



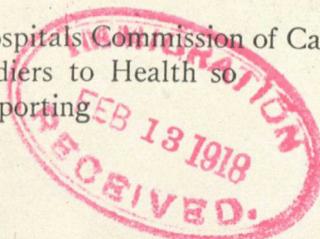
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SALVAGING WAR'S WASTE

The System Successfully Employed by the Military Hospitals Commission of Canada
for Restoring Wounded and Disabled Soldiers to Health so
that They Can Become Self Supporting

BY
ADAM BLACK



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I WENT in, a fragment. I came out, a man."

A fine upstanding man, he is, too—this tall Canadian soldier who speaks.

"Went into what? Came out of what?" I asked.

He smiled in gentle toleration of my ignorance. "The big machine called the M. H. C.," said he. "The machine that takes in disabled fighters at one end and sends them out able bodied men at the other." I found out afterward that one of his legs had been taken off close to the hip. It seemed to make little difference to his walk, and none at all to his spirits or his capacity. "I'm not going to let it," he said. "Why should I? A little thing like that!"

Officially, the letters "M. H. C." stand for Military Hospitals Commission. With equal truth, they signify "Making Healthy Canadians."

In Europe, the wounded Canadian soldier is cared for by the Canadian Army Medical Corps and the Canadian Red Cross. These act in close coöperation with the kindred organizations of the mother country. In fact, of the 22,000 invalided Canadians in the British Isles at the present time, about half are in non-Canadian Hospitals; though it may be added that the Canadian Hospitals caring for the other half make room also for a considerable number of non-Canadian soldiers.

From the time of their arrival in Canada—for the most part at Halifax in winter, but generally at Quebec in summer—until their discharge from the army, or until the close of their reëducation following discharge, the men are cared for by the Military Hospitals Commission.

The Commission carries on its work in a great chain of institutions stretching from

Cape Breton Island at the eastern to Vancouver Island at the western end of the Dominion. The first institutions opened were mostly large private houses, lent, and some of them furnished, by individual citizens and local organizations. For greater efficiency and economy in management, as the number of patients increased, it was found necessary to secure larger institutions, though most of the earlier and smaller convalescent homes have been retained.

Practically all the invalids returned to Canada have reached the stage of convalescence. Most of the Commission's institutions therefore are Military Convalescent Hospitals. These number fifty-two with accommodation, available or in sight, for more than 12,000 men. There are also nineteen sanatoria for tuberculosis, with similar accommodation for about 1,430. All but four of these sanatoria had been erected for consumptives before the war, and still treat civilian patients—caring for the soldiers either in an allotted part of the old premises or in new buildings added by the Commission. Finally, the Commission has secured a certain proportion of the accommodation in twenty-one general hospitals. These receive soldiers who relapse, or who develop fresh complaints requiring "active" rather than convalescent hospital treatment.

The trains for "walking" cases consist of standard and tourist sleeping cars, with dining cars for meals. For cot cases, special hospital trains are provided, and these are believed to surpass anything of the kind existing elsewhere. Both the Government Railway and the Canadian Pacific Railway have transformed a number of standard sleepers into hospital cars. Wide doors enable the men to be carried in on stretchers. The

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Ordinary berths are replaced by regular beds, and everything is done to make the journey as pleasant as possible, the speed being limited to about twenty-five miles an hour. On arrival at the hospital, every man whose condition does not forbid is given two weeks' leave, to be spent at his home; and a considerable number remain there as out-patients.

THE TREATMENT

The treatment in a convalescent hospital naturally varies in character and duration. But the Commission's settled policy is to discover and apply to every individual man whatever methods are likely to prove most effective in his case.

At the foundation of the treatment is an appropriate and varied diet—which has been most carefully and elaborately worked out—with plenty of good air.

Massage plays a large part in the treatment of many cases; and the Commission trains its own masseuses and masseurs—these latter being themselves invalided soldiers—at Toronto.

Baths, an astonishing variety of baths, are also much used, especially in cases of nerve trouble and rheumatism. There are baths for single limbs as well as baths for the body.

Free exercises, akin to the physical drill used in the training of able-bodied soldiers, are found of great benefit to the disabled—being regulated most carefully by medical advice and supervision in every case. Special instructors are trained by the Commission for this branch of treatment.

