICE

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An army in the field may roughly be divided into two parts: the part that is employed within the zone of active operations, marching, countermarching, bivouacing, billeting, sometimes camping, often enduring privations, and now and then fighting, and the second part, employed on the lines of communication, transporting personnel and stores, maintaining rail, road and waterways, administering cities, towns, posts and camps, and, in a word, carrying out all those manifold arrangements which are necessary to maintain in an efficient condition the fighting portion in front.

In both parts the health of the troops must be maintained, but the sanitary problems involved in each case, are so different that different systems must be employed in order to meet these conditions. For instance, the troops in the zone of operations

are for ever moving or expecting to be moved. There is no permanence about the positions or locations they occupy. Nothing of a permanent character such as one associates with municipal sanitation is applicable to them. It is true that a military unit or collection of units may reach a place on the line of march and bivouac there, expecting to be en route next morning. Instead, new orders may be received, and they will remain inactive perhaps for days and weeks before marching again. But all this time they will be in daily expectation of marching off at an hour's notice. Again, a unit may one day form part of a large force in one place, and on the next day form part of a much smaller force, or even be on detached duty elsewhere. Billets and bivouacs will be occupied as military exigencies may dictate, and not as sanitary ideas would prefer,