There is a medical officer in charge of every institution. Specialists are called in whenever required; or the men are sent to centres where the best specialists are always available.

Even a small home will have at any rate one trained nurse; and many of the nurses belonging to the "Voluntary Aid Detachment" have acquired training which practically lifts them to the professional level.

One of the most valuable lessons learned in the early stages of the work was that occupation is not only beneficial but necessary to invalided men. The old idea of a convalescent home, as merely a place of rest, is quite out of date. Occupation is the best of tonics, for body and mind. Idleness is an obstacle rather than a help to recovery.

There is a great variety of occupations; and often a considerable number will be found in the same institution. Some of them may be considered trifling, such as making toys, and fancy articles—for example, buttonhooks, paper knives, and so forth, their handles consisting of empty cartridge cases picked up at the front. Such petty trades, however, promise little help for the men's future. The occupations encouraged and seriously organized by the Commission are those which increase skill and capacity for trades which are most likely to afford steady work at good wages.

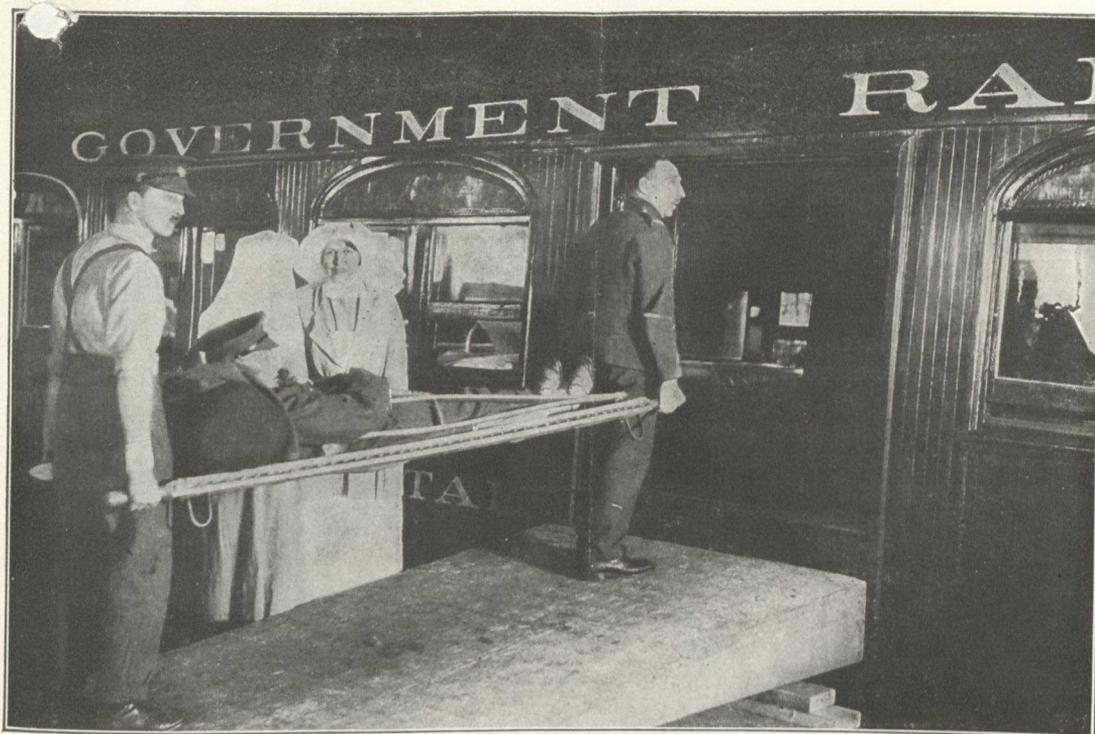
These include carpentry; motor engineering, and other kinds of metal work; harness making and other branches of the leather industry; mechanical drawing, useful in many trades; telegraphy; with gardening and poultry raising for out-of-doors. Classes in elementary school subjects also are held, enabling men to improve their general educational standing; while typewriting, bookkeeping, and so on, prepare them for the civil service and commercial offices. The sanatoria, also, are being equipped with workshops for useful as well as interesting occupations. Patients confined to bed even embroider and perform other light tasks. These tend to prevent the unrest of mind which would counteract the good effect of bodily rest. Many of the convalescents attend classes in regular technical institutions near the hospitals, special arrangements having been made for the instruction of invalided soldiers there.

THE PRIVILEGE OF "REËDUCATION"

Any man prevented by his disability from returning to his former work is entitled, and encouraged, to undertake a course of re-education for a new occupation—preferably one akin to that which formerly engaged his attention. His choice of a new trade has to be confirmed by the Commission, on the recommendation of a Soldiers' Training Board, consisting of a medical officer, a vocational officer, and generally a member of the Employment Commission of his Province.

Such a man's training is continued after discharge, generally at a technical or agricultural college. Not only is this training given him free, but during his education, and for a month longer, the Federal Government pays

SALVAGING WAR'S WASTE



EN ROUTE TO THE HOSPITAL

A wounded Canadian soldier returned from the front being conveyed aboard a hospital car on the Government Railway of Canada en route to a hospital

subsistence allowances to the man and his family. So far, about 900 men have applied for this training, and nine tenths of them have been found eligible for it.

AN ILLITERATE SOLDIER'S EXPERIENCE

I quote from a letter, dated Montreal, June 15, 1917, from a French Canadian returned soldier to an officer of the institution where he spent his convalescence:

"As you know, for the past four weeks I have been at work in the tool room of the Dominion Bridge Company, and I just thought I would like to drop you a line to express my thanks to the Military Hospitals Commission.

"When I came back from the front in October 1916, I was not able to read or write, and so I went into the school class at the Grey Nuns' Convalescent Home. As you will now see from this letter, I can now make a pretty fair show of myself.

"When the M. H. C. opened the Machine Shop at McGill I decided to take up the course, as I wanted to get a trade for myself. I had never worked on machines before, so I had a lot to learn, but I stuck with it, and when I got my discharge,

three months later, I was able to secure my job with the Dominion Bridge Company. I received \$21.10 per week since I started. The foreman told me this week that he was going to put me on a new machine and this would mean more money for me. I expect to get about \$30 per week.

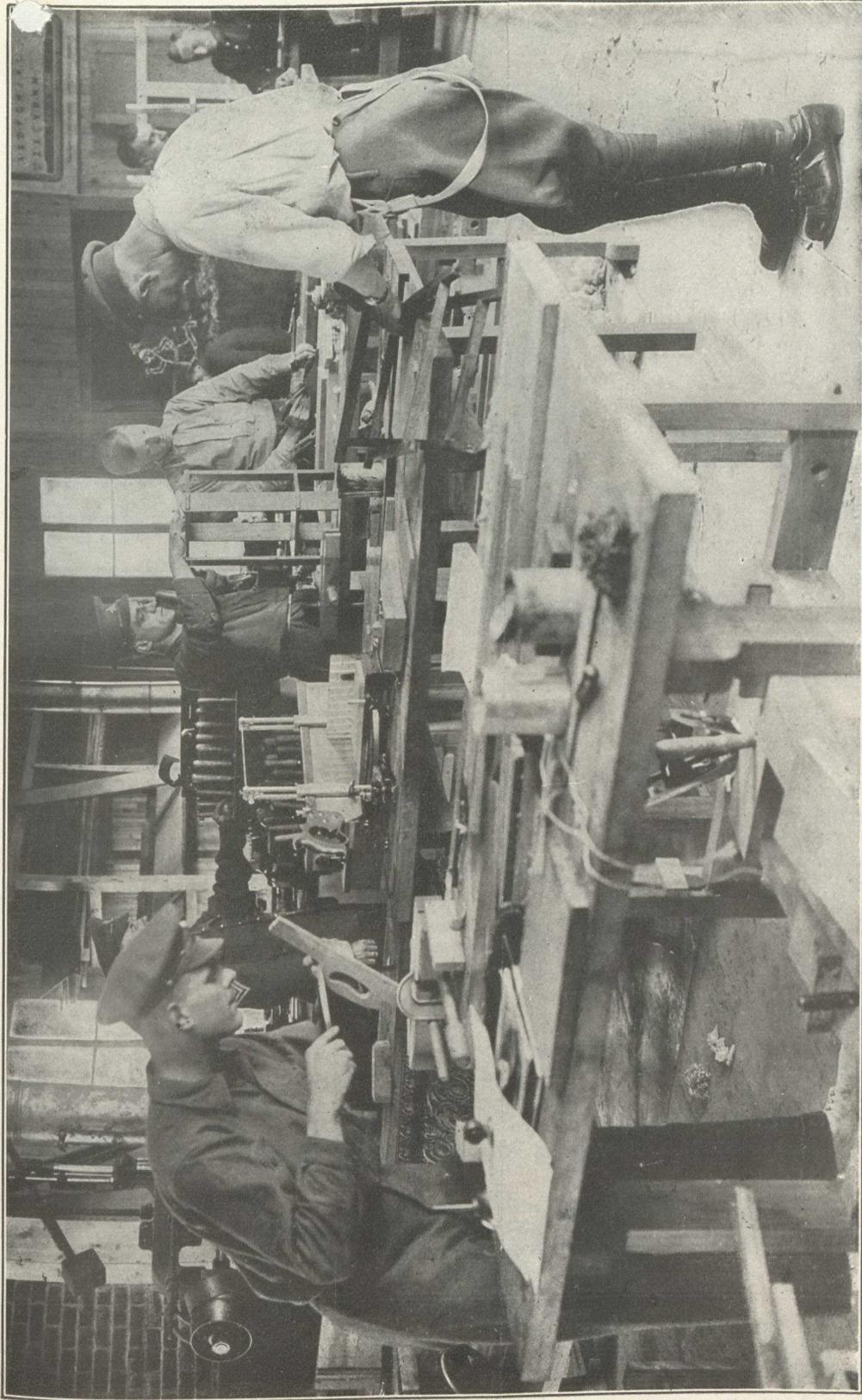
"If it had not been for the school I never would have been in the place I am to-day. Before the war, I was driving a team at \$15 per week. I also worked on a pile driver at \$18 per week, so you see I am now able to earn almost twice as much as I could before. I hope all the returned boys will see the chances they have in the school and make the most of them."

Each of the nine Provincial Governments of Canada has appointed a Commission to help discharged soldiers in getting employment—the chairman being ex-officio a member of the Federal Commission. There are a multitude of local committees, formed generally both to welcome the soldiers on their first arrival home and to help them afterward in getting employment. With the labor market in its present state, this is not so very hard. But when the war ends, no matter how gradual



CONVALESCING

At one of the many sanatoria maintained by the Military Hospitals Commission throughout Canada. Thanks to the instructions given by the Commission, many a soldier has been enabled to earn more than before he went to war



IN THE CARPENTER SHOP

Here convalescent soldiers, strong enough to move around, are taught carpentry or some other useful occupation whereby they may earn their livelihood and not become a burden to Canada



IMPROVING HIS ART

A young French Canadian artist, who developed tuberculosis in the great war, grasps the opportunity to improve his art while recovering at a sanatorium for tubercular soldiers

demobilization may be, the resettlement of hundreds of thousands of men, their reabsorption into the ranks of industry, will demand extraordinary statesmanship and efficiency of organization. Every one hopes that as many as possible of the men will be persuaded to undertake productive work on the land. The Dominion Government has a scheme, so far only published in outline, with this end in view. A "Soldier Settlement Board" of three commissioners will grant 160 acres of Federal land to any honorably discharged British soldier or sailor, with a loan of \$2,500, subject to such conditions as the government thinks necessary "to secure the use of the land for the purpose for which it is granted." The Provincial Governments of

Ontario and British Columbia have schemes with the same object; and a number of soldiers have already taken up land in northern Ontario. Also the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, which has enormous holdings of land in the west, is greatly extending its ready-made farm system with soldier-settlers in view. However attractive these schemes, the great majority of returned soldiers will have to be provided for otherwise, chiefly in the industrial centres. As we have learned from bitter experience in other fields that the best way to cure an evil is to prevent it, we feel that the "M. H. C." is attacking this problem of the disabled soldiers' restoration in the most effective way possible and in a way that might well be imitated by the United States.